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They moved out of their apartment. And then came a year-long fight over disputed charges

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They moved out of their apartment. And then came a year-long fight over disputed charges

Tenant advocates say renters are being hit with questionable damage charges and 'junk' fees. In Dallas, a housing shortage gives landlords extra leverage

By **Lauren Nutall**

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Victoria Post poses for a photo in her house, Friday, Aug. 15, 2025, in Bedford.

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When Victoria Post first moved into Lakeside Urban Center Apartments in August 2023, she didn't know what to expect. Neither the 28 year-old nor her roommate had ever lived in an apartment.

With its waterfront view and full range of amenities, Lakeside Urban was a picturesque rental property in the upscale Las Colinas community.

What started as an ideal living situation for Post and her roommate has become a contentious nearly year-long battle over hundreds of dollars in disputed move-out charges following allegations of damage that have led to debt collection and threats to their credit scores.

Legal advocates who specialize in housing issues told *The Dallas Morning News* that experiences such as Post's are the reality for countless renters across the country. This is particularly true in Dallas, they say, because the city grapples with a persistent housing shortage that gives landlords an advantage.

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As a result, many renters are left to either scrape up the money to pay questionable charges or risk their credit scores. In some instances, the consequences are more dire.

“It’s not a joke that these post move-out charges contribute to homelessness,” said Stuart Campbell, Chief Legal Officer of the Dallas Eviction Advocacy Center.

For Post, it isn’t a matter of becoming homeless or even that she can’t afford to pay the charges. For her, it’s a matter of principle.

“It really honestly feels like I’m being bullied and cornered into paying this amount of money,” she said, “when I know I didn’t do anything wrong.”

The News reached out to both Lakeside Urban and its parent company, Greystar Real Estate Properties, which oversees more than 100 rental complexes in the Dallas-Fort Worth area. Greystar declined to comment for this story and Lakeside did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

In some ways, Post's ordeal began even before she moved in when she says she was presented with previously undisclosed fees upon signing her one-year lease. Such mandatory fees — often referred to by critics as “junk fees” — include pest control, trash valet and package delivery service.

After moving in, she encountered a leaking water heater that she said maintenance painted over. Then there was the toilet. It broke so frequently, she said, “Like the fourth or fifth time I called, they left me a note that said, ‘Well, just stop using toilet paper and you won't have this problem.’”

An unexpected bill

The real battle began in September 2024 — two months after Post and her roommate moved out.

Post's roommate returned to Lakeside to retrieve a package that had mistakenly been delivered. When she went to the front office to pick up the item, she was told that the two women had an outstanding balance of \$621.74, which included \$50.80 for a remaining water bill and \$570.94 for damage.

“We're panicking,” Post recalled, “cause we're like, ‘What do you mean we owe \$620?’”

An itemized list of charges included things such as anchor holes, primer, carpet buffer brushing and even carpet indentions.

The women countered with photographs of the deep-cleaned unit. Lakeside lowered the amount to \$308.80, including the \$50 water bill that Post had already paid by that point.

Post felt that the charges were still unwarranted. That's when she contacted her cousin, who is a real estate broker.

“I asked him about it and he said, ‘That's ridiculous. They can't charge you for leaving carpet indentions. That's just what furniture does to carpet. Give it 24 hours, it's gonna return to normal.’”

Post sent a detailed email to the property, and Lakeside said that they would forward the message to the appropriate manager. A month went by with no response.

Over the next few months, Post said she and her roommate found themselves in constant limbo. Their attempts to resolve the matter would be met with brief

responses from the rental agency followed by weeks of silence.

Post said that the only communication they'd receive were unexpected notices about the money they owed from various managers, each bill listing a new amount.

