

LAND USE + PLANNING, GOVERNMENT + POLITICS

# Community to be displaced in Belmont Apartment renovation



EMILY HAYS  
@amihatt

4 MIN READ

Thursday, April 11, 2019, at 10:03 AM



Delma Buchanan, lifelong Belmont resident, stands outside the Belmont Apartments.

Credit: Emily Hays/Charlottesville Tomorrow

SHARE



Delma Buchanan takes care of her neighbors, whether that means driving a neighbor with a disability to the grocery store or allowing a depressed friend to sleep in her La-Z-Boy chair after a midnight talk. She said that it does her good and gives her something to do.

The idea of losing that strong community is part of why Buchanan, a lifelong Belmont resident, was so shocked and saddened to see that her month-to-month lease at the Belmont Apartments in Charlottesville is being terminated.

### RELATED ARTICLES

[ALBEMARLE BEGINS AFFORDABLE HOUSING POLICY UPDATE](#)

[LYMAN STREET HOMES CLEAR FIRST HURDLE IN CITY COUNCIL](#)

[FRIENDSHIP COURT REDEVELOPMENT NOW TO INCLUDE ONLY AFFORDABLE UNITS](#)

“When I got this notice, the first thing I did was sit down, start crying and have a panic attack. It feels like you’re having a heart attack, and sweat just pours,” Buchanan said.

Buchanan said that she called her doctor and told him she really needed to see him.

“I could not drive, because I was afraid if I got in my car, I’d have a wreck. I was so jittery and out of it, so I got one of my neighbors to take me,” Buchanan said.

Buchanan said that she is one of 14 individuals and families in the apartments who were notified in March that their month-to-month leases will end on May 5. She said that, like her, approximately 10 were long-time residents of the buildings.

The apartment complex includes two two-story brick buildings at 1000 Monticello Road in the Belmont neighborhood. The Legal Aid Justice Center, which has offered to represent residents in case of eviction, met 13 residents through door-knocking, nine of whom said they had received notice to leave by May. The group of residents was racially diverse and most said that they lived on fixed incomes.



The Belmont Apartments were family-owned until 2018, when Core Real Estate purchased the property. This February, the apartment complex changed hands again when Piedmont Realty Holdings III LLC bought the property for \$2.75 million.

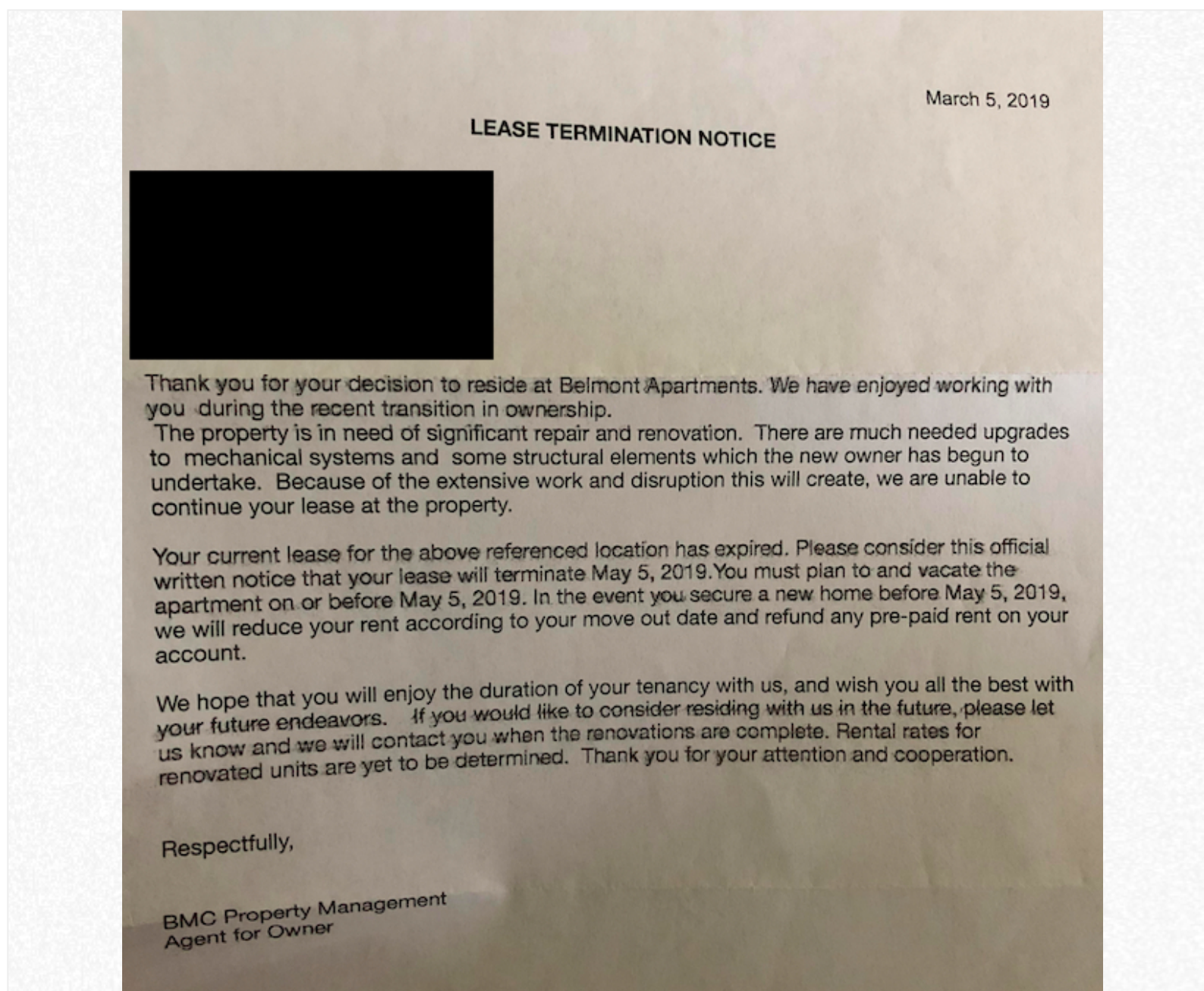
In a prepared statement, owner Drew Holzwarth said that he bought the apartment complex partially to provide necessary repairs.

