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FEATURED TOP STORY

Dominium renters: 'We're living in fear'

By Ian Wreisner
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River North resident Dawn Cordes stands in the shadow of the garage that malfunctioned, leaving her stuck outside in the middle of a med. She experienced respiratory issues as a result and had to call 911 two days after.

Photo by Ian Wreisner

Low-income residents of Dominion properties across the Twin Cities were hoping to find forever homes or a fresh start in these affordable communities, but instead said they found disrepair, disharmony and deception.

Following coverage in March of a rally against Dominion at the Minnesota Capitol, Dominion renters reached out to ABC Newspapers about the problems the residents face.

ABC Newspapers visited five Dominion buildings and spoke with 29 residents and observed those issues. Problems ranged from overdue carpet and window cleanings at Legends of Cottage Grove to broken security doors and a near-death experience due to a malfunctioning garage door at River North in Coc

Rapids. The tenants of Legends of Spring Lake Park and Bren Road Station in Minnetonka are facing more than maintenance issues.

ABC Newspapers witnessed dog fecal matter and vomit staining elevators months after initial cleanings in Spring Lake Park. Layers of dust coat a parking garage that has been without circulation due to a broken fan. Empty parking stalls serve as dumping zones for unwanted furniture.

Residents claim that unwatched entrances have led to non-residents entering the buildings and causing disturbances, leaving them to feel unsafe.

ABC Newspapers was made aware of the conditions at Woodland Park Apartments in Anoka during an April 17 City Council meeting. Resident Shawna Hoffman said that residents were facing an “exterior in disarray” during the meeting. She shared a police report with ABC Newspapers, in which she made complaints about management and their handling of maintenance and security.

“The COPPS unit has received an abundance of complaints of similar nature from multiple tenants regarding the management at the location,” Anoka Officer Austin Ohren wrote. “COPPS unit has attempted to work with the previous manager, who is no longer at the location. Officers have received numerous complaints ... regarding the maintenance employee, ... including officers finding him sleeping on the couch in the office during the day.”

Bren Road Station residents also shared complaints about management with ABC Newspapers. The community manager of the building is a convicted felon, guilty of theft in Hennepin and Anoka counties.

ABC confirmed through residents, police records and Minnesota court records that this manager has been convicted of four felonies. The most recent came in 2020, when she gave multiple false checks to Cub Foods in Blaine, leading to a felony theft conviction.

In addition, residents said they are still struggling to adapt to a 12.5% rent increase from last year. Many residents stated that a similar increase in 2023 would force them to move out, as their fixed Social Security incomes won't cover the cost of rent.

“We're living in fear,” River North resident Jan Bragelman said. “A lot of people here have no place to go. I don't even have a car (to move into).”

River North

A group of residents from River North in Coon Rapids organized to push for a state law that would cap low-income housing rent increases at 3%. This effort led to the Capitol rally.

A year ago, Bragelman started taking point on the organizational work, sending emails and updates from her “command center” – which used to exclusively be her craft room.

“I started this, thinking, ‘I’m going to get my life back,’ and a year later I still haven’t,” Bragelman said.

Bragelman estimates she spends six hours per day drafting letters, organizing email campaigns and keeping correspondence with other Dominion buildings.

“I’m not fighting just for me,” Bragelman said. “We can’t lose at this point. There’s so many people that if rent goes up another \$200, where are they going to go? The things they’ve done to some people, they treat them like they’re feeble minded and it’s disgusting.”

Bragelman said that as Dominion properties go, River North isn’t as bad as it gets. She said the residents love the community, get along with staff – and the repairs, while needed, are not rampant. The problem for many residents is the rent.

“In the six years I’ve been here, my rent has been raised 42%,” River North resident Charlene Goltart said. “And how many people get a 42% raise in pay over six years? Some people say, ‘We’re whining.’ We’re just trying not to end up on the street.”

Dominium builds many of their properties, such as River North, using Low Income Housing Tax Credits. The buildings are marketed as such through the federal Section 42 program. Many of the residents living at River North are on fixed incomes and receive only Social Security. Bragelman said rent takes up to 75% of her monthly income.

“I’m living on \$400 a month,” Bragelman said. “That’s all that’s left for utilities, groceries, my phone bill ... for the entire month.”

Upon move-in in 2016, residents said they were promised rent increases would stay under \$20 per year, but in the first year said they saw increases of as much as \$60.