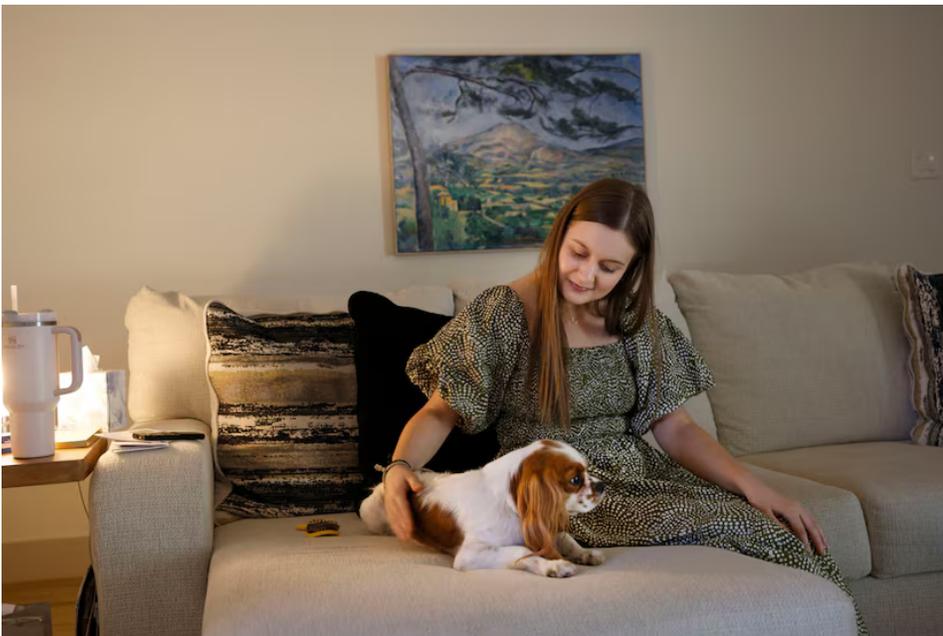
"Every time we try to dispute these charges," she said, "we get told it's a different amount of money every single time, which is exhausting."

As more time passed with sporadic responses from Lakeside and no resolution in sight, Post sent a final message that she would consider the matter resolved in October, citing the lack of communication.

Charges keep coming — and changing

Still, the invoices continued — now from Greystar's receivables department — and the amount changed each time.

Eventually, Post enlisted the help of her brother-in-law, an attorney. He also attempted to settle the matter, sending an email to Greystar formally disputing the charges and citing the Texas Property Code. Still, the invoices continued.



Victoria Post poses for a photo with her dog Benjamin in her house, Friday, Aug. 15, 2025, in Bedford.
CHITOSE SUZUKI / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

One invoice for \$308.80 became \$258.00, then dwindled to \$207.20. In March 2025, Post was even told that, if she paid \$180.60 before a specific date, then the department would consider the matter resolved.

"I don't even know how much they think that I actually owe them but I really just want them just to leave me alone," she said. "I mean, they're a corporation. They're worth billions of dollars and they're harassing me. I work in education,

like I'm not a billionaire. I'm not a millionaire.”

Greystar never responded. Instead, in May, Post and her roommate were contacted by a collections agency, Genesis Collections, claiming that they owed another amount, this time \$258.42.

The move puts the women's credit scores and rental history at risk.

This was a particular concern for her roommate. Her father was her guarantor at Lakeside and now his credit score is also on the line.

“She has been calling me and has been very stressed because her parents are helping her pay for PT (physical therapy) school,” Post said, “but now Lakeside or Greystar is coming after his credit score, which is gonna impact her ability to be able to keep going to school if they keep attacking them like this.”

A year into the dispute, collections is still contacting them.

Other renters in Greystar-managed properties have reported similar experiences.

The News reviewed over 200 Better Business Bureau complaints against Greystar and found that, over the past three years, the BBB has been inundated with similar reports against the property management company from across the country — claims of move-out charges that, when gone unpaid, result in threats to credit scores.

It's a tactic used by some management companies — leveling punitive charges against tenants until it culminates into sending these balances to debt collection agencies.

