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# Annual Report

UNITED HOUSING  
CONNECTIONS



United  Housing  
CONNECTIONS

# From the desk of our CEO



## Wow – what a year!

In 2020, not just our organization, but our community, country and our world experienced a paradigm shift like we have not seen in modern history. Before January of 2020, life did not begin and end the day with concern over wearing masks, staying six feet apart or contracting and spreading a virus that has wreaked havoc on our physical, organizational, and global systems. Here at United Housing Connections, we closed our doors to the public and scheduled by-appointment-only visits with our clients and tenants. We quickly adapted to meeting almost exclusively in virtual environments – hello Zoom, Teams, and GoToMeeting. “Working remotely” has become the standard.

While our shelter providers have remained open providing nighttime shelter services, some have reduced their capacity due to social distancing protocols. Pre-COVID 19, our neighbors without stable housing could find local places to get in out of the heat or cold in our public libraries, soup kitchens or daytime shelters. COVID-19 has changed all that. Libraries are open to limited numbers of guests, our soup kitchens and daytime shelters are operating for limited hours, providing grab-and-go meals and limiting guest capacity in order to abide by COVID-19 protocols for unsafe gathering. Given these circumstances, our citizens experiencing homelessness are on our streets more often because they simply have nowhere else to go.

If the pandemic has shown a light on anything, it is the need for alternate homelessness service plans when natural disasters like the highly contagious Coronavirus occur – particularly when it comes to homelessness prevention, diversion, and outreach.

Yet, with every problem we face, there is always the silver lining of opportunity. We have seen our service community take on this COVID-19 challenge without hesitation, finding opportunities to collaborate, innovate and bring their expertise to bare to prevent homelessness and hunger, to care for those suffering and to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus among our most vulnerable population.

In December of 2020, in collaboration with Miracle Hill Ministries, PRISMA Health, DHEC, SHARE, United Ministries, Salvation Army, Triune Mercy Center, Greenville County and the SC Department of Administration, UHC helped open the doors of a 16-32 bed quarantine shelter for people experiencing homelessness and testing positive for COVID-19. The first month, we provided respite for 30 people, offering a room, a warm bed, food, clothing and medical care to prevent the spread of the virus among those experiencing chronic homelessness.

Since May of 2020, UHC and the Upstate Continuum of Care (CoC) have partnered with funders like the United Way of Greenville, the Greenville County Redevelopment Authority, The Greenville Housing Fund, Greenville County CARES Act Program, and the SC Department of Administration to distribute just under 3 million dollars in rental and utilities assistance to individuals and families at risk for eviction and homelessness. Certainly, with the current opportunities for vaccines there is light at the end of the tunnel; however, UHC and the CoC will continue our efforts to apply for and provide funds and connections to support services until the COVID-19 crisis is behind us.

As the lead agency for the Upstate Continuum of Care, a group of more than 80 homelessness service providers, UHC would like to thank all our agencies, churches, businesses, and citizens for stepping in to provide shelter, food, clothing and funds to help meet the needs of our community’s most vulnerable.

**Developing an Outreach Plan to Assist Those Experiencing Homelessness** - But, what else can be done? Plenty. UHC and the CoC, in partnership with the City of Greenville, Greenville County and shelter providers are working together to develop a plan that will create an outreach program staffed by a team of case management professionals, mental health professionals, shelter providers and city/county police officers to engage and connect our citizens experiencing homelessness to housing, services and other support systems. The program will begin with a survey of our citizens experiencing homelessness and a creation of a by-name list to help facilitate a coordinated effort to assist this vulnerable population. While the implementation of this plan will take some time, we believe it is the best and most effective way to engage and assist those living on our streets without a permanent home, as well as, extend the work of our partners already engaged in street outreach.

**Developing the HOME Again Program to House Families with School-Age Children Living in Hotels** - As the needs of our community grew as a direct result of the pandemic, our service community quickly realized the need to assist the growing number of families losing their housing and being forced to live in hotels or to live in their cars or other places not meant for human habitation. In an effort to stably house these families, UHC partnered with The United Way of Greenville and the Greenville Housing Fund to establish programming and funds to move these families out of these environments and provide rent stabilization funding, case management and connection to resources to ensure long-term housing and stability. This program is an addition to UHC’s 8 permanent supportive housing programs currently in operation.