Dominium has signaled potential actions to residents and local

politicians concerning its rent increase practices. ABC Newspapers obtained a letter from Dominion Executive Vice President Paula Prah written on May 23, 2022, to Rep. Zack Stephenson, DFL – Coon Rapids, assuring that a rent increase for River North will not exceed 3% in 2023.

Prah confirmed to ABC Newspapers that this was still the intent going into 2023-2024 lease agreements.

Yet, Dominion opposes SF 2590 and HF 2676, two bills currently stalled in Minnesota Congressional committee that will cap affordable housing's rent increases at 5%.

In a press release sent to ABC Newspapers after the rally, Dominion favored the funds that Section 8 and Section 42 would provide to renters and developers instead of a state rent-control measure. Section 42 is the portion of the Internal Revenue Service code that allows and sets rules for Low Income Housing Tax Credits, including who gets the credit and to whom they can rent the buildings.

Prahl reached out to ABC Newspapers through Tunheim Public Relations Senior Account Supervisor Sandi Scott to have an off-the-record talk about Section 42, but did not respond to ABC Newspaper's request to have that conversation on the record.

Prahl instead sat down with ABC Newspapers to talk about the issues witnessed in Dominion's properties and the company's affordable housing practices.

"There are lots of advocates around housing, thankfully, ... but not all advocates like Section 42," Prahl said. "They want to go back to where we had public housing 40, 50 years ago. That's a point of view, I don't deny that, but I think occasionally those things get mixed up. Many of (those advocates) would not want residents living in our properties, they don't believe they should have the quality those properties provide. I disagree with that."

Dominium builds its facilities with the help of Low Income Housing Tax Credits and Tax Increment Financing districts. Both of these regulate how much Dominion is allowed to charge for rent, the maximum for which is determined by the area median income, or AMI.

The AMI is based on working incomes, and the residents of Dominion properties have taken issue with that number as many are on fixed incomes and not actively working. Developers are allowed to raise rents along these rules, but are not required to.

"We participate in the low-income housing program and we really believe we provide a nice product with a significant rent advantage over what people would be paying in the market," Prahl said. "We maintain rent levels such that we can sustain the property and pay the debt service on the property."

As rent continues to rise alongside the AMI, many residents ABC Newspapers spoke with have been left wondering why more buildings remain dirty, and maintenance issues persist.

"What's the money going for?" Legends of Woodbury resident Mike Tronstad asked. "It's not going toward security and it's not going toward cleaning."

'It's no joke ...'

Tronstad is not the only renter concerned about security, as Bragelman had similar concerns over the garage of River North. A security door in the garage has remained unlocked and propped open for months at a time, Bragelman said.

ABC Newspapers confirmed the door remained broken with a note encouraging passersby to “please leave open, door is broken.”

River North residents are concerned, as this door leads into the building, meaning anyone who enters the garage has access to the full building. Residents said that thefts from cars are a common occurrence.

At River North, another exterior garage door is broken. Due to the malfunction, Dawn Cordes, a River North tenant with respiratory issues, was almost trapped outside during a snowstorm after coming home from the hospital.

When she approached the garage door during a heavy snowfall on Jan. 6, Cordes found her garage door opener would not work from the outside.

She attempted to back her car up, but it was sliding due to the snow that had already accumulated. Cordes entered the side door to the garage to manually press the open button, but by the time she made it back to her car, the door had begun to close on her.

Another resident saw Cordes and opened the garage door for her. This resident helped Cordes to her room, as her respiratory issues she originally visited the hospital to manage had recurred during her time stuck outside. The issues persisted, and two days later Cordes called 911.

Residents are not sure when the garage door broke, but it remained broken as of April 21.

“It’s no joke when this stuff doesn’t work for seniors,” Bragelman said.

‘If it’s installed on the property, it should function correctly ...’

Coon Rapids Housing Inspector Kyle Katterman spoke with ABC Newspapers about the city’s inspection process with these rental properties. He stated that there are different criteria for scheduled inspections versus complaint-based inspections. He usually looks out for life-safety issues, such as checking smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, plumbing and electric, and will point out superficial problems if they become dire.

“We’re not necessarily looking for minor wear and tear, but past a certain point we’ll be calling it out,” Katterman said. “Like when you start seeing drywall or holes in walls, loose railings, things like that.”

In terms of garage doors and security doors, that relies heavily on whether or not it has been reported. Katterman said it is not as easy as testing a private home garage door because a resident will be right there with the remote. For apartments, they will usually need to wait for someone with access to demonstrate the

door's functionality.

