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Wall Street Landlords and the Housing Crisis: A Case for Land Value Taxation

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"Social reform is not to be secured by noise and shouting … but by the awakening of thought and the progress of ideas."

- Henry George
New York, 1883

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Executive Summary

This policy brief examines the growing dominance of institutional investors in the American housing market, a trend accelerated by the foreclosure crisis of the Great Recession. We argue that the financialization of residential real estate transformed housing from a social necessity into a profit-driven commodity, leading to inflated rents, aggressive evictions, and diminished homeownership opportunities for families. While some policy makers propose banning corporate purchases, the brief highlights how similar restrictions have often failed or backfired by further constricting rental supply. Instead, we make the case for land value taxation (LVT), a proven and effective solution for curbing speculation and incentivizing development. By shifting taxes to land and untaxing improvements, LVT can achieve affordability without any of the market distortions associated with outright bans.

Introduction

As millions of residents struggle to afford rent or purchase a home, and homelessness is on the rise in many metro areas, housing affordability has once again taken center stage in public policy discussions in the United States. This happens against a backdrop of growing financialization of the housing market, with large institutional investors, private equity firms, and real estate investment trusts (REITs) buying up residential properties and turning them into high-rent assets.

Although institutional investors have existed since the mid-20th century, their rapid expansion into the single-family rental sector began only after the Great Recession, following the wave of foreclosures stemming from the subprime mortgage crisis[1].

Initially, these companies planned to hold the properties until the real estate market improved and then sell them to individual buyers. However, they soon realized the potential for generating higher returns by operating the units as rentals, issuing debt securities backed by the rental incomes, and selling equity to investors[2]. As a result of this shift, the single-family rental housing market, which had previously been a "mom and pop" industry, became increasingly financialized[3]. This transformation was facilitated by a regulatory vacuum and a largely permissive policy environment, as policymakers viewed investor participation as a means of stabilizing the distressed housing market following the 2007 financial crisis.

Corporate ownership of the US housing stock varies greatly by property type and location. Nationally, corporate entities owned about 27% of all rental units in 2021[4], with a higher concentration in large multifamily properties and specific single-family rental markets. For example, while they owned roughly 2-4% of all single-family rentals nationwide[5], the share of housing controlled by corporate entities in specific metro areas, such as Atlanta[6], is estimated at around 25 to 30%.

A recent study by the American Enterprise Institute claims that, despite the attention it has gained in the media, corporate ownership of the housing stock remains small compared to traditional ownership.

1. Dick Oosthuizen (2023), Institutional Housing Investors and the Great Recession. Working Paper 23-22, Federal Reserve Bank, Philadelphia, October 2023. Available at: https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/FRBP/Assets/working-papers/2023/wp23-22.pdf
2. John D. Johnsson (2023), The Rise and Impact of Corporate Landlords, Marquette Lawyer, Summer 2023 Issue. Available at: https://law.marquette.edu/assets/marquette-lawyers/pdf/marquette-lawyer/2023-summer/2023-summer-p48.pdf
3. Meredith Abood, "Securitizing Suburbia: The Financialization of Single-Family Rental Housing and the Need to Redefine Risk
4. Alexander Hermann (2023), 8 Facts about Investor Activity in the Housing Market, Housing Perspectives, July 18, 2023, Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies. Available at: https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/8-facts-about-investor-activity-single-family-rental-market.
5. Holden, Lewis (2024) "Corporate Landlords Put Pressure on Rents in Key Markets". Retrieved from: https://www.governing.com/policy/corporate-landlords-put-pressure-on-rents-in-key-markets#:~:text='Significant%20Market%20Power',he%20said%20in%20an%20email
6. Laurie Goodman et al. (2023) A Profile of Institutional Investor-Owned Single-Family Rental Housing, Urban Institute Report. Available at: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/2023-04/A%20Profile%20of%20Institutional%20Investor–Owned%20Single-Family%20Rental%20Properties.pdf

The study stresses that corporations own, in aggregate, less than 12.4% of the nation's housing stock, including small and medium-sized "mom-and-pop" firms with portfolios of fewer than 100 properties[7]. Moreover, only 25% of homes were purchased by investors of all sizes in 2024: Q1, of which only 1% is attributable to institutional investors, i.e., those owning 100 or more properties[8]. In fact, small and medium-sized investors accounted for over 90% of all investor home purchases. They also accounted for between 18-24% of single-family home purchases over the past two decades, according to JBREC, a share that has remained remarkably stable.

However, while the overall footprint of institutional landlords remains negligible nationally, there is a clear shift in the housing market, with a steady growth of housing units under corporate ownership. According to the 2021 Rental Housing Finance Survey data, the percentage of rental properties owned by individuals dropped by 8 percentage points over the last six years alone, from approximately 78 percent to just under 70 percent, reflecting a decline of more than 3.4 million properties[9]. Similarly, the percentage of units owned by individuals dropped from 48 percent to 37 percent over the same six-year period, a decline of over 4.5 million units[10]. The findings support the conclusions of the Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies covering the period 2001 to 2015. Taken together, these trends correspond to a significant change from 1991, when individuals owned 92 percent of all rental properties[11]. There is abundant evidence in the literature to suggest that corporate entities disrupt the housing market in significant ways[12]. Due to their preferential access to capital, institutional investors enjoy a significant funding advantage over small buyers, especially during periods when mortgage lenders cut back on lending. Furthermore, the securitization of rental income streams, first introduced (in high demand) by Blackstone in late 2013 and later by Colony Capital and American Homes 4 Rent, also offers greater liquidity to enable additional purchases.

Because the financialization model relies on the expectation that an asset will continue to increase in value and generate income, the shift of rental housing from a local, independent industry to a global investment asset class has led to the profit motive overshadowing housing stability. This change has resulted in rising rents, frequent evictions, and the displacement of low and middle-income families. In a 2017 special report, the UN warned about the entry of real estate investment trusts and asset managers such as Blackstone into urban markets, highlighting the broader adverse effects of financialization on housing as a human right[13].