**Building Church Street Place at Poe Mill – 36 Units of Permanent Supportive Housing** - UHC and the SEARCHlight Initiative Campaign Cabinet fulfilled their promise to this community to raise funds to build 36 units of permanent supportive housing for people experiencing chronic homelessness and suffering with a disability. In December of 2020, the project received the final funds needed through SC Housing’s Small Rental Development Program.

We are grateful to all of you who support the work of UHC and the people we serve. We could not do this work without our volunteers, funders and partner agencies. Thank you, thank you for your support.



**Our mission is to connect people at-risk for, or currently experiencing homelessness with safe, sustainable and affordable homes.**

## Moving from homelessness to a home, can take a village.

Moving back to South Carolina with her husband, was a bold move, but one that resulted in his leaving the family and LeAundera found herself with three children, homeless. LeAundera recounts, “I was not your textbook homeless mother. I was college-educated, I was married, and my children were not dirty without clothes and shoes on.” But, life circumstances changed in an instant. She found a temporary, safe place to live with a friend, but she knew she could not stay indefinitely, and she was unsure of what to do next.

With credit issues, employment fluctuations, no childcare provisions and no familial support, this newly single mom used her meager savings to bounce from hotel to hotel but, the hotel stays quickly became cost prohibitive; so, she made another difficult choice – to live in her car.

Mentors in the Circles Program led her to UHC’s permanent supportive housing (PSH) program. UHC’s program provides tenants with the rights of tenancy and links people with very low income to voluntary and flexible supports and services.

With the assistance of UHC, LeAundera crafted a plan to become a homeowner after securing steady employment and working to raise her credit score from a 466 to a 726. LeAundera explains that “she went from homeless to hopeful and she could see the light at the end of the tunnel with the help of UHC.”



## UHC provides:

- Transitional housing for homeless youth
- Short-term rental assistance
- Oversight for the Upstate Continuum of Care (CoC) – coordinating and supporting homeless assistance programming in 13 counties

### Low- income housing rentals for:

- Literally homeless and chronically homeless
- Veterans • Seniors • Families • Mentally & physically disabled
- People battling substance abuse issues • Domestic violence victims

### Evidence- based housing solutions that include:

- Budget management
- Home care/maintenance
- Employment services
- Life planning / goal setting

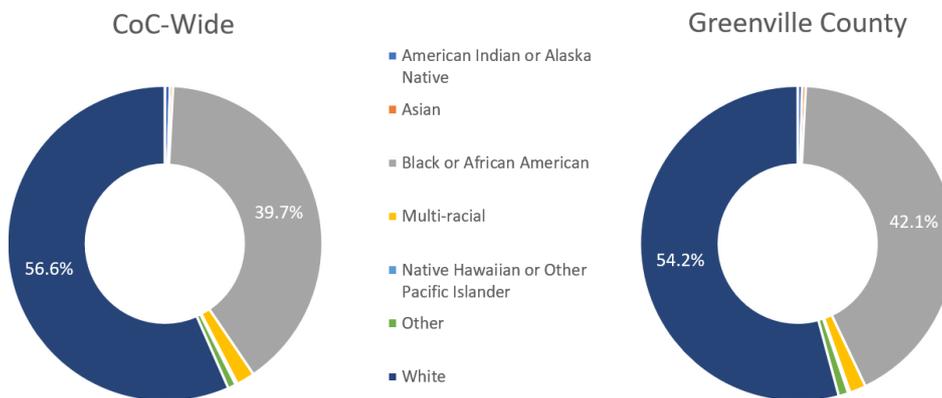


# Homelessness in the Upstate

Homelessness and housing instability continued to be pervasive in South Carolina in 2020, and the Upstate was no exception. According to the 2020 South Carolina Point-in-Time Count, **36%** of persons experiencing homelessness on any given night in South Carolina were in the Upstate.

When looking at a year-round perspective, **2,941** persons in 2020 received assistance from Upstate sheltered homeless providers.

