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MHAction staff are happy to help with any part of your action planning! If you'd like assistance, please contact Shandra, MHAction's Organizing Director, by emailing Shandra@mhaction.org.

Action overview, purpose and context

Problem:

Corporate real estate investors are hurting our communities by placing economic strain on low-income families, seniors, veterans and disabled people, causing displacement, and making our communities less safe and less healthy by cutting back on maintenance and infrastructure improvements. MHAction members are seeing this happen in their manufactured home communities, and members of our partner organizations, New York Communities for Change, Tenants and Neighbors, and the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment are seeing similar patterns in their rental housing.

Background:

Over the past 20 years, manufactured home communities increasingly have gone from “mom and pop” businesses to ownership by large, multi-state corporations. The increase of corporate ownership has brought with it an unsustainable business model that prioritizes short term investor profit over the needs of communities, including increasing lot fees and decreasing investment in infrastructure.

This trend has worsened over the past few years, since the foreclosure and financial crisis of 2008 housing affordability has become a national problem. From 2009-11, there was a twenty percent increase in the number of families who had to spend over half their income on housing costs,¹ and according to a 2016 report issued by the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) the average American tenant would have to earn at least \$20.30 an hour in order to afford a modest and safe two-bedroom rental home, without spending more than 30% of their income on rent and utility costs.² This data translates into more and more families desperate to find an affordable place to call home.

Corporate investors are profiting off this crisis and the lack of affordable and safe options for working families and people relying on social security or disability payments, pulling in rent increases that have outpaced inflation, wages, and Social Security benefits.

Solution:

Manufactured homeowners and renters nationwide have decided enough is enough. These corporate owners now own communities, apartments and individual homes across the country, and are using the same playbook everywhere; raising rents, decreasing services, and acting like people don't matter. It's time for the communities impacted by these companies to unite to draw attention to the harm behind the corporate profits.

¹ http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/BosticHughesSalazar_CISP13.pdf

² http://nlihc.org/sites/default/files/oor/OOR_2016.pdf



This April, across the country, manufactured homeowners will be taking action to clean harmful corporate business practices out of their communities. We’re undertaking an important “spring cleaning” to call for an end to real estate investment practices that prioritize investor profit over the needs of people living in the properties they own. First and foremost, our communities are our homes. Everyone deserves access to affordable, safe, healthy housing

Manufactured homeowners will be linking arm in arm with homeowners, renters and tenants in cities and urban areas who will also be taking action in their communities against corporate landlords. By standing together tenants and manufactured homeowners can draw attention to predatory corporate practices that are harming our families and communities. We’ll be presenting a united front fighting for our communities and neighborhoods.

We’re calling for the corporations that own our communities to take responsibility for the impact of their business practices, and we’re calling for local, state and federal policies that protect affordable housing and prioritize the needs of our communities.

Use this action toolkit to hold a “spring cleaning” action in your community on or around April 10th. Email pictures and stories from your action to Shandra@mhaction.org so we can share them on our action page, and check out the page to see what others are doing across the country!



Press Release Template

Use the template below to create a press release to inform local news outlets about your action. MHAction staff are more than happy to help if you’d like assistance creating or editing your press release. Please reach out if you would like assistance.

For Immediate Release

Day of the week, month date year

Contact:

your name – phone number, email address

What: very short (a few words) description of your action

Where: action location

When: date and time of action

Who: Describe your group in a couple words. Are you an HOA? A group of concerned residents? Seniors, veterans, families?

Local Manufactured Homeowners Participate in National Day of Action

Residents of (community name) are joining tenants and manufactured homeowners nationwide to call for an end to real estate investment practices harming their communities.

City, State –Manufactured homeowners and apartment tenants nationwide are coming together for some spring cleaning to remove harmful real estate practices from their communities. They are calling for an end to predatory residential real estate investment practices that are tearing apart communities and causing economic insecurity, displacement, and unhealthy and unsafe living conditions.

Insert long quote from a local manufactured homeowner on conditions in their community.

Themes to highlight:

- Increased lot rent
- Decreased maintenance/potential health hazards
- Difficulty communicating problems to property owners
- Lack of respect, financial hardship.
- End quote with sentence on why it’s important for manufactured homeowners and tenants to stand up together and demand change



Paragraph describing your local action.

- What will your group be doing?
- What is exciting or interesting about it?
- Remember, press will be interested in covering stories or events that:
 - a) Have an interesting visual element
 - b) Have clear messaging that will be easy for their readers/viewers to understand,
 - c) Tell a compelling story

Wall Street firms have a tightening grip on almost every type of housing in the market and are raking in large profits from investments in affordable housing sectors while working and low-income people are struggling to make ends meet. From affordable housing complexes in urban areas to manufactured home communities in rural and ex-urban regions, large corporate entities are buying up neighborhoods. Diverse communities nationwide are finding they face similar problems, caused by the same landlord playbook.

Manufactured home communities, primarily located in rural areas, are an important source of affordable homes³ for over 20 million people.⁴ Residents of manufactured home communities are older and poorer than the general population: 33% are over 65 and more than 24% fall below the poverty line.⁵

Provide additional background information on the local issues your organization is fighting against, additional quote.