Ultimately, Coon Rapids municipal law states that all buildings must be in operating order, inspected or not.

"City code dictates if it's installed on the property, it should function correctly," Katterman said.

Legends of Spring Lake Park

Bragelman said the residents of River North have relatively little to complain about compared to other Dominion properties in the Twin Cities. The residents of Legends of Spring Lake Park, however, have issues all their own.

The Legends of Spring Lake Park sits on the former site of Goony Mini Golf, a vintage Spring Lake Park attraction that closed in 2016. The Legends of Spring Lake Park opened in 2018, being marketed as a "55+ community," but residents found that there was a catch.

"Seven school buses come here, twice a day," a Legends of SLP resident said. "It was not mentioned to us when we moved in that two doors down, there was a family with ... kids in a three-bedroom apartment."

ABC Newspapers met with 12 tenants from Legends of Spring Lake Park, and they all requested that ABC Newspapers not to use their full names, as they were concerned about retaliation from building and Dominion staff for contacting the media about these issues.

Prahl assured that residents should not be afraid to speak out and have a right to bring forward complaints and maintenance requests.

"They're not going to face retaliation," Prahl said. "I appreciate that it's an uneasy situation, so I don't want to diminish that thought. ... They have every right to ask questions and every right to request maintenance."

In 2019, reporting from ABC Newspapers found that in order to apply for a Legends of SLP apartment, only one member of a unit needs to be aged 50 or older. While that rule has been changed to 55 since, the one-resident requirement still stands. Residents expressed surprise when moving in and seeing families with young children, as they say the multi-generation nature of the building was not revealed to them up front.

Prahl responded that it is policy to notify potential residents.

"I know they talk about it, typically when leasing the apartment," Prahl said about the age requirements. "That's a human-to-human interaction. So, I can imagine there are times that gets missed on both sides. ... We can't discriminate against someone who has a dependent, and I don't think anyone wants to."

The nature of the building's 55+ status changed frequently during the course of construction.

Stantec, an engineering firm that Spring Lake Park regularly works with, stated in a July 25, 2016, memorandum that the building would be a "50+ senior apartment project."

An official Dominion project application dated Oct. 10, 2016, stated that the building would rent to “seniors 50 to 55 and older.”

During a City Council meeting on Nov. 7, 2016, Mayor Cindy Hansen described the project as “restricted 55-plus housing.”

Ordinance 430 from Dec. 5, 2016, described the project as a “55 plus multi-family dwelling,” while Ordinance 434 from Feb. 8, 2017, changed the minimum age requirement back to 50.

On Feb. 13, 2017, Ordinance 436 included language that allowed additional family members in the apartment to be any age, so long as one member of the unit was older than 50.

“One unit was rented out by parents to some young men,” a Legends SLP resident said.

Multiple residents identified the back patio as a space for frequent parties and drug deals. Residents also said that drug deals and other illicit activities were common at the front door. Spring Lake Park has previously identified the building as a location for high police traffic.

“We have noticed a substantial amount of calls to this location for a variety of different reasons,” former Police Chief Doug Ebeltoft said in a 2019 report from ABC Newspapers.

ABC Newspapers obtained the Spring Lake Park Police Department’s calls for service from March 31, 2022, to March 31, 2023, and out of 381 total calls, 23 were for suspicious activity.

Tenants said the building receives heavy traffic from non-residents, both on the back patio and in the building itself, and find that strangers will often follow them in through the garage — the door for which is also broken in Spring Lake Park.

Prahl responded that she was not immediately aware of any garage door issues, but would look into the matter at multiple buildings. Residents said that the issues with the garage door led to unwanted strangers entering the building.

“You’ll have to use your key fob at the side door (to open the garage door), so you’ve got to get out of your car to get into the building,” a Legends SLP resident said. “People who don’t live here follow you in.”

ABC Newspapers witnessed that a man not recognized by the group was able to approach a back door and open it without a key fob as the person who exited prior failed to latch the door shut.

Down in the garage itself, a thick layer of dust coats the cars that have been parked there for even a few days at a time. A fan that residents said has been broken since July 2021 means that there is not sufficient circulation in the underground facility.

Empty parking stalls are also being used as furniture dumps, where residents will leave unwanted or broken items with no answer as to who is responsible or when it will be picked up, tenants said. Loitering and noise complaints are also common in the garage, among other activities.

“People will sit in their car or talk on the phone or listen to loud music for hours,” a resident said. “Or they’ll smoke pot or have sex.”