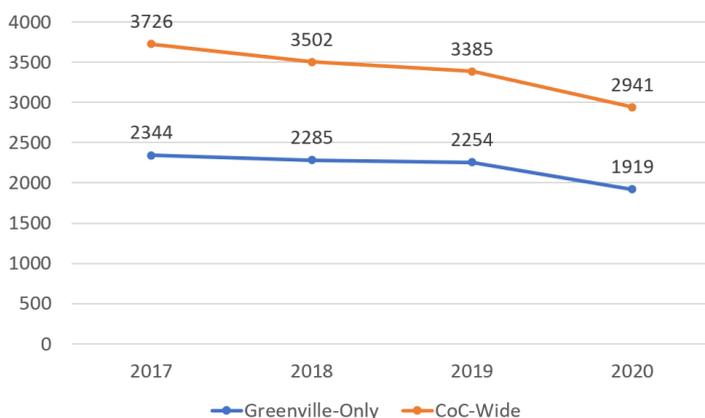
## 2020 Homelessness by Race



In 2020, **200 HOUSEHOLDS** completed an intake assessment. Of the 200 --

**129 were children**  
**242 were adults**

## Unique Persons Receiving Sheltered Services



The COVID-19 pandemic and the temporary reduction in shelter capacity provided a background for the decrease in persons counted as experiencing sheltered homelessness in the Upstate (see graph on left).

Despite the decrease observed in 2020 compared to previous years, nearly 3,000 people still engaged with shelter or transitional housing providers in the Upstate.

This figure does not account for the hundreds of unsheltered persons who were not engaged with shelter providers during 2020. Considering these factors, the need for homeless assistance remains high in the Upstate, particularly as society recovers from the impact of COVID-19.

## YOUTH TRANSITIONAL HOUSING

20

**TOTAL Individuals Served**

15

**Young Adults Served**  
(aged 18-24)

5

**Children Served**  
(children of program participants)

( data is derived from 10/1/2019 to 09/30/2020)

United Housing Connections offers 10 individually leased homes for youth experiencing homelessness as a transitional housing option. This program is designed to provide the interim stability and support to successfully move to and maintain permanent housing. Program participants who are between the ages of 18-24, reside in transitional housing with the intention of holding the lease independently at successful completion of the program.

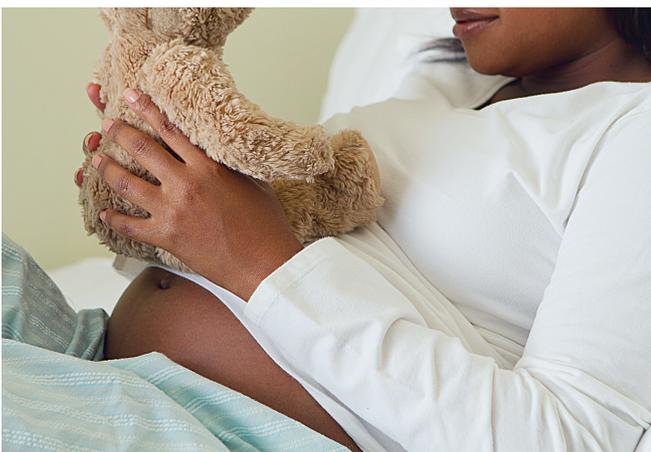
Intensive case management services are provided by UHC and are provided to help the youth, who have had few role models, set goals, find employment and create a plan to sustain their goals at the completion of the program.

Getting our youth who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness, off the streets and into stable housing gives them an opportunity to completely change the course of their future and become happy, healthy and thriving members of our Upstate community.

*Jenny\*, a pregnant teen in our transitional program, successfully secured housing assistance after being in the program 1 year and 5 months and with our help she has secured a place to live on her own.*

*UHC assisted Jenny in securing employment and finding reliable childcare. UHC provided additional assistance by securing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and access to vouchers for childcare on her behalf. Connecting Jenny to these services provided her the ability to be financially independent.*

*\*names have been changed to secure our tenants' privacy*



# Property Management & Development

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING SOLUTIONS

United Housing Connections offers an array of affordable housing options to qualifying individuals and families. To prevent at-risk families and individuals from entering into homelessness, we believe that affordable housing is crucial to the pathway of success. We own or manage **154** single family homes and we provide an additional **302** units of multiple family housing for special populations. These units are considered affordable homes and UHC is committed to maintaining and developing affordable housing in our community. UHC works collaboratively with SHARE, Human Relations, GCRA, Project Care, SPIHN (Spartanburg Interfaith Hospitality Network) and numerous other providers around the Upstate to ensure we present all options available to those in need.

