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Rob Winning, a resident of Albuquerque Meadows, stands in the front of his manufactured home in Albuquerque on Thursday.

New Mexico lawmakers push for mobile home regulations

Larger businesses investing in manufactured home communities

BY CATHY COOK
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With cost of living top of mind for voters, New Mexico's federal, state and local lawmakers have pushed new regulations of the manufactured home industry in the last year.

Manufactured homes are typically a more affordable option than site-built homes, and they're an important part of New Mexico's housing stock.

the legislators have pushed bills that would provide more transparency on mobile home park sales, increase state investment in new mobile homes and take aim at significant lot rent increases.

"I think when it comes down to affordable housing stock in New Mexico, this is an issue we can't ignore," U.S. Rep. Gabe Vasquez, D-N.M., said at a recent roundtable in

Albuquerque.

About 16% of New Mexico's housing units are manufactured homes, making it one of the states most reliant on manufactured or mobile homes, according to U.S. Census data. The New Mexico Manufactured Housing Association estimates 18% of the population lives in manufactured housing. The national average is closer to 6%.

In recent years, there's been a disproportionate investment in mobile homes from institutional investors — big investment vehicles that can purchase private equity in mobile homes,

according to Reilly White, a University of New Mexico finance professor.

"About a quarter of the purchases in 2021 of mobile home parks were by private equity," White said. "This is significantly higher than other housing markets like the residential housing market."

Often, mobile home owners rent the land where their home resides, and new ownership of that land can mean a rental increase.

"It's pretty consistent to vary-

See **HOMES** >> **A7**

HOMES >>

From **PAGE A1**

ing degrees,” said Joanne DeMichele, president of advocacy group Land of Enchantment Manufactured Home Owners’ Alliance. “Rents go up and services go down.”

DeMichele started advocating for updating New Mexico’s laws on manufactured homes after the Silver City community she lived in was abruptly sold in 2021.

“In many states, the protections are far greater than what New Mexico has,” DeMichele said.

Albuquerque enacted an ordinance in January that requires 60 days’ notice to mobile home owners before the park they live in can be sold. Four bills that were meant to address everything from mobile home park sale notices to rent stabilization to replacement initiatives were introduced and failed in the state Legislature earlier this year. Affordable housing was a hot topic in the Roundhouse, with more than 100 bills that included the word “housing” introduced during the state Legislature’s 2025 regular session.

The latest mobile home regulation effort comes from Vasquez, who introduced a bill in Congress to investigate price gouging and utility management in manufactured homes.

“It’s an issue that goes under the radar, but it’s an issue that really impacts the lowest-income people and our senior citizens and veterans disproportionately,” Vasquez said.

Vasquez’s bill would create more oversight of large businesses purchasing manufactured home communities. It would require the Housing and Urban Development secretary to investigate any entity that purchases 2,500 or more manufactured housing units or pads to ensure they’re not price gouging residents and that they continue to provide access to essential utilities like running water and electricity. The HUD secretary would then report the findings to Congress and provide a strategy for addressing any price manipulation.

The legislation would be retroactive to 2015.

Since the bill is written to focus on larger investors, White thinks it would be unlikely to have an adverse effect on housing supply.

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home owners are in rural areas and are disproportionately older, White said. Native American and Hispanic families also disproportionately rely on manufactured housing in the state.

“It’s trying to clamp down on some of the worst behaviors — or worst fears of behaviors — happening for investor-owned homes that don’t take into consideration affordability or availability of the buyers to pay. ... So it’s a very, very interesting bill for that reason,” White said.

The manufactured home market is a quasi-captive market, because the cost of moving a manufactured home from a rented pad is very high, said Chris Erickson, New Mexico State University economics professor.

“People kind of bad-mouth private equity, and I think that private equity is a very, very large category of investors,” Erickson said. “There’s good guys and bad guys, and most of them are neutral. ... What’s bad is this kind of a market where you have this quasi-captive market and the companies come in, they buy a lot of units, and then they raise the price, the rent, the fees, the utility access fees and things like that. ... And the consequence of that is someone loses their home.”