Of course, housing insecurity in the US predates the rise of corporate landlords and could persist regardless of it. Severe rent burdens have long undermined many Americans' ability to afford basic necessities such as food, healthcare, and transportation[14]. Evictions, which occur disproportionately in the United States for non-payment of rent, have gained widespread attention as a key perpetuator of poverty. The growth of corporate landlords is only exacerbating these long-standing problems.

In this policy brief, we examine how the rise of corporate ownership of rental housing impacts the

7. Sissi Li et al. (2025), Institutional Investors in the US Housing Market: Myths and Realities
8. John Burns Research and Consulting, "Charting a 22-Year Roller Coaster of Investor Activity", 2024.
9. See Rental Housing Finance Survey, U.S. Department of Housing. & Urban Development. & U.S. Census Bureau (2024), https://www.census.gov/data-tools/demo/rhfs/#/?s_tableName=TABLE2 [https://perma.cc/6DWS-UA7D].
10. Rental Housing Finance Survey, supra note 5
11. Emily Badger, (2018), Anonymous Owner, L.L.C.: Why It Has Become So Easy to Hide in the Housing Market, Business Times (Apr. 30, 2018), https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/property/why-it-has-become-so-easy-hide-us-housing-market
12. Chuck Collins et al. (2024), Billionaire Blowback on Housing, Institute for Policy Studies and Popular Democracy. Available at: https://ips-dc.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/billionaire-housing-disruption-report.pdf/
13. UNHRC (2017) Report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. Available at: https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/34/51
14. oint Center for Housing Studies (2022), America's Rental Housing, 2022. Available at: https://perma.cc/5996-STJK

housing market and housing outcomes. In particular, we will look at how this phenomenon contributes to the housing crisis. We also review existing and proposed policy responses and make the case for of land value taxation as an effective solution to the problem.

1. Understanding the Rise of Corporate Landlords

Over the past twenty years, corporate landlords have gained significant control over the U.S. housing market. After the 2008 financial crisis, private equity firms and institutional investors purchased thousands of foreclosed homes at discounted prices, converting them into rental properties[15]. Companies like Blackstone (through its subsidiary Invitation Homes), Tricon Residential, and American Homes 4 Rent now own hundreds of thousands of single-family homes across the country.

The rise of corporate landlords in the single-family rental industry has been attributed to changes in household formation and consumer preferences, as well as increased demand stemming from the foreclosure crisis and tightened mortgage lending standards. Early studies highlighted shifts in consumer preferences, particularly among millennials, who are choosing to rent more and "diversifying their assets" away from housing, leading to a rise in rental housing and a decline in homeownership[16]. For example, according to Invitation Homes, between 2006 and 2016, single-family rental households grew by 35% from 11 million to 15 million, and the homeownership rate fell from a high of 69.2% in late 2004 to 63.5% in 2016. Single-family rental companies therefore claim that, given changing demographics and a decreasing supply of affordable homeownership opportunities, rental demand will only increase over time[17].

Additionally, during and after the Great Recession, declining consumer demand and rising unemployment caused a scarcity of profitable investment opportunities. Investors responded by seeking alternative outlets to "park" their money outside the productive economy. The search for profits amid declining production and economic stagnation gave rise to what economist David Harvey described as "capital switching" from traditional investment outlets to single-family rental housing[18]. During this period, large institutional investors made an unprecedented incursion into the housing market. Between 2011 and 2013 alone, it is estimated that institutional investors and hedge funds acquired approximately 350,000 bank-owned single-family homes[19]. For comparison, in 2011, no U.S. investor owned more than 1,000 single-family homes[20]. The growth of Invitation Homes, a subsidiary of Blackstone, demonstrates how the market has changed. At its peak, the firm owned 82,500 single-family homes[21].

Investor acquisition of single-family homes for conversion to rentals persisted even after the Great Recession[22]. They acquired 28% of all single-

15. Government Accountability Office Report, May 2024, Information on Institutional Investment in Single-Family Homes. Available at: https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-24-106643.pdf
16. Meredith Abood (2017), Securitizing suburbia: the financialization of single-family rental housing and the need to redefine "risk".
17. Ibid. Note 11
18. Brett Christophers (2011), Revisiting the Urbanization of Capital, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, 101:6, 1347-1364. Available at: http:/ / dx.doi.org/ 10.1080/ 00045608.2011.583569
19. Elora Lee Raymond et al. (2018), From Foreclosure to Eviction: Housing Insecurity in Corporate-Owned Single-Family Rentals, Cityscape, Issue 161, (2018)/
20. House Committee on Financial Services., 117TH Congress., Memo 1 (Comm. Print 2022), https://perma.cc/KT8R-ATYN
21. Francesca Mari (2021), A $60 Billion Housing Grab by Wall Street, New York Times. Magazine, Oct. 22, 2021 Issue. Available at: https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/04/magazine/wall-street-landlords.html
22. Laurie Goodman and Jung Hyun Choi (2026), The Evolving Role of Single-Family Rental Investors—and How They Can Leverage Their Property Management and Rehab Capacity for Greater Impact. Available at: https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/evolving-role-single-family-rental-investors-and-how-they-can-leverage-their-property

family homes sold in the first quarter of 2022 and progressively employed aggressive strategies to acquire subsidized housing in desirable areas, with the intention of converting it to market-rate housing once rent restrictions expired.

The Federal Government also played a key role in the expansion of corporate landlords by offering incentives and structuring transactions to facilitate the acquisition of government and bank-owned distressed properties by institutional investors. This included indirect support through connecting large single-family home purchasers with capital markets. In certain instances, government assistance was provided as direct support, exemplified by generous financial guarantees. A prominent example is the billion-dollar loan to Invitation Homes, guaranteed by Fannie Mae[23]. Additionally, Freddie Mac extended substantial financial aid to support private equity's acquisition of rental housing. As a matter of fact, private equity-backed firms were behind 85% of Freddie Mac's biggest apartment complex deals.