### Housing serving low-income people with mental and/or physical disabilities (120 units)

Brookhaven Housing 12 units – Gaffney, SC  
Capps Villa Apartments 15 units – Spartanburg, SC  
Country Gardens Apartments 14 units – Moore, SC  
Cypress Park Apartments 14 units – Anderson, SC  
Draymont Housing 12 units – Spartanburg, SC  
Sunset Village 18 units – Fountain Inn, SC  
Reedy Place 23 units – Greenville, SC  
Stribling Place 12 units – Seneca, SC

### Housing serving low-income seniors (118 units)

Creekside Landing 36 units – Greer, SC  
Draymont Ridge 39 units – Spartanburg, SC  
Liberty Square 43 units – Spartanburg, SC

### Housing serving low-income families & individuals (64 units)

Arkwright Housing 8 units – Spartanburg, SC  
Twin Oaks Apartments 56 units – Greenwood, SC



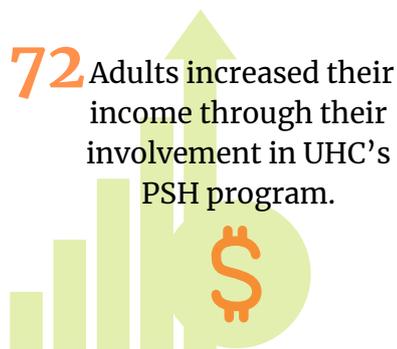
# Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) works!

PSH combines rental or housing assistance with individualized, flexible and voluntary support services for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities, or substance use. PSH units are often located in one home or building.

UHC sub-leases nearly 100 Permanent Supportive Housing units across 7 counties in the Upstate of South Carolina. We provide housing for approximately 173 individuals annually who are very low income and at-risk for or have previously experienced chronic homelessness.

## Persons Served with PSH

(data is derived from 10/1/2019 to 09/30/2020)



125

persons reported a mental health condition

48

persons reported a physical health disability

80

persons reported living with two or more disabling conditions

38

persons reported a chronic health condition

94%

of persons served remained housed in one of our units or were assisted in exiting to their own permanent housing.



# PSH works and we are developing more . . .

## *Church Street Place at Poe Mill*



Church Street Place at Poe Mill is planned as a **NEW, state-of-the-art** residential facility that will provide 36 studio units of PSH for adults who are experiencing chronic homelessness and suffering with serious mental or physical disabilities. The two-floor structure will include a community kitchen on each floor, as well as a common eatery, community space, office space and a lobby area.

The project is modeled after UHC's Reedy Place, and in partnership with Greater Greenville Mental Health, will provide housing and support services to help stabilize disabled residents and move them toward health and independence. Through the generous giving of local community groups, churches, individuals, businesses, and grant-makers, **5.4 million dollars** was raised to complete construction. The project is scheduled to be lease-ready by Fall, 2022.

## *Deb Richardson Moore Community Center*

The center will provide food, shelter and connections to treatment services, as well as a place to rest. The DRMCC will not only continue Deb's legacy of ministry, but also provide much-needed services to the individuals and families living in the Poe Mill Community who have little or no access to support services.

*Features of the center will include:*

- a large community space for meetings/trainings educational opportunities
- individual space for service providers to serve clients, healthcare, dentistry, mental health services, behavioral health services
- storage bins for our citizens experiencing homelessness to store personal belongings
- mailboxes to provide our homeless citizens with a mailing address
- a cafeteria and more.

UHC will launch a campaign during the second quarter of 2021 to raise funds to build the center. The center will be located at 50 Church Street and was designed by LS3P Architects. UHC is finalizing the project budget which will be revealed at the campaign launch with a very preliminary timeline for opening by the Fall of 2024.