Dominium garages are a topic not just for residents but also in court.

The Legends of Spring Lake Park charges \$70 per month to park in its parking garage. A lawsuit was filed against Dominion in 2021 regarding parking charges. Affordable housing projects that receive tax credits to build parking garages are prohibited to charge for parking, which this lawsuit alleges Dominion has done.

For the residents of Legends SLP, they say their issues circle back to Dominion upper management.

“I called the main office and got put through to a manager, and in the middle of me speaking, they said, ‘I’ve got to go,’ and hung up,” a resident said. “I’m paying rent and I have legitimate complaints. We’re really displeased with the response from corporate.”

Other issues the Legends of Spring Lake Park cited with Dominion upper management included long wait times for repairs, infrequent routine maintenance and failure to light outdoor spaces at night.

“Anything that affects Dominion’s bottom line, they’re not going to do,” a resident said. “This has been a nightmare. We can’t afford to move.”

Prahl said that the nature of Dominion’s affordable housing status and rent increases keeps a balance between charging below market price and keeping buildings in running order.

“Affordable housing is all about filling gaps,” Prahl said. “It’s filling gaps between peoples’ income and the rent that might be required. It’s filling gaps between rent income and the costs of running the building. It’s a balance. The last thing I think anyone in these communities wants is for these properties to not be there any more or for them to completely fall into disrepair, which we’ve seen in early versions of affordable housing 20, 30, 40 years ago.”

Woodland Park Apartments

ABC Newspapers was invited to Woodland Park Apartments in Anoka after a group of residents got up to speak about the building’s state of disrepair during an April 17 City Council meeting.

While at the building, ABC Newspapers witnessed stained carpets, rusted siding, dented garage doors, falling gutters, loose door latches, spray-painted stairwells, sagging balconies, broken screen doors and video evidence of excessive dog excrement being left across the property.

To hear more about Woodland Park from the residents who live there, see abcnewspapers.com.

The Legends of Cottage Grove

At Legends of Cottage Grove, residents said there are fewer cleaning and maintenance issues, with rent being the main concern for seniors. The tenants of Legends of Cottage Grove did not feel the need to meet in secrecy and were not afraid of retaliation for speaking out.

Gary Spooner moved into Legends of Cottage Grove in December 2018, six months after the building opened. He wanted to downsize and still have access to the amenities that the facility offers, and said the switch so far has been a success – with the exception of the rent increases.

“Living here has been very productive for me, as far as I’m concerned,” Spooner said. “I enjoy living here, and I enjoy the people who live here with me. The only thing I don’t like is the 12.5% increase in rent.”

Spooner moved to Cottage Grove when the population was 5,000 in 1961. The 2021 census shows it sitting at just under 40,000. He feels connected to the city – it’s where he ran his own newspaper business and served on the City Council – and having lived in the city so long, he doesn’t want to leave.

“Being 84 and looking at a place to live, you don’t want the anxiety of thinking the rent is so high you can’t live here anymore,” Spooner said. “I’ve always felt that getting old should be more pleasant.”

Spooner was present at the Capitol rent-cap rally, and he read about Dominion’s response. He isn’t sure that changes to Section 42 and Section 8 are a viable solution for the immediate problems that residents are facing.

“They said we should be getting more tax credit,” Spooner said. “Who should get it? The developer or the people that live here? When they make something, that should be affordable to the people who already live here. Otherwise why give the credit in the first place?”

While the building has not received a carpet or window cleaning for several years, according to residents (and which ABC witnessed signs of at every building visited), Spooner says that the staff gets along well with residents.

On the topic of carpet and window cleanings, Prahll stated that carpets get a full cleaning every three years, windows every two and spot treatments when needed.

“The pandemic disrupted this schedule some, so I know that many are in the cue for this year,” Prahll said.

Spooner sees a lack of communication from the top on down as the reason for Dominion’s property issues.

“(The staff at Legends CG), they listen and they help,” Spooner said. “Some units, I’m sure, don’t have that. We’re lucky to have people that care. With a company as large as Dominion, it’s hard to look and put everything together. But they should have constant training with how to handle people. Especially older people.”

He also shared that he would like to see Dominion executives open more lines of dialogue with those living and working in their buildings.

“I wish more corporations realized their success is from the people they hire,” Spooner said. “Dominium, I think they could go a long way if they had more empathy. They seem very money focused.”