Corporate landlords are viewed as a disruptive force in the housing market because they often operate under a different set of incentives and expectations than individual landlords. Private equity firms, for example, commonly promise high returns to investors over limited time horizons[24].
This results in pressure to rapidly increase profits from acquired assets, and this is achieved primarily through cutting costs and revenues maximization. Substantial evidence indicates that properties owned by investor landlords are more likely to fall into disrepair[25]. Other research also links corporate landlords to rising rents and the disproportionate eviction of lower-income residents[26].

Amount Borrowed	Closing Year	Borrower	Private Equity?
$1.8B	2017	Greystar	Yes
$1.5B	2013	Southern Management	No
$1.5B	2016	Lone Star	Yes
$1.5B	2017	Irvine Co.	No
$1.4B	2016	Starwood Capital	Yes
$1.4B	2016	Lone Star	Yes
$1.4B	2015	Lone Star	Yes
$1.3B	2016	Lone Star	Yes
$1.3B	2019	KKR	Yes
$1.2B	2016	Irvine Co.	No
$1.1B	2017	Starwood Capital	Yes
$1.1B	2017	Starwood Capital	Yes
$1.1B	2013	Goldman Sachs, Greystar	Yes
$878M	2015	Prime Group	Yes
$841M	2016	Brookfield	Yes
$816.1M	2015	Kayne Anderson	Yes
$804.8M	2021	Harbor Group International	Yes
$789.6M	2018	Harbor Group International	Yes
$750M	2018	Brookfield	Yes
$745.9M	2019	Brookfield	Yes

Fig.1: GSE support for corporate buyout of single-family homes
Source: Commercial Mortgage Alert

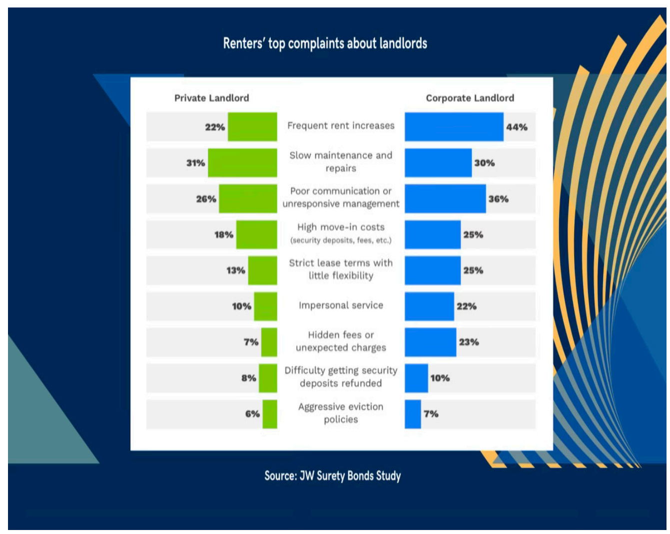


Fig.2: Renters' Complaints

23. NRCC Policy Agenda (2017) Rethink Fanny May and Freddie Mac's Backing of Private Equity Investors in the Single-Family Rental Market. Available at: https://ncrc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/08_local_rethink_fannie_mae_freddie_mac_single_family_rental_market_042617.pdf
24. Supra Francesca Mari at Footnote 19.
25. Fay Walker et al. (2025), Buying the Block: The Impact of Corporate Owners on Tenants and How to Promote Community Accountability. Available at: https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/ea/7f/ea7ff227-aa3b-499e-9c53-4058ca45ec99/lisc_kc_institutional_investors_report_2025_digital.pdf
26. Heather Vogell (2022), When Private Equity Becomes Your Landlord, ProPublica, Feb. 7, 2022. Available at: https://www.propublica.org/article/when-private-equity-becomes-your-landlord

2. The Root Cause: The Financialization of Rental Housing

The financialization of rental housing refers to the growing influence of financial entities, such as real estate investment trusts (REITs), asset managers, and pension funds, that buy and manage rental properties to generate returns for investors. According to economist Gerald Epstein, financialization means “the increasing role of financial motives, financial markets, financial actors and financial institutions in the operation of the domestic and international economies[27]”.

This process involves turning housing from a primarily social good and a basic human right into a financial asset, seen as a commodity for investment and profit. When housing becomes financialized, the focus shifts from providing stable, affordable homes for people to maximizing profits for investors, often at the expense of tenants.

In a financialized housing market, corporate landlords hold several structural advantages. They gain access to cheaper institutional financing, often pay in cash, and benefit from early access to listings and influence over local policies[28]. Firms also use innovative financing methods, like bundling many homes into a single investment package and using expected rent payments as collateral to borrow more[29].

These tendencies do not only drive prices up and crowd out many first-time buyers from the market; they also encourage short-term profit-seeking at the expense of long-term community stability, exacerbating instability in housing markets[30].

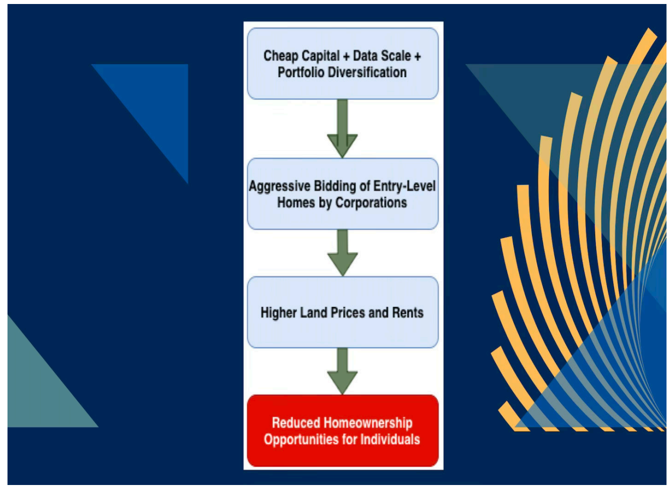


Fig 3: Financialization and homeownership

Furthermore, studies show that although the growing financialization of housing has increased mortgage lending, it has not always been matched by a corresponding rise in construction and has actually created supply shortages driven by rentier strategies employed by housing-market insiders and private developers[31]. To better clarify this idea of housing financialization, let us examine some of its main features.