Deb Richardson-Moore  
Community Center

# COVID-19 IMPACT

## Eviction Abatement & Rental / Utility Assistance

As COVID-19 ravished our community with evictions, UHC went to work. We were awarded over **\$3,169,500** from various housing funders to help keep people housed. As cases spiked quickly during the onset of the pandemic, it became clear that people who were living in shelters would be impacted. Shelter hours of operation were limited and people experiencing homelessness who exhibited symptoms or who had tested positive for COVID, needed a quarantine space. UHC led the charge to develop a collaborative quarantine shelter. Over **\$1,725,000** of the housing funds awarded from the SC Department of Administration ESG-CVII were used to open and operate the Quarantine Shelter.

UHC added staff and the impact of the funding also allowed us to partner and build relationships with numerous service providers and vendors throughout the Upstate. UHC hired an Intake and Administrative Support Specialist to conduct assessments for clients who were experiencing “literal homelessness”. We screened between 50-100 calls daily. To assist with the volume of incoming requests, a few well-trained, seasoned volunteers conducted follow up calls with tenants to collect needed documentation.

Low-income renters were losing their jobs or their hours were largely diminished by business restrictions. People were in dire need of both rental and utility assistance. Even with the hundreds of households UHC assisted, many people continued to struggle due to barriers they faced. The most frequent barriers we identified from clients requesting COVID-19 rent and utility assistance were their inability to provide complete documentation and communicate with us timely. Oftentimes, clients were not able to pay their cell phone bills, preventing consistent communication. Cell phones are invaluable to clients to ensure they are able to remain in contact and to complete the application process.

Without funding, many of our citizens would have been on the streets. UHC and those we served, and will continue to serve in 2021, owe a debt of gratitude to funders who understood the implications of what inaction would have on our community.

Thank you to The United Way of Greenville County, the Greenville Housing Fund, Greenville County Redevelopment Authority (GCRA), the Jolley Foundation, Greenville County CARES Act Fund and the SC Department of Administration who were amongst those who provided support.

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**People affected by COVID-19 related job losses and who received financial assistance were asked, “What are the details of your loss of employment?”**

**Below is a sample of their responses:**

*“I lost my job and was not at my job long enough to collect benefits and because of COVID, it was hard to find employment. I'm also a single father with 3 kids ages 9,8,5.”*

*“As a professor, I was not assigned a five-week class in July and have not been assigned a class this month as well.”*

*“I was a hotel bartender in Greenville, SC. I have been unemployed since March. The hotel has furloughed me until the occupancy at the hotel increases.”*

*“My daughter is high risk for contracting Covid-19 due to having RSV as an infant and she is having to attend virtual school. The school she is registered in has only been attending face-to-face one to two days a week depending on the number of Covid-19 cases in the county. Otherwise she has to be home.”*



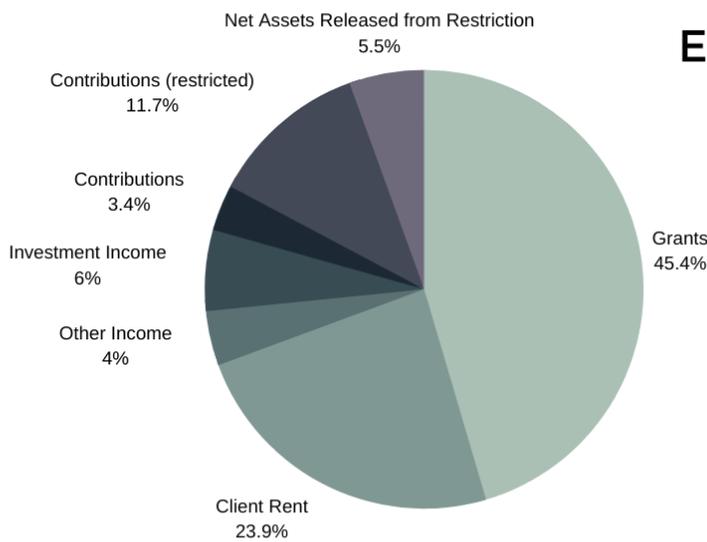
# Finance Report

During 2020, United Housing Connections was in a pivotal position to responsively distribute COVID-19 aid for rental and utility assistance through the Emergency Solutions Grant and Cares Act funding. As of this publication, UHC has distributed **\$814,203.36** and served **227** unique households. In addition, we received 3 allocations from United Way of Greenville County totaling **\$85,000**.