Spoooner shared one occasion in which two Dominion employees, whose names and positions he did not identify, visited Legends of Cottage Grove to talk about rent increases. The answer given to the residents concerning the rent prices matches what ABC has heard from residents from several other Dominion properties.

“They didn’t make any friends when two employees came here,” Spooner said. “We asked why they’re raising the rent (12.5%), and they answered, ‘Because the math says we can.’ They’re really stepping on their own bunion; it’s a shame.”

Spoooner says that as far as units are concerned, Legends of Cottage Grove has no trouble filling vacant spots. Even if the rent continues to rise and residents continue to give up groceries, medication or ultimately their apartments, the building will remain full.

“What they’re saying is that there are more people that need facilities like this than there are facilities,” Spooner said. “If things aren’t rented, people are going to take them. I know there are some buildings that aren’t (fully) rented because of their reputation.”

Prahl said that this was not an official Dominion stance on rent increases, and that they adhere to all guidelines set for low-income housing developments.

While Legends of Cottage Grove remains full, there is another Dominion property on the other side of the metro that’s had more trouble filling its 35 vacant rooms out of a total 262. Residents say they won’t fill because of the convicted felon who manages them.

Bren Road Station

While Bren Road Station in Minnetonka has faced many of the same problems with security, high numbers of police calls and lacking maintenance, it is the only building ABC Newspapers investigated that’s managed by a convicted felon.

Residents are concerned with their manager's record of theft-based felonies, as building managers have access to personal information and also have a master key to each apartment. Due to the sensitive nature of the topic, Bren Road Station residents would only spoke to ABC Newspapers on the condition of anonymity.

ABC Newspapers confirmed through publicly available data and resident statements that their manager was convicted of four felonies.

The manager was convicted of felony theft by swindle over \$500 in 2006 and again in 2007, when she was convicted of issuing dishonored checks. Another charge came in 2012, when she was charged felony check fraud and was sentenced to 57 months in federal prison, according to a 2012 Star Tribune article.

Minnesota law states that a manager of a rental property cannot be hired if "a person is convicted of third degree murder; second degree manslaughter; criminal vehicular homicide or injury; fourth or fifth degree assault; simple or aggravated robbery; false imprisonment; theft; burglary; terrorist threat; or non-felony stalking." (MN Statute 299C.67)

There is a 10-year probationary period, after which a person may be hired on after committing these offenses. Bren Road Station's manager was hired in 2021, and was last convicted of theft in 2020. Prah was unaware that the manager had a felony record, but recorded the manager's name. She also said that Dominion does a background screening process during hiring.

"I won't comment on employment of individuals," Prah said in a follow-up with ABC Newspapers. "I will report that we do a background check on all employees and follow the laws and regulations related to employment, including laws specific to the hiring and employment of property management personnel."

Parhl did not confirm nor deny whether the manager in question still works at Bren Road Station.

Many seniors at Bren Road Station, a 55 and older community, are still employed, whether to keep busy or for supplemental income. Residents said the treatment they experienced at the hands of staff made them feel demeaned and belittled.

"We're working professionals, but we're still lower income," a resident said. "I used to (work with a homeowners) association. The rules are different, but I negotiated contracts and worked with a million dollar budget. I'm not stupid, I know how things should be. They treat us like we can't even talk or meet. It's horrible."

Bren Road Station also faces a similar problem to Spring Lake Park, as the buildings are advertised as 55-plus communities, but will allow younger family members to live with the seniors. Occupants claim that a tenant briefly used their unit as a day care for family members, and a diaper service is a regular building visitor. Youth from the surrounding buildings also end up making it into the building.

“Kids will wait outside the garage and flood in when you open it,” a Bren Road Station resident said. “There’s nothing anywhere that mentions security besides having locked doors. At this point I’m not afraid to take my dogs out, but I look before I open the doors.”

The problems were bad enough for resident Kathy Moseley that she decided to move out. She agreed to use her full name, as she is moving to Texas around the time this article publishes. Others answered similarly to other Dominion tenants that they either enjoy the community and building, or don’t have the money or means to leave.

“I’m moving out of a fear of living here and a fear of management,” Moseley said.

Minnesota’s executive council remains silent

When it comes to government response, Minnesota’s executive council has remained silent.

Dominium residents launched a mass letter writing campaign to Gov. Tim Walz at the Capitol rally followed by an email and phone call campaign to Attorney General Keith Ellison’s office. As of April 24, residents have not yet received a response to the campaign.