Situations like that with asymmetric negotiation are common targets of antitrust regulation, Erickson said, and Vasquez’s bill could fit in that category.

New Mexico Rep. Cristina Parajón, D-Albuquerque, is passionate about regulating the manufactured home industry because of the years she spent working in homeless shelters.

“There are some really egregious things happening in manufactured home parks

because the mobile home statute has not been updated in years and years and years,” Parajón said.

In the 2025 regular session, she sponsored House Bill 426, which would create an opportunity for manufactured community residents to buy the land they live on if it goes up for sale. The bill would require a park owner to notify residents if they’re planning to accept an offer for the park and give residents 75 days to present a matching offer.

The bill passed the House, but died in the Senate, getting further than any of the other mobile home legislation that was filed. Similar legislation has passed in states like New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Colorado, Delaware and Washington.

Parajón wants to file the bill again in the upcoming 30-day session.

“This, to me, is one of the more important housing bills that we can pass when it comes to preserving the affordability of housing. A lot of the folks who live in manufactured homes are our elders,” she said.

A similar requirement has passed at the local level. Albuquerque City Councilor Nichole Rogers sponsored an ordinance at Mayor Tim Keller’s request to help mobile home residents become aware of sales. It requires park owners to provide residents with notice they plan to sell the park when the property is listed for sale and give good faith consideration to purchase offers from resident groups.

“A lot of times, they don’t get a notice until it was already sold, the bill’s done and it’s transferring to new ownership,” Rogers said.

The ordinance was enacted in January. Rogers thinks statewide protections are needed.

“We know we have over 200 seniors in our shelter program right now,” Rogers said. “We know from our point in time count, seniors are the highest number of growing folks that are unsheltered.”

The percentage of seniors experiencing homelessness in Albuquerque increased by almost 24% from 2023, according to the point in time count.

Nationwide, the average price of a manufactured home in 2024 was \$123,000, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. Meanwhile, single-family, site-built homes had an average sale price of \$514,500 last year, according to the Census Bureau.

Manufactured homes can be a good

opportunity for senior citizens who are downsizing, according to Othiamba Umi, AARP New Mexico associate state director of advocacy and outreach. The organization is interested in increasing the supply of manufactured housing and expanding some zoning and land use laws around manufactured homes, he said.

While prices for manufactured homes are well below site-built home prices, some manufactured home owners say they’ve seen more increases in their lot rent after the sale of their mobile home park to an out-of-state company.

Merrill Klocke, 89, and his wife Pat enjoy living in Albuquerque Meadows, a 55-plus manufactured home community in the northeast quadrant of the city. The neighbors are nice, he said, but the rent is too high.

“If it keeps going up, we might have to move,” Klocke said.

Their lot rent has risen from \$990 to \$1,030 to \$1,080 in the year and a half they’ve resided there.

Two neighbors across the street moved out after rent increases, he said. Another resident saw their rent go from \$586 a month in 2021 to \$730 in 2023 with annual increases of roughly 6% to 9% after the property was sold to Florida-based Legacy Communities.

Company president Andrew Fells said in a statement that Legacy is committed to providing affordable and quality communities. The business model is reliant on keeping existing residents in place, and in 2025 the average rent increase was 4.75%, Fells said.

“Since acquiring Albuquerque Meadows in 2021, Legacy has invested almost \$2 million in new homes and renovating existing homes,” Fells said. “In the last two years, we invested approximately \$215,000 in capital improvements, including electrical infrastructure, roadwork and security, and an additional \$50,000 is planned for 2026.”

Rob Winning has lived in the park for three years and has also seen lot rent increases. He’s supportive of efforts at the state Legislature to create a right of first refusal.

“In a park this size, there’s a lot of really old people, and I don’t know if you could muster enough support, but properties like this should have the right to go (resident-owned community), if they wanted to,” Winning said.