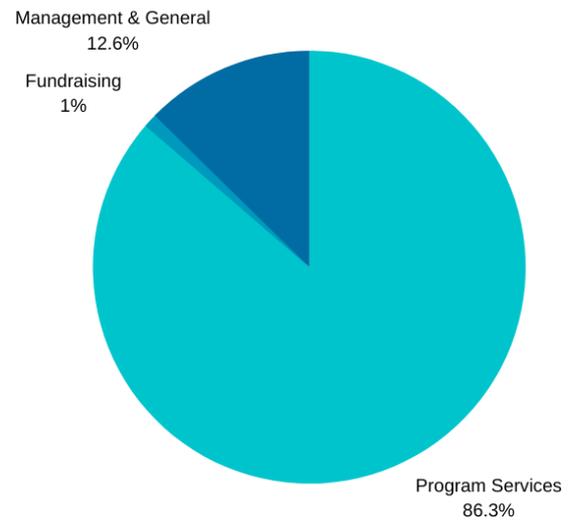
The impact of this funding will positively impact people into 2021.

The financial results for the fiscal year saw a **28% increase in revenue**. Revenues were strongly impacted with a 19% increase in unrestricted contributions, in addition to the nearly one million dollars donated to Church Street Place, a 36-unit affordable housing complex, that will break ground in 2021.

## Revenue \$5,451,253



## Expenses \$4,288,522



## Net Income \$1,162,731

\*As tied to FY20 Audit and encompasses UHC, SV, DR and sale of TO

# QUARANTINE SHELTER



Funding support for this project was awarded from the Department of Administration's Office of Economic Opportunity's (OEO), the Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program and Greenville County CARES Act funds. The quarantine shelter is located in the west wing of the White Horse Road Academy, which is a property owned by the Phoenix Center.

This unprecedented effort required unparalleled collaboration and cooperation amongst agency providers. Miracle Hill Ministries, United Ministries, Triune Mercy Center, The Salvation Army, SHARE, DHEC, Vital Care Ambulance Services and Prisma Health were partners in this massive undertaking.

58 individuals were served at the time of this report. Miracle Hill and United Ministries provided case managers 24 hours a day/7 days a week. PRISMA Health provided patient care, PPE, testing and nursing care. Vital Care Ambulance Service provided patient transport to and from the shelter. Case managers, with assistance from UHC and PRISMA Health social workers plan for the patients' exit to a safe, secure home or shelter.



The mission of the Upstate Continuum of Care (CoC) is to make homelessness brief, rare and nonrecurring.

The SC Upstate CoC was established in 2012 and it was formed by a group of relevant organizations within our 13-county geographic area set forth by HUD in the CoC Program interim rule.

As the designated HUD Continuum of Care lead agency for Upstate SC, United Housing Connections serves as the collaborative applicant for the HUD CoC program grant application process.

In addition, UHC serves as the collaborative applicant for the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) Administrator for the region. UHC partners with homeless service providers across the Upstate to collaborate and to leverage mainstream resources.

The CoC annually coordinates a Point-In-Time (PIT) count. The PIT Count is conducted on a single night in the first Quarter. This year's count was abbreviated due to Covid-19.

Visit [www.upstatecoc.org](http://www.upstatecoc.org) to learn more.



Home Again is a program designed to help working families who are currently experiencing homelessness and are residing in hotels, motels or staying with someone. They must be referred to the program by the McKinney-Vento Liaison from the school system in the counties that are eligible for the program which include: Greenville, Spartanburg, Anderson and Pickens.

The families referred must meet the income requirements, as well as, have children in school to be eligible to participate in the Home Again program. The families must have a barrier that prevents them from obtaining a lease on their own. The rent will be calculated based on the families' income and household size to determine the amount of assistance that can be provided.

As the household income increases, the amount of financial assistance provided will decrease, with the goal of the family paying their full rent and transitioning into a lease on their own.

Once housed, the families participate in case management services to help them begin the process of correcting the barriers that have prevented them from leasing units on their own. The Home Again team members are working to identify new landlords to provide more affordable housing units.

To date, the Home Again program has assisted four families in obtaining stable, affordable housing. All four families are participating in case management services to address the challenges that led to the barriers that prevented them from leasing on their own.



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