- Commodification → Housing is increasingly treated as a commodity, bought and sold for profit, rather than as a basic necessity.
- Investment Focus → Financial institutions and investors become major players in the housing market, seeking to maximize returns.
- Derivatives and Securitization → Complex financial instruments, like mortgage-backed securities, are used, further disconnecting housing from its social function.
- Global Capital Flows → Housing markets become

27. Gerald Epstein (2015), Financialization: There is Something Happening Here. Working Paper Series, Political Economy Research Institute, Issue # 394, August 2015.
28. Private Equity Stakeholder Project – Tools for Tracking Corporate Landlords. Available at: https://pestakeholder.org/report-series-tools-for-tackling-corporate-landlords/.
29. John, P. Ruehl (2025), “The Corporate Takeover of Housing”, Rozenberg Quarterly, July 12, 2025.
30. Sophie Bandakar (2025), “The Rise of Institutional Investors in the US Rental Housing Market”. Journal of Public and International Affairs, August 7, 2025. Available at: https://jpia.princeton.edu/news/rise-institutional-investors-us-rental-housing-market
31. Sebastian Kohl (2021), “Too much mortgage debt? The effect of housing financialization on housing supply and residential capital formation” Socio-Economic Review, Volume 19, Issue 2, April 2021, Pages 413–440, https://doi.org/10.1093/ser/mwaa030/

> integrated into global financial flows, making them susceptible to international economic trends and investment strategies.

Empirical studies have established a link between the rise of corporate/institutional landlords and faster rent increases, worsening housing insecurity, and the displacement of communities[32]. The table below provides a schematic comparison of housing by ownership purpose. It shows a clear contrast between the financialized model and traditional ownership, which views housing primarily as a social good.

CHARACTERISTICS	HOUSING AS A SOCIAL GOOD	HOUSING AS A FINANCIAL ASSET
Primary Purpose	Shelter and community	Investment and profit
Key Players	Individuals, families, local communities, government	Financial institutions, investors, corporations
Focus	Affordability, stability, quality of life	Return on investment, asset appreciation
Outcomes	Stable communities, secure housing, equitable access	Rising prices, housing insecurity, potential displacement

Fig. 4: Shifts in housing policy and outcomes

3. Corporate Landlords and Housing Outcomes

Corporate landlords raise housing costs through algorithmic pricing, exploitative fees, and evictions. They also reduce housing supply by crowding out the market, leading to families being evicted from housing opportunities..

3.1. Rent inflation and price gouging

Corporate landlords use sophisticated algorithms, such as RealPage's YieldStar software, to artificially inflate rents by coordinating pricing strategies across properties[33]. These tools analyze market data to push rents to the highest possible levels, often ignoring tenants' ability to pay. Studies show that properties owned by corporations raise rents faster than those owned by non-corporate owners, exacerbating affordability crises in cities such as Atlanta, Phoenix, and Los Angeles[34].

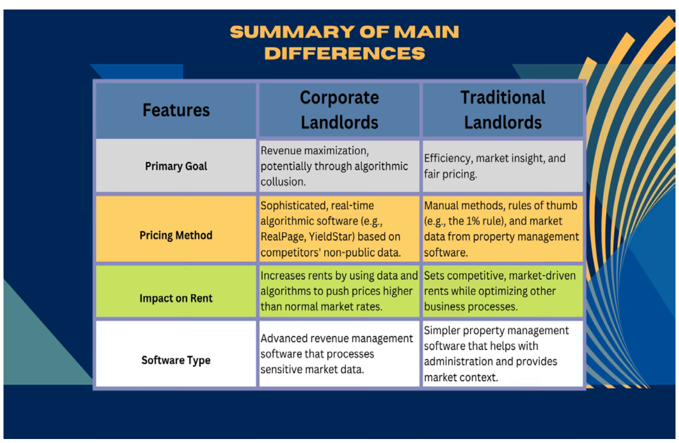
Rent-setting algorithms are also associated with higher rates of eviction. According to Camden Property Trust's CEO Ric Campo, a client of RealPage, adopting RealPage's rent recommendations increased "turnover rates" by 15 percentage points, meaning tenants had to find new apartments due to untenable rent increases[35].

Here's how it works: Landlords across local markets share private data about their rental properties with RealPage, including current rents, available square footage, and vacancy rates. RealPage then uses this data, along with publicly available information, to estimate the supply and demand for rental housing in specific geographic areas and unit types. It recommends rent and occupancy levels aimed at maximizing not only the landlord's revenue but also the earnings of all RealPage's clients in the market. This system allows landlords to collaborate to limit supply and raise rents without explicitly sharing data, exploiting a loophole in laws prohibiting collusion and price-fixing. Essentially, they form a cartel to keep rental prices high. Landlords working with RealPage follow its recommendations about 90 percent of the time[36]. RealPage controls the cartel's

32. Fay Walker et al. (2025), Buying the Block: The Impact of Corporate Owners on Tenants, and How to Promote Community Accountability. Available at: https://www.lisc.org/media/filer_public/ea/7f/ea7ff227-aa3b-499e-9c53-4058ca45ec99/lisc_kc_institutional_investors_report_2025_digital.pdf
33. March 2024 Press Release: The Justice Department sues RealPage for Algorithmic Pricing that harms Millions of Americans. Available at: https://www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/justice-department-sues-realpage-algorithmic-pricing-scheme-harms-millions-american-renters
34. Harvard Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2023
35. Amy Edelin (2024), Arizona Attorney General Sues RealPage, Landlord Over Alleged Rent Price-fixing Scheme. Phoenix Business Journal February 28, 2024.

behavior by penalizing those who ignore its advice, including removing landlords who deviate too often. The result is inflated rents and higher profits for corporate landlords and RealPage, at tenants' expense. In 2022, a Congressional subcommittee reported that "renters in institutionally owned single-family rental homes often experience higher rent increases, inflated fees, and decreasing quality of housing over time[37]."

Both corporate and traditional (smaller, independent) landlords utilize rent-setting software, although larger corporate entities tend to rely more heavily on advanced, algorithmic pricing tools. This difference is at the core of ongoing lawsuits and investigations into algorithmic price-fixing in the rental market. Unlike corporate landlords who require a broad market perspective, smaller landlords tend to focus on local, comparable properties when setting prices.



