

Mold, mice, and unexpected fees: Randolph tenants say living conditions worsen under corporate landlords

By **Mara Kardas-Nelson** Globe Staff, Updated November 18, 2025, 6:00 a.m.



Sugie Ali, a renter at Rosemont Square in Randolph, says her former unit flooded for two months after a pipe burst, leaving behind mold that she believes caused a chronic respiratory infection. She was later billed nearly \$7,000 for the damage despite saying it wasn't her fault. ERIN CLARK/GLOBE STAFF

RANDOLPH — In late spring last year, water began gushing out of the bathroom at Sugie Ali's two-bedroom unit at Rosemont Square, a large apartment complex.

“There was contaminated water everywhere,” she recalled.

A burst pipe triggered months of trouble. While waiting for repairs, Ali had no workable kitchen and had to shower in friends’ homes. She suffered from a chronic respiratory infection that she believes came from mold and the damp, and wound up in and out of the hospital.

She endured this for months, until Rosemont finally put her up in a hotel after she complained to the town’s board of health. She was then moved into a different, smaller apartment at Rosemont, which cost just over \$2,500 a month. She says the landlord tried to bill her nearly \$7,000 for repairs, but dropped it after the state attorney general’s office stepped in.

Her complaint is one of many that tenants have lodged with the town of Randolph since the 507-unit Rosemont Square was bought in 2020 by Waterton Residential, a Chicago-based real estate investor and property management company. Renters, many of whom live on modest incomes or receive housing subsidies, have repeatedly complained of unmaintained buildings, unresponsive management, and additional fees that total hundreds, sometimes thousands, of dollars a year.

A Globe review of court documents and records from the town’s health department shows Rosemont Square has the highest number of complaints and housing court cases of all the large apartment complexes in Randolph, a working-class suburb south of Boston where approximately 30 percent of people rent. Randolph also has the highest rate of eviction filings of all Massachusetts municipalities with more than 2,500 renters.

Several Rosemont Square residents shared documents, photos, and videos of poor conditions with the Globe. These included ants crawling out of electrical sockets, caved-in ceilings, mold, leaks, backed-up sewage, mouse droppings, and peeling floors.

Waterton and Rosemont Square management did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Residents of several other large Randolph properties have similar complaints. Many claim they were charged thousands of dollars in fees for a variety of additional services and infractions, which, if unpaid, can result in eviction. Lawyers, advocates, and residents say the poor conditions and accumulating charges can push tenants out, allowing landlords to rent newly empty units at higher prices.

It is notable, residents, advocates, housing lawyers, and town officials say, that these issues come in the wake of Randolph's large apartment complexes being purchased by corporate landlords.

"Every single large [apartment building] that we have, they're not locally owned anymore," said Town Manager Brian Howard. "Every one of them has been flipped multiple times."

When Helena Broleph-Harding moved to Rosemont Square in the late 2000s, the complex was owned by a lifelong Randolph resident, who had held the property for more than 30 years. "It was a beautiful community. I loved it," Broleph-Harding said.

After Waterton took over in 2020, she said, "things started falling apart": broken fire alarms and plumbing fixtures, mold, scalding hot water. Even getting a light bulb fixed took multiple calls and arguments, she said.

In December 2022, Sara Meola, a nurse who had moved into the complex in 2017, waited weeks to have a broken microwave and refrigerator fixed. In January 2023, a Randolph board of health inspection found several violations by Rosemont Square in Meola's apartment, including flies in her drain pipes, cracks in the ceiling, a broken front door knob, and a clogged bathroom sink. Meola eventually moved out when Rosemont sought to evict her over rent payments she said she withheld because the apartment was not maintained.

Imani Brown, who moved to Rosemont Square in 2012, said that after Waterton took over, mice were everywhere: in her son's bedroom, burrowing a hole in the hallway. Her sister moved into a separate Rosemont Square building across the street, and also had mice.

"They kept saying it was because of clutter," Brown said. "It's not because I'm dirty. It's because they literally have infiltrated the entire property."

The large number of complaints about Rosemont Square led the town to hire more staff, increase inspections, and issue fines when management was not in compliance. "I can't stress how seriously we take this," said Howard, the town manager.

Lakeyica Darget has been in an eviction battle for two years over conditions in her apartment. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Torn flooring inside Darget's apartment. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Another complex in Randolph owned by an out-of-state corporate landlord is the 172-unit Highland House. There, Lakeyica Darget said she's had regular infestations of mice and cockroaches and plumbing problems since she moved in six years ago. Photos and videos shared with the Globe show evidence of mice eating through toilet paper and food, and dead mice in the refrigerator.