“It's an industry standard,” Campbell said. “Unless there's a local authority that's going to stop them from doing this, they're gonna do it and they're gonna do it all across the country.”

A failure to follow the process

Property management representatives, however, push back. They say disputes can arise from tenants not following procedure.

“Most disputes of this nature stem from tenants not following the move-out process,” said a statement from the Apartment Association of Greater Dallas. “Tenants are given clear guidelines in their TAA (Texas Apartment Association) lease agreements that are consistent with Texas Property Law, which sets out the standard for deductions.”

Move-out conflicts also often come down to a disagreement on what is considered regular wear and tear.

“From a property management perspective, move-out damage charges are intended to cover repairs or cleaning that go beyond what is considered normal wear and tear,” President Elect of the Institute of Real Estate Management Lisa Harris said in a statement. “The challenge is that ‘normal wear and tear’ can mean different things to different people, which is often where misunderstandings arise.”

Representatives say that actual damage can include broken fixtures, holes in walls, stains on carpets, or signs of excessive neglect, which require repair maintenance.

Harris also said that residents are often surprised by utility charges, which are some of the most commonly charged items and are billed in arrears.

Both property management representatives advise tenants to schedule move-out inspections to avoid confusion before vacating their units.

Feds sue over ‘junk fees’

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION, and
STATE OF COLORADO, *ex rel.* PHILIP J.
WEISER, ATTORNEY GENERAL,

Plaintiffs,

v.

GREYSTAR REAL ESTATE PARTNERS, LLC,
d/b/a “Greystar,” a limited liability company,

GREP GENERAL PARTNER, LLC, d/b/a
“Greystar,” a limited liability company,

GREYSTAR MANAGEMENT SERVICES, LLC,
d/b/a “Greystar,” a limited liability company,

GREYSTAR RS NATIONAL, LLC, d/b/a
“Greystar,” a limited liability company,

GREYSTAR CALIFORNIA, INC., d/b/a
“Greystar,” a corporation,

GREP SOUTHWEST, LLC, d/b/a “Greystar,” a
limited liability company,

Defendants.

Case No. 1:25-cv-165

COMPLAINT FOR PERMANENT
INJUNCTION, MONETARY
JUDGMENT, CIVIL PENALTY
JUDGMENT, AND OTHER RELIEF

The Federal Trade Commission filed this complaint accusing Greystar of alleged “junk fees” in January 2025

THE DISTRICT OF COLORADO

According to the National Multifamily Housing Council, Greystar manages over 900,500 units in multi-family residential rental buildings and complexes, as well as adult and student communities across the country. This makes it the largest multi-family rental property manager in the United States.

Beyond the BBB complaints, which critics caution are not always substantiated, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) filed a complaint against the real estate giant in January, alleging that it uses deceptive promotion to hide the actual

prices of its units.

“The FTC is suing Greystar for deceptively advertising low monthly rents only to later saddle tenants with hundreds of dollars of hidden junk fees,” FTC Chair Lina M. Khan [said in a news release](#) following the complaint. “The FTC should continue its work taking on corporate landlords that use illegal tactics to jack up rent, exploit tenants, and deprive Americans of safe and affordable housing.”

The complaint alleges additional mandatory fees are not revealed until a person is far into the application process.

In some extreme cases, the FTC states, these subtle fees are only disclosed in the dozens of pages of one’s lease agreement.

Post shared that she experienced this during her own tenancy, noticing unexplained charges that would be tacked onto her monthly bills. She also said that she was charged mandatory fees that were not shown to her until she had been approved for her two-bedroom, two-bathroom apartment, after already sinking hundreds of dollars into the application and upon reviewing her lease.

“I remember being confused and being like, ‘Well, we didn’t call for pest control,’” she said. “And so I don’t know why we got that charge. And then I remember asking after we had lived there if we could opt out of the trash valet because I would just take it to the dumpster. I don’t mind doing that, but no, you can’t opt out of it.”