SUMMARY OF MAIN DIFFERENCES

Features	Corporate Landlords	Traditional Landlords
Primary Goal	Revenue maximization, potentially through algorithmic collusion.	Efficiency, market insight, and fair pricing.
Pricing Method	Sophisticated, real-time algorithmic software (e.g., RealPage, YieldStar) based on competitors' non-public data.	Manual methods, rules of thumb (e.g., the 1% rule), and market data from property management software.
Impact on Rent	Increases rents by using data and algorithms to push prices higher than normal market rates.	Sets competitive, market-driven rents while optimizing other business processes.
Software Type	Advanced revenue management software that processes sensitive market data.	Simpler property management software that helps with administration and provides market context.

Fig. 5: Corporate vs. Traditional Landlords

3.2. Reduced homeownership opportunities

Corporate landlords have increasingly reshaped the U.S. housing market by aggressively acquiring singlefamily homes, particularly in highgrowth metropolitan areas. Through cash offers, bulk purchasing, and algorithm-driven acquisition strategies, institutional investors are able to crowd out first-time and moderate-income homebuyers, intensifying competition for a finite stock of entry-level housing. This surge in investor demand places upward pressure on both home prices and rents, further eroding housing affordability and narrowing pathways to homeownership for households seeking to build longterm wealth.

Empirical research supports the conclusion that institutional investment in singlefamily housing materially reduces opportunities for owneroccupancy. A study covering 2022 and 2025 estimates that for every home purchased by an institutional investor, the supply of homes available to owneroccupiers declines by approximately 0.23 units[38], illustrating a measurable crowdingout effect. While the study also notes that increased housing construction or divestment by smaller investors could partially offset these impacts, such supply responses have thus far failed to keep pace with investor acquisition rates in many regional markets. As a result, the displacement of wouldbe homeowners has been most pronounced in neighborhoods where housing supply is constrained, and demand is strongest.

The scale and acceleration of institutional ownership further underscore its growing influence. According to a 2024 report by the Government Accountability Office, no investor owned more than 1,000

36. Heather Vogel (2022), Rent Going Up? One Company's Algorithm Could be Why. ProPublica, October 15, 2022.
37. Committee on Financial Services, June 23, 2022 Memorandum. Available at https://www.congress.gov/117/meeting/house/114969/documents/HHRG-117-BA09-20220628-SD002.pdf
38. Joshua Coven (2025), The Impact of Institutional Investors on Homeownership and Neighborhood Access. Available at: https://www.philadelphiafed.org/-/media/frbp/assets/events/2024/housing-demand-workshop/7c_InstitutionInvestors_Coven
39. Hangen, F., & O'Brien, D. T. (2024), Linking landlords to uncover ownership obscurity. Housing Studies, 40(4), 940–965. https://doi.org/10.1080/02673037.2024.2325508

singlefamily rental homes as recently as 2011. By 2015, however, institutional investors collectively controlled between 170,000 and 300,000 such properties, a figure that rose to roughly 450,000 homes within the following seven years[39]. By mid 2022, institutional investors of varying sizes accounted for a significant share of the single-family rental market in many cities, particularly across Sunbelt states.

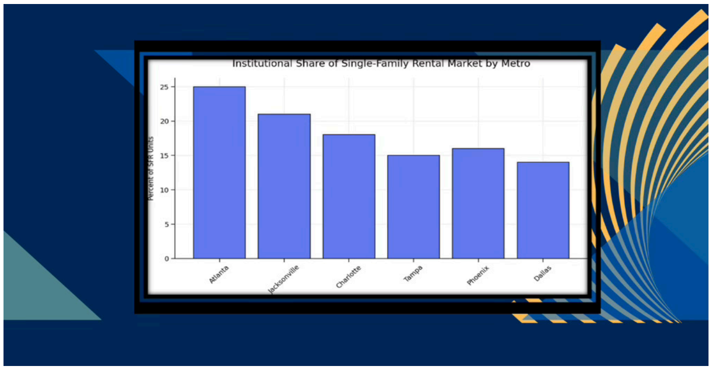


Fig 6: Top 6 metro areas by share of single-family homes

This rapid consolidation contributes to what scholars increasingly describe as a "rentership society," in which starter homes are permanently removed from the ownership market, wealth accumulation through home equity becomes less attainable, and households are locked into longterm rental arrangements with profitmaximizing corporate landlords rather than local owners.

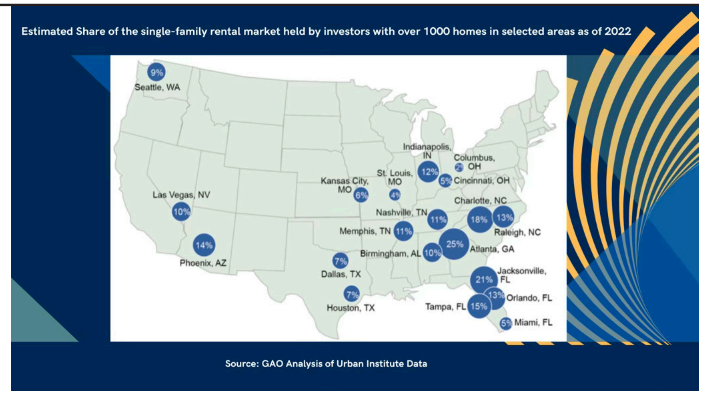


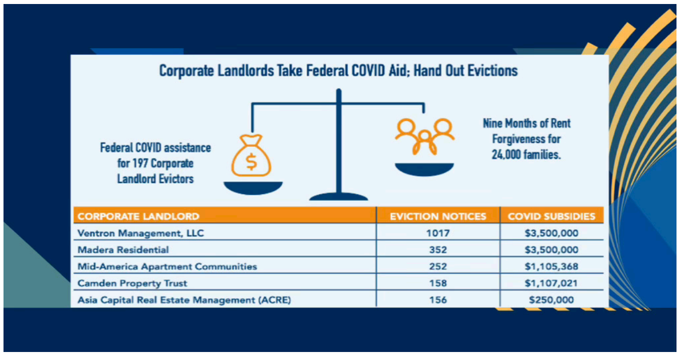
Fig. 7: Share of single-family homes owned by large investors by State

According to a recent survey, 93% of Americans believe that corporate ownership makes homeownership less accessible, and one in three say they have given up on buying a home due to competition from corporate buyers[40].