³ *General Characteristics by Units in Structure - All Occupied Units, 2013 American Housing Survey, accessed via factfinder. census.gov 9/15/16*

Median monthly housing cost for manufactured housing units: \$501

Median monthly housing costs for all housing units: \$891

CFPB report: Manufactured-housing consumer finance in the United States, September 2014, Pg. 7

⁴ *“America’s trailer parks: the residents may be poor but the owners are getting rich” The Guardian 5/3/15*

⁵ *General Housing Data - All Occupied Units (NATIONAL) 2013 American Housing Survey, updated February 24th, 2015, accessed 9/15/16. Percentages calculated from data for groups of 21 or more manufactured homes, this is most accurate representation of what manufactured home community normally refers to.*



Action Talking Points

- Everyone deserves safe, affordable housing. Working families, seniors on fixed incomes and veterans shouldn't have to worry about losing their homes and their community support networks. We shouldn't have to choose between paying rent and buying food. This isn't the America we believe in.
- Corporate investors are taking wealth out of our communities, they are coming in and buying up manufactured home communities, apartment buildings and single family homes and raking in huge profits from low and middle income people. Housing is a public necessity, it shouldn't just be a tool to line the pockets of wealthy investors regardless of the consequences to our communities and are wider economy.
- We're standing up today with people across the country to clean these predatory investors out of our communities. We don't like their business practices, and we think it's time our community's needs were prioritized over their profit margin.
- We're calling for an end to unsustainable lot-rent and rent increases, poor maintenance and unlivable conditions, and displacement. Most of all we're calling for respect. We are people, families, neighbors, communities and our needs matter. We're not just line items on a profit ledger.
- These extractive business practices only benefit corporate CEOs, private equity fund managers, and investors. Their model harms millions of Americans, and pulls money out of our local economies. These companies need to stop and think about the lives they are destroying, and change their practices.
- If companies don't take responsibility for the harm they are causing, our representatives need to stand up to them and enact policies that will protect our communities.
- Local elected representatives should investigate local options to protect manufactured home communities, such as lot fee stabilization ordinances and zoning. Federal representatives should expand the power of the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau to regulate manufactured home community owners and expand the power of HUD to ensure safe affordable housing is available for all who need it.
- It's time to work together to clean up the real estate investment industry, and create a housing sector that works for everyone.



Action Ideas

- Ask everyone in your community to place the attached “window sign” in the window of their home. Take pictures of signs in windows, and of a group of all of you holding signs, send to local papers along with press release. Copy and paste the following links to download window signs.
 - Window Sign #1: <https://mhaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Spring-Cleaning-Sign-1.pdf>
 - Window Sign #2: <https://mhaction.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Spring-Cleaning-Sign2.pdf>
- Circulate a petition in your community calling for changes you want to see, submit it to your manager. If you would like to circulate an online petition MHAction can help set it up, an online petition could also be circulated to supporting friends and family in other parts of the country.
- Hold a “letter to the editor” campaign. MHAction can help you set up an online template that will allow people to quickly and easily send letters to the editor, you can then email the link to members of your community, or other supporters.
- Gather a delegation of manufactured homeowners to visit an elected official (local, state or federal). Ask them to support a specific local policy, or have a general conversation with them about the importance of protecting affordable housing. You could print out the stories of manufactured homeowners from across the country that are posted on MHAction.org/stories, and use them to explain why you want to see more regulations to protect everyday people from predatory real estate investors.
- Gather outside the entrance to your community with brooms, dustpans and signs with slogans related to spring cleaning, such as:
 - “we’re cleaning bad business practices out of our community”
 - “No more predatory business practices”
 - "Spring Cleaning, time to sweep predatory business practices out of our communities"
 - “Clean up your business practices (community owner name)”
- Hold a call-in day, gather all participants and take turns calling your community’s owner, asking them to make a specific set of changes. You could also hold a call-in day to contact a local elected official, county health department, etc.
- For help brainstorming or planning an action, contact MHAction.

Action Prep Checklist

- Email or call MHAction organizing director Shandra at Shandra@mhaction.org or 313-444-0897, to register your action and request any necessary support.
- Identify core group of people, at least 3, to plan the action. They may assign other tasks to a wider group of people.
- Decide what you are going to do:
 - What do you hope to accomplish through the action?
 - What do you want people to understand from participating in or witness the action?
- Choose a date, time and location
- Set a goal for how many people you want to participate
- Create a recruitment and outreach plan. How will you let people know about your action and encourage them to participate? When will you do this?
- Assign someone to “bottom line” the action. This person will make any last-minute decision that must be made if there is not time to consult with other leaders, will be the ultimate point of responsibility for the action.
- Edit the Press Release Template and send to local press outlets. Consider whether anyone in your group has press contacts. You may also want to send a letter to the editor in advance of the press release to build more interest.
- Assign one or more people to deal with logistics for the day of the action. How are people getting to the action location? What materials will you need at the action? Do you need an alternate plan in case of bad weather? Do you need to bring water or snacks? Is there a nearby location with a public restroom?
- Assign a Press Point Person for the day of the action. Make sure they have MHAction talking points, and are also prepped on any local talking points you have developed. Encourage your press person to practice talking points, and their personal story, and role play interviews with another leader. You may also want to assign someone to post update on the action to social media.
- Have Fun! To build a strong movement for justice in your community, you need to build strong relationships between members of your community, and it’s important to make sure your group is enjoyable for people to participate in, even though you are working to address very serious and important problems in people’s lives.
- After your action make sure to send any press, pictures, video, etc. to Shandra@mhaction.org so it can be posted to our National Action page along with information from other actions happening across the country. Shandra will edit as necessary before posting, so don’t worry about making things perfect before sending.**