Such fees, critics contend, are an attempt by real estate property managers to garner more money from unsuspecting renters.

Mary Spector is Professor of Law and the Associate Dean for Experiential Learning at SMU Dedman School of Law. Her work focuses on the rights of consumers and tenants.

Spector shared that the influx of junk fees is a detriment to both Dallas renters and landlords and not just because of Greystar.

“I think that the addition of junk fees in the rental housing market has a negative impact in two ways: One, it has an anti-competitive effect because it makes the price seem lower so that landlords who are not charging those fees separately and including those things in their basic rent appear to be charging a little bit more, and may be overlooked in favor of the ones that aren’t disclosing them and give an unfair-appearance of a lower price.

“The second effect is on the tenants themselves, who may be lured into an apartment and, once they see all these fees, they realize it’s a whole lot more than they bargained for. And it could be one illness away or one temporary layoff away from not being able to afford the apartment.”

A particular problem in Dallas

According to Campbell, real estate management companies that level these fees as well as excessive move-out damage charges threaten the Dallas housing ecosystem.

“The reason I hesitate so much is because, even if I gave the best advice, they’re gonna get screwed for the most part because there’s a shortage of housing,” he said. “And if I’m an SMU kid or whatever, if I work at one of the bars downtown and I wanna live in Bryan Place, I wanna live in Saint Thomas, I’m gonna have to rent from one of these big massive conglomerates that are worth billions of dollars a year. And if I’m renting from them, it’s gonna be in my lease that they can screw me over with these junk fees.”

He shared that renters also don’t have leverage to negotiate the terms of their leases or oppose these fees because they are at a disadvantage.

“It’s not like you can go into the property management office upon getting approved and say, ‘You know what? I’m gonna strike this page of the contract. I don’t agree to that,’” he said. “They’re gonna say, ‘Okay, see you. We’ve got a line of 10 other people that want this apartment.’”

It leaves Dallas renters vulnerable to the whims of property managers, according to Campbell. “That’s because it’s a landlord’s market and it always will be as long as there’s this housing shortage that we have in Dallas.”

His advice to consumers? Back everything up.

“Really, the only advice I would have then is to document everything,” Campbell continued. “To save your own butt, you should be documenting everything and reporting issues as they come to you immediately. So whenever you move in, do a very thorough walk through. Don’t just peep your head in, but do a very thorough walk through.”

He suggested taking photographs and recordings of your unit’s conditions, even of damage that already existed.

“They’re gonna charge you the \$250 charge for your blinds being broken, even if they were broken when you moved in,” he said. “And they probably charged it on the person that lived there before and the person that lived there before that, too. They’re probably having a huge windfall on these charges. Document everything and don’t hesitate to make reports for maintenance requests to the property management office because if you don’t, it can come back to bite you.”



Victoria Post poses for a photo in front of her house, Friday, Aug. 15, 2025, in Bedford.

CHITOSE SUZUKI / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Post shared her own advice to potential renters, in hopes of helping other first-time apartment renters.

“Do your research on the apartment complex, the parent company,” she said. “I would also just remind people that they have rights and to become familiar with what their rights are as a tenant and to hold people accountable to that. Don’t let them take advantage of you, just because they have billions of dollars and you don’t. It doesn’t mean that you don’t have a say in what’s going on.”

For Post, the experience has been crushing and she says that Genesis Collections is still contacting her and requested \$281.51 as recently as July 26, to which Post informed the agency that she is in the process of taking legal action against the company.

“I’m not even suing them for money,” she said. “I just want them to leave me alone, and they just can’t do that. And I’m so exhausted. I’ll cry if I talk about it too much because it makes me so upset.”

Post isn’t sure how the situation with Greystar will ultimately play out. But she has made a decision to prevent a similar situation in the future.

She bought a house.

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