Two bills, House File 2676 and Senate File 2590, are not currently getting attention on the House or Senate floors. The new area median income will come out in late May or early June, and the residents of Dominion properties will likely have to face another rent increase.

The bipartisan authors of the Senate bill, Sens. John Hoffman, DFL-Champlin, and Jim Abeler, R-Anoka, have been the seniors’ most vocal allies when it comes to rent cap legislation. With the bills in the Tax Committee, they have pursued further options for rent assistance with the likes of a \$500,000 relief grant for Section 42 residents added to the Omnibus Human Service bill currently in committee. They included it under a section titled, “Senior Housing-Related Stress and Mental Health Prevention.”

The Senate did not approve the other half of the section, however, which would cap rent increases at 3% for “any properties owned by a corporation founded in 1992; domiciled in Minnesota, with over 38,000 properties in 19 states as of Jan. 1, 2023.”

Dominium tenants were invited to speak with members of the governor’s staff on April 19 over Zoom, and ABC Newspapers witnessed the conversation. A resident invited ABC Newspapers to watch the conversation in their apartment independently of any organizer or staff involvement. Seniors were given 30 minutes to make their case for rent cap legislation, during which staff responded.

“We’re asking that for sure you can’t use the AMI to raise rent this year,” Bragelman said to staff members present. “If they use the AMI, they can raise rent another \$168 this year. This is not OK, and this is why we’re asking Gov. Walz to stop this.”

Dominic McQuerry, Senior Advisor to the Lieutenant Governor, said that it was “extremely unlikely” that the bills would get passed before the current legislative session ends. He also stated he was “not comfortable speaking to” what degree of influence the Minnesota Housing Finance Agency would have over the rent increase issue.

“It’s not indicative of our position, but I just wanted to be forward about that,” McQuerry said.

Senior Public Engagement Liaison Mackenzie Nolan was on the call and said that because the bill was introduced late into session, they would have a harder time getting it passed.

“This is an opportunity to get a head start ahead of next session, and really utilizing the time we have through the summer to make sure you can arrive next session with the ask,” Nolan said.

“We don’t have another year,” Legends of Cottage Grove resident Bob Ebbenga replied. “My rent last year went up \$228. Now how can a guy that’s 84 years old justify \$1,800 in rent?”

Spooner, of Cottage Grove, was on the call with Ebbenga and added to his statement.

“A lot of seniors have quite a bit of anxiety about the AMI in May,” Spooner said. “That’s not going to be very fun to be around. If you raise the rent over 7%, 10%, 12%, a lot of people out there won’t have a place to live. What do we do then?”

Policy Advisor for Human Services, Homelessness and Housing Joshua Ney stated that he had a number of conversations about Dominion and its renters earlier in the year, but “didn’t recall a follow up.”

ABC witnessed audible groans from renters in the room at that statement.

“I’m always more than happy to try to connect folks with MHFA, especially if you’re not getting responses,” Ney said. “I’m a firm believer that everyone deserves a response from writing to their elected officials. ... I’ve worked for a number of elected officials who made it a point to respond to every letter, so I’m a firm believer in that.”

Bragelman said that the seniors have already been working with MHFA, as well as Minnesota Housing Commissioner Jenner Ho.

Bragelman said that Ho signaled to lawmakers that the rent would be capped back in November 2022, but no such cap came through. A January meeting also failed to materialize, leading to the late legislation.

“How can you call this a LIHTC program, which if you follow the definition of the program, should be 30% of your income?,” Bragelman said. “Dominium bills it as ‘affordable,’ which is 60% of your income, and we are telling you that 75% to 100% of our income is going to rent. How is that low income? How is that allowed?”

Malyun Yayhe, Community Ownership Project Coordinator with Hope Community, spoke up on behalf of the seniors, saying they've already exhausted the options being presented to them.

"Your administration is failing seniors," Yayhe said. "They went every way and knocked on every door. It's not enough to go back and tell their stories, we want something done."

Tronstad referenced the many letters seniors brought with to the rally that they dropped off directly at the governor's office.

"Did he actually read our letters?" Tronstad asked. "Or did he just throw them away?"

Bragelman was frustrated after the meeting was over, feeling as though their concerns weren't heard.

"You're not listening, politicians aren't listening," Bragelman told ABC Newspapers. "They told us it was 'too late.' I've been screaming for a damn year! I feel like I've resuscitated a cause and I'm having a hard time calling it dead. I'm heartsick. We've fought tooth and nail to be heard by politicians. What does it take?"

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