3.3. Exploitative fees and evictions

Corporate landlords frequently impose excessive fees (e.g., late fees, maintenance charges, and mandatory "convenience fees" for online payments) that disproportionately burden low-income tenants. Additionally, they are more likely to pursue aggressive eviction strategies compared to smaller landlords[41], contributing to housing instability[42]. A study on the Boston housing market shows that corporate landlords file evictions at two to three times the rate of small landlords and for less money owed and more often as a rent collection strategy[43]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, many corporate landlords continued filing evictions despite federal moratoriums, even after receiving tax breaks and other government subsidies[44], highlighting their profit-driven approach.

40. JW Surety Bond Study, March 2025 – The Corporate Landlord Effects
41. Henry Gomory (2022), The Social and Institutional Contexts Underlying Landlords' Eviction Practices. Social Forces, Volume 100, Issue 4, June 2022, pp 1774–1805, https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soab063
42. Bruce Katz and Ben Pries (2023) The Rental Market Has Changed for the Worse, Government Must Respond. Nowak Metrofinance Lab Newsletter, August 24, 2023. Available at: https://drexel.edu/nowak-lab/publications/newsletters/2023/rental-market/
43. Henry Gomory (2021) The Social and Institutional Underlying Contexts Landlord's Eviction Practices. Social Forces, June 2021, Vol. 100. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/soab063
44. Jobs with Justice Education Fund (2021), "Corporate Landlords Pocket Federal Sweetheart Deals, Subsidies and Tax Breaks While Evicting Struggling Families." https://www.jwj.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/JWJEDU_Report_TaxpayerSubsidizedEvictions_Jan2021_V4.pdf



CORPORATE LANDLORD	EVICTION NOTICES	COVID SUBSIDIES
Ventron Management, LLC	1017	$3,500,000
Madera Residential	352	$3,500,000
Mid-America Apartment Communities	252	$1,105,368
Camden Property Trust	158	$1,107,021
Asia Capital Real Estate Management (ACRE)	156	$250,000

Fig.8: Subsidized Evictions
Source: Jobs with Justice Education Fund (2021)

3.4. Neglect of property maintenance

While raising rents, corporate landlords often cut maintenance and repair costs, resulting in subpar living conditions. Tenants report delays in repairs, mold growth, and unsafe housing in buildings owned by large investment firms[45]. Since these landlords operate remotely and prioritize shareholder profits over tenant well-being, tenant complaints are often overlooked[46].

4. Banning Corporate Landlords: Will it Work?

Weak regulatory frameworks have facilitated the rise of corporate landlords. Unlike in some European countries with strict rent control and tenant protections, many U.S. states limit local governments' ability to enact strong rent stabilization laws. Moreover, such measures (where they exist) are not designed to address the relatively new phenomenon of corporate landlords. They can also distort the housing market by discouraging the development of additional units[47]. Additionally, tax loopholes such as the 1031 Exchange allow corporate landlords to avoid capital gains taxes when reinvesting in real estate, thereby further promoting speculative buying. Recent efforts aim to restrict or ban corporate acquisitions of single-family homes, along with measures to encourage their gradual withdrawal from the single-family housing market. Many of these efforts have faced challenges before local legislatures, causing regulatory efforts to shift toward the federal level. In March 2026 Senators Warren and Scott proposed the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Act. This comprehensive bipartisan bill passed the Senate with a vote of 89 – 10 aims to boost housing supply, improve affordability and streamline regulations to encourage and facilitate housing construction. Section 901 of the bill titled "Homes for People, Not Corporations" would restrict the purchase of single-family homes by large institutional investors that directly or indirectly own at least 350 single-family homes.

While a ban or a restriction on corporate purchase of single-family homes is politically appealing, policy wise, housing experts caution that it could weaken property rights and discourage future investment in the housing sector, potentially reducing housing supply over time[48]. Moreover, and as Daryl Fairweather of Redin noted, a potential issue with a ban targeting large corporations landlords, is that mid-sized or "mom-and-pop" investors could take their place, meaning the same homes will still be used as rentals rather than sold to individual buyers[49].

In Europe, several cities have taken steps to ban corporate landlords in an effort to make housing affordable to their residents. Berlin for instance

45. Senate Banking, Housing and Housing Affairs Committee, March 25, 2026. Senator Warren's letter to Bradley A. Hill President and CEO of MAA. Available at: https://www.banking.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/20260325lettertomaareinstitutionalinvestorshousing1.pdf
46. Sukhdip Purewal Boparai and Will Dominie (2024), Corporate Wealth vs. Community Health: How Corporate Landlords' Profit-seeking Strategies harm health. Available at: https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/67cafbff6880dabe1f2342b0/680eb5364c805875962dfeec_CorporateWealthVCommunityHealth_HIP_2024-2.pdf
47. Konstantin A. Kholodilin (2024), Rent control effects through the lens of empirical research: An almost complete review of the literature. Journal of Housing Economics, Vol 63, 2024.
48. Joe Gyourko (2026), The Ripple Effects of Banning Institutional Purchases of Single-Family Rental. Brookings, February 23, 2026. Available at: https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-ripple-effects-of-banning-institutional-purchases-of-single-family-rentals/
49. Daryl Fairweather (2026) Banning Corporate Landlords Won't Fix the Housing Affordability Crisis. Building More Homes Just Might. Redfin News, January 7, 2026 Issue. Available at: https://www.redfin.com/news/banning-investors-pros-cons/

adopted in September 2021 a non-binding resolution via referendum to expropriate properties from large corporate landlords. Though the measure passed by a majority of nearly 57%; years of political delays have prevented its implementation with opponents arguing that it would cost billions to the taxpayer and the government struggled on how to implement the expropriation without facing legal challenges[50].
Another variation of such restrictions is Copenhagen's "Anti Blackstone Law", passed in 2020 to limit foreign private-equity firms from rapidly raising rents in the city. The law mandates a five-year waiting period for new landlords to increase rents following property acquisitions in an effort to cool investment speculation[51].