“Unfortunately, the serious nature of the required repairs means that the work cannot be done while the apartments are occupied,” the statement said. “We hope the misinformation about our building can stop and people can begin to see this renovation for what it is — an effort to improve and repair a property desperately needing it.”

Buchanan agreed that her apartment needs maintenance. She said that her electricity bill climbed to almost \$300 last month because heat leaked out of the doors and windows.

Sarah Ballard, of BMC Property Management, which is managing the apartment complex, said that it is too soon to say what rents will be after the renovation, and it will depend on the costs of the repairs, which would include replacing windows.

“I think that’s everybody’s vision – that a landlord has more money than they do – but there are costs associated with being a landlord too. You have debt. You have an obligation to maintain a property,” Ballard said.



Some residents of the Belmont Apartments received lease termination notices on March 5.

Long-term residents like Buchanan rented the one- and two-bedroom apartments for between \$500 and \$800 a month.

According to a recent assessment of housing in the region, there's a scarcity of such apartments in Charlottesville and Albemarle County. Study author Partners for Economic Solutions found the average rate of one-bedroom apartments was \$968 on Zillow and \$1,044 on Craigslist, based on searches conducted on Dec. 15, 2018.

There are few protections for tenants like Buchanan. The property owners are respecting existing leases, but many leases had expired in the transition between property owners.

Caroline Klosko, an attorney with Legal Aid who works on housing and criminal law, said that lawyers defending tenants have to focus on technicalities like the length of the notice period in eviction cases.

"You're not directly addressing the root of housing problems in Charlottesville, which is that rents are skyrocketing, and people are being displaced. On the individual level, there just isn't very much that you can do about that," Klosko said.

Ballard said that residents should call her if they have concerns about the notices. She said that she has called other landlords to find housing options for one resident and wants to connect residents to community services.

"Communication is key with any project like this. We are all humans. We do not want anyone homeless," Ballard said.

Buchanan has found an apartment that she is happy with. She likes her new landlord and said that the rent includes utilities, so her housing costs will stay approximately the same or decrease. Still, she said that rent is more than half of her monthly income and that it was the cheapest apartment she could find. She said that she hopes some of her neighbors will find places near her.

“I’m going on 73 years old, and who feels like moving? And then can’t get any help, you know?” Buchanan said.

## We're reimagining local news in Charlottesville

### → Reimagine with us

Our free, no-commitment newsletter delivers our latest local only headlines directly to your inbox, ad-free and paywall-free, giving you news on local topics you can use, share, and discuss. You'll also get invitations to Coffee Conversations and other in-person events on topics of local interest where you can interact directly with our journalists, local policy makers, and stakeholders. You care about local news - reimagine it with us.

### Sign up:




WRITTEN BY:  
**Emily Hays**  
@amihatt

Emily Hays grew up in Charlottesville and graduated from Yale in 2016. She covers growth, development, and affordable living. Before writing for Charlottesville Tomorrow, she produced a podcast on education and caste in Maharashtra, India.

### Topics in this story

GOVERNMENT + POLITICS

LAND USE + PLANNING

## Related articles



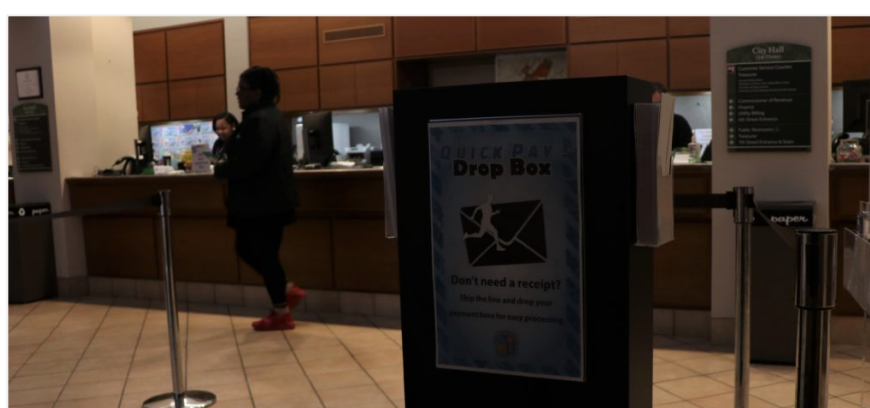
01.16.20 | LAND USE + PLANNING | 8 MIN READ

### Development Digest: Tech companies reserve space at Dairy Central

Two national-level technology companies are planning to settle into Charlottesville's 10th and Page neighborhood this spring and summer. [MORE](#)



EMILY HAYS  
@amihatt



01.14.20 | CLIMATE CHANGE | 5 MIN READ

### The city of Charlottesville owns a gas utility. How does it work?

Climate resiliency was one of the dominating topics in Charlottesville and Albemarle County's elections. Both localities also set emissions goals to become carbon neutral by 2050. So, where does the city-operated gas utility — which services both... [MORE](#)



CHARLOTTE RENE WOODS  
@charlottewoods