When a Globe reporter visited her apartment in September, water was dripping from the ceiling light in her kitchen. Several floorboards were peeling off.

Darget relies on a wheelchair and since at least 2022 has asked to be moved to a first-floor unit, a request supported by Randolph's board of health and MetroHousing, which administers the housing subsidy she receives to help pay rent. She says the elevator has been broken several times, sometimes for hours at a time. Once, after waiting more than an hour for it to be repaired, she said, she crawled up four flights of stairs to her unit.

A representative from Highland House responded with "no comment" to a list of questions from the Globe. Connecticut Management did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

In addition to concerns about living conditions, many Randolph renters report being charged unexpected fees that were not included in their leases. Those include a fee to use the landlord's online payment system and to cover the landlord's

legal costs for eviction proceedings against them.

According to her lease, Ali faces a nearly \$260 fee if she is late on rent. She is also charged \$75 a month to have a pet, even though her cat has been approved by a doctor.

Her lease states Rosemont Square can also charge a “reasonable administration fee” for the billing of utilities, and a variety of trash-related costs, including “trash consulting/management costs,” “valet trash,” “trash contamination prevention,” odor control, and trash auditing costs, without outlining what those costs might be. Ali does not know if she has been charged the fees.

Rosemont Square appears to use a lease template from the National Apartment Association, which includes provisions that allow landlords to require tenants to have rental insurance and charge for pets, non-metered water, and the cost of the company’s attorneys in eviction cases. There is also a clause noting landlords can charge 25 percent over market rate when tenants stay past their lease.

Darget used her wheelchair to get to a bedroom inside her apartment. JESSICA RINALDI/GLOBE STAFF

Experts say that large corporate landlords are more likely to charge so many fees, which are not always listed on an apartment’s website or on renter sites such as Zillow, and can push up the cost of rent by hundreds of dollars. They are

not considered rental fees and thus not covered by housing vouchers for lower-income tenants who receive government subsidies.

Greg Vasil, chief executive of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board, an industry trade group, was surprised by allegations of fees from Randolph tenants. “The only thing that can be charged is first month’s rent, last month’s rent, security [deposit], and the cost of the key fee. No other fees can be charged under Massachusetts law.”

But legal experts say current Massachusetts law only restricts fees associated with moving in, but does not ban other fees that are tacked on to a lease or incurred after a tenant moves in.

“I am seeing over and over and over again fees that are mind-boggling,” Laura Camara, a lawyer at Greater Boston Legal Services who has represented tenants in Randolph, said. “[They add] up to significantly more than what I am paying for my three-bedroom, single-family home. How can that be?”

State Representative Amy Mah Sangiolo, a Newton Democrat, recently cosponsored [legislation](#) that would restrict late fees to the lesser of 5 percent or \$50, ban renewal and subletting fees, and clarify that attorneys’ fees can only be sought if a case goes in front of a judge, with the court reviewing fees.

(In housing court, renters and landlords are often encouraged to negotiate outside of a judge’s purview, which leads to financial settlements not reviewed by a court. Several Randolph tenants showed the Globe charges on their ledgers for thousands of dollars in legal fees after their landlord tried to evict them.)

Before she was elected in 2024, Sangiolo worked as a consumer specialist at the state attorney general’s office and had met with tenants of Rosemont Square in Randolph. As she sees it, the fees were included for a “simple reason: they make more profit,” she said, adding, “these junk fees are the cause of most evictions.”

Ali, the Rosemont Square resident, said she was incorrectly charged nearly \$500 for a water bill this past summer. She says that she called the front office 10 times to no avail, and that when she went to the front office, she was told it was a computer error, and had happened before several times.

“They always say, ‘Oh there was a problem with the computer, that was a mistake.’ But I keep getting messages about money I don’t owe.”

Months later, in October, management was still sending her the \$500 bill. That month, she filed several maintenance requests that she says remained unaddressed as of early November.

Meanwhile, Ali put her name on wait lists for several affordable senior housing facilities across Greater Boston. Each day, she imagines her name inching its way to the top.

“I just want out,” she said. “I don’t want anything to do with Randolph anymore.”

Jessica Ma, formerly of the Globe staff, contributed to this report.

This story was produced by the Globe’s [Money, Power, Inequality](#) team, which covers the racial wealth gap in Greater Boston. You can sign up for the newsletter [here](#).

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