However, the most radical implementation of a corporate ban to date is the Dutch "By to let ban" law of 2022 which prevents investors from purchasing home to rent out. A recent study by a group of scholars shows that while the law has translated into increased homeownership for middle class families, it has also made rents unaffordable to lower income tenants[52]. In other words, the rollback of corporate landlords opened homeownership opportunities for the affluent middle class but caused housing insecurity for low-income tenants who were forced to move to other cities[53].

The existing empirical evidence therefore seems to undermine the conclusion that a corporate ban would make housing affordable when supply is constrained. What is more likely is a replacement effect, with smaller landlords or affluent individual buyers filling the vacuum left by large institutional landlords.

5. Targeting the Root Causes of Housing Unaffordability: Land Value Taxation

While public policy has recently focused on banning or regulating corporate ownership in the single-family housing market, the evidence suggests that these measures (assuming they overcome legal challenges) are unlikely to address the ongoing housing crisis. Six years after some municipalities in the Netherlands have enacted restrictions on corporate landlords, home prices have not decreased, but with far less rental stock, rents have skyrocketed, pushing low-income people out of key cities. The Dutch example clearly indicates that removing corporate demand does not lead to greater affordability if the underlying causes of the supply shock remain unaddressed. Land value taxation can help governments address the bottlenecks that suppress supply and incentivize speculation bringing housing within the financial reach of communities.

Land value taxation is grounded in long-standing public finance theory. Land supply is fixed, and its value largely reflects external social factors such as public infrastructure investment, population growth, local economic growth, and zoning decisions. As a result, taxing land rents is widely regarded as economically efficient and minimally distortionary compared to taxes on labor or capital improvements[54].

By shifting the propertytax base away from buildings and toward land values, LVT increases the cost of holding valuable land independently of development intensity while eliminating penalties on construction, rehabilitation, and densification. In other words,

50. Alexander Vasudevan (2021), Berlin's Vote to Take Property from Big Landlords could be a Watershed Moment. The Guardian, September 29, 2021, Issue. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/sep/29/berlin-vote-landlords-referendum-corporate
51. Hettie O'Brien (2022), The Blackstone Rebellion: How One Country Took on the world's Biggest Corporate Landlord. The Guardian, September 29, 2022, Issue. Available at: https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/sep/29/blackstone-rebellion-how-one-country-worlds-biggest-commercial-landlord-denmark
52. Mark Francke et al. (2025), Buy to Live vs. Buy to Let: Homeownership and Residential Sorting in Housing Markets. Available at: https://ssrn.com/abstract=4480261
53. Ibid
54. Richard F. Dye and Richard W. England (2010), Assessing the Theory and Practice of Land Value Taxation, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Available at: https://www.lincolninst.edu/publications/policy-focus-reports/assessing-theory-practice-land-value-taxation/

taxing land penalizes holding land vacant and drive down its price while untaxing buildings encourages more construction activity. The LVT framework directly targets speculative strategies that rely on land appreciation rather than productive and efficient housing provision.

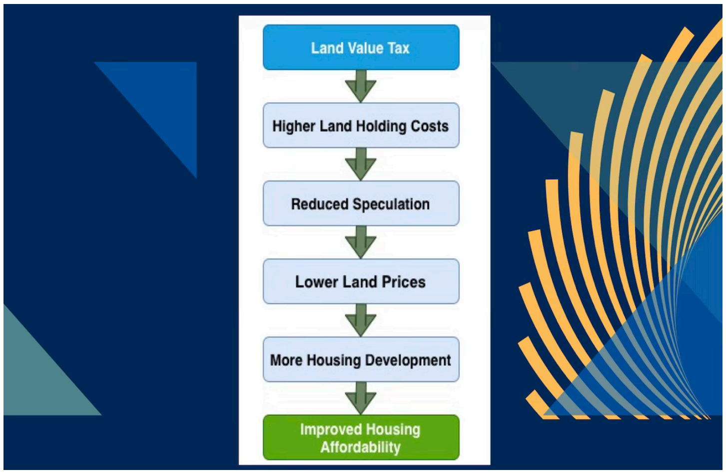


Fig.9: How LVT shapes incentives for affordability

Land value taxation is likely to impose a comparatively greater fiscal burden on institutional investors in the single-family rental market than on owner-occupants. Large institutional portfolios are structurally more exposed to broad-based land value taxation because tax liabilities would scale with the land value embedded across an extensive set of holdings. Accordingly, land value taxation would bear more heavily on business models oriented toward long-term capital appreciation and speculative holding than on forms of ownership grounded primarily in housing consumption or occupancy[55].

Furthermore, it is well documented in academic literature that traditional property taxes penalize improvements and often reward underdevelopment[56]. In contrast, LVT applies the same tax burden to equally located parcels regardless of whether land is vacant, underimproved, or fully developed. Empirical studies of landweighted property tax reforms show increased development intensity and reduced land hoarding, particularly in highdemand urban areas[57].

For institutional landlords, this would reduce incentives to hold singlefamily homes primarily as appreciating financial assets and is likely to encourage a withdrawal from the single-family housing market more effectively that a forced disinvestment implemented via a government ban.

Large financial firms also benefit from lower borrowing costs, diversification across large portfolios, and the ability to internalize appreciation gains at scale. Land value taxation neutralizes many of these advantages by imposing unavoidable, locationbased tax liabilities that scale with land value rather than leverage or financial sophistication[58]. Owneroccupants and small landlords who derive value primarily from housing consumption rather than speculative resale are relatively less exposed, reducing asymmetries in bidding power and competition.

Since it exempts buildings and improvements from taxation, LVT lowers the marginal cost of constructing new housing, rehabilitating existing home and intensifying land use especially when combined with the lifting of zoning restrictions. Evidence from cities in Pennsylvania that adopted landheavy property tax structures indicates increases in development activity without corresponding increases in housing prices[59].

55. Dakota B. Walker et al. (2024), Land Stewardship and Development Behavior under an Ecological Impact-Weighted Land Value Tax Scheme: A Proof-of-Concept Agent Based Model. Land 2024, 13, 1795. Available at: https://doi.org/10.3390/land13111795
56. Land Value Tax Fact Sheet – Federal Highway Administration. Available at: https://www.fhwa.dot.gov/ipd/fact_sheets/value_cap_land_value_taxes.aspx
57. Steven C. Bourassa (1990) Land Value Taxation and Housing Development: Effects of the Property Tax Reform in Three Types of Cities. American Journal of Economics and Sociology, Vol. 49, Issue 1, January 13, 1990. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1536-7150.1990.tb02264.x
58. Sebastian Hanson (2022), Institutional Investors in the Single-Family Housing Market: Where did they come from, Where did they go? Available at: https://scholar.google.com/citations?view_op=view_citation&hl=en&user=wWYAjUEAAAAJ&citation_for_view=wWYAjUEAAAAJ:u5HHmVD_uO8C
59 . Steven C. Bourassa (1990), Footnote 37

Unlike restrictive interventions such as corporate landlord bans, LVT aligns affordability objectives with incentives for housing production and longterm occupancy; increasing supply without rewarding speculation.

CONCLUSION

The housing landscape for tenants in the United States has changed since the Great Recession. While it was once common to rent from a local "mom and pop" landlord, rental properties are increasingly owned by corporate entities, a trend that has not slowed down. Corporate landlords face different economic incentives and pressures and often operate with less transparency, hiding behind complex ownership structures not easily tracked by traditional title registries. Evidence shows that corporate owners are frequently poor stewards of rental housing, and tenants across the United States face high levels of housing insecurity. Recent government action to address the corporate incursion into single-family rental housing has prioritized command-and-control regulation to rein in this phenomenon. However, the evidence from cities that implemented such restrictive policies is at best mixed and should serve as a cautionary tale for what not to do, rather than a precedent to be emulated. While the corporate takeover of housing is a perilous proposition, it also happens against a backdrop of decades of neglect and policy failures that have caused a disconnect between the supply and demand for housing. One promising policy is land value taxation, as it holds the potential for unlocking supply by taxing land which would drives down land prices, as it simultaneously incentivizes development by untaxing buildings. Unlike a ban on corporate landlords, LVT would alter incentive structures without restricting investment (as opposed to speculation) or suppressing housing supply. When community generated land rents are socialized, housing becomes de-financialized and house prices would fall accordingly, improving the prospects for homeownership and affordable rents.

ANNEX 1: LOCAL INITIATIVES TO RESTRICT CORPORATE LANDLORDS IN THE UNITED STATES

State	Bill	year	goal	status
California	AB1240	2025	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor that owns more than 1000 single-family homes can purchase.	Failed
	AB2584	2025	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can purchase and lease.	Failed
	AB1116	2026	Eliminates the 1031 Exchange. A tax loophole that allows investors that own at least 50 homes to outbid individual homebuyers	Pending
	SB1212	2025	Restricts institutional investors from purchasing a single-family home that has been listed for fewer than 60 days.	Failed

State	Bill	Year	Goal	Status
Georgia	HB555	2025	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can purchase	Withdrawn
Maryland	SB510	2025	Imposes an excise tax on the acquisition and excess ownership of certain single-family homes by an institutional investor	Withdrawn
Minnesota	SF365	2023	Prohibits institutional investors from purchasing a single-family home and converting it to a rental property	Failed
	HF685	2023	Same as SF365	Failed
	HB2687	2025	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can purchase	Failed
	SF3173	2025	Same as HB2684	Failed
New Jersey	AB5424	2025	Imposes a fee on institutions owning certain unproductive residential properties.	Pending
New York	A3009C	2025	Establishes a ninety-day waiting period before an institutional investor can purchase a single- or two-family home	Passed
	SB1572	2025	Imposes a tax on certain institutional investors who fail to dispose of excess residential units	Pending
Nevada	SB395	2023	Limits the annual number of properties an institutional investor can purchase	Vetoed
	SB391	2025	Same as SB395	Failed
North Carolina	HB1010	2025	Limits the number of rental single-family homes an institutional investor may purchase in a county	Pending
Texas	SB443	2025	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can purchase	Failed
Virginia	SB1424	2025	Prohibits the future purchase of single-family homes by institutional investors and requires current investors to dispose of their assets by 2035	Failed

State	Bill	year	goal	status
Washington	HB1732	2025	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can purchase	Failed
Wisconsin	AB213	2025	Prohibits institutional investors from purchasing single family homes within the state	Pending

ANNEX 2: RESTRICTIONS ON CORPORATE LANDLORD: AN INTERNATIONAL COMPARISON

Country	Scope	Bill	Goal	Outcome
Denmark	Copenhagen	Blackstone indgreb (The Blackstone Law)	Instituted a 5-year waiting period for new landlords before rent hikes and banned corporate landlords from paying tenants to vacate apartments.	• Caused a withdrawal of large investors • Improved tenant rights • Prices remained high due to supply shortages
Germany	Berlin	Non-binding Referendum	Expropriates corporate landlords and prevent future corporate acquisitions of local housing stock.	• Not in effect
Netherlands	Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, The Hague, Eindhoven, Groningen, Almere, Breda	Opkoop-bescherming (Buyout Ban)	Limits the number of single-family homes an institutional investor can purchase.	• Improved homeownership rates • Prices remained high • Fewer homes available for rent causing rent spikes and a renter exodus
Spain	Barcelona	Catalan Decree of 2022	Imposes a ban on tourist rental apartments by 2028. A 2025 ruling of the Supreme Court upheld the city's plan to phase out all short-term licenses by 2028.	• No impact on housing supply • Rental supply fell by 19% • Rising rents • Landlords switching to seasonal rentals
USA	All 50 States	The 21st Century Road to Housing	Limits acquisition of single-family housing by large institutional investors. Plans to boost housing construction nationwide.	• In effect since July 11, 2026

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