

## CITIZENS WATFORD CITY WANTS TOWN BACK



Watford City, a small town in North Dakota, is the home of many lifetime citizens. Those who have spent their lives working and dwelling in this small, quiet farm town are out of sorts with its new growth. The recent discovery of the oil within the Bakken formation incited rapid growth throughout the area. Thousands of adventurous people throughout the country left home and flocked to this small town. The exponential growth in such a short time span has caused problems for those arriving and for those who lived there before the discovery. Locals are disturbed by the high increase in traffic, crime and frustration from a growing town. Likewise, newcomers face their share of frustration. The large growth has caused a great shortage of housing, leaving many workers homeless. A 57-year-old native of Watford City, Deone Lawlar, said, "At first we were excited about the prospect of bringing in new people and money... but it slammed us so hard, in such a little time that a lot of locals now are kind of resentful. Now we want our town back." Lawlar's land has been in her family for years, and the house she lives in is of great sentimental value to her. Last year, the peaceful setting of this family land was disrupted by the oil excavation. Now, instead of seeing the beautiful North Dakota scenery, her road hosts semi trucks as workers build a pipeline company, housing facilities for workers and two new oil rigs. Lawlar says, "The quiet peaceful country life as we know it is a thing of the past." Before the discovery, Lawlar and her husband believed that they would stay in the house until their death. However, now they are thinking about moving from the family land into a quiet, country town. With all the competition for land and housing, the Lawlar's wouldn't have any trouble selling their land, regardless of the shaky national economy. The growth has sent housing prices soaring, and landlords eager to rent out property for prices only seen in large cities. Two-bedroom apartments have rent prices set around \$3,000, and one-bedroom apartments at \$1,500 each month. Locals are finding the increase in rent hard to manage when holding jobs outside the oil field. Kristen Pallacheck works as a nurse at Bethel Lutheran Nursing Home, and she saw her rent triple over the course of the year. She says, "People are getting greedy, and we're losing people who have lived here their whole lives. It's hard to make ends meet, especially with two little kids. How does a nursing home keep up with the oil fields?" Many locals aren't willing to fight for their homes, and are moving to different towns. Wanda Goetz, a local who has given up the fight and moved away, says, "I will come back to be buried here; that's in my will. This is my home. I was talking to myself this morning, and I thought, How am I gonna feel when I have to shut this door? I sold my house and have to be out by the first of November, and how is it gonna feel to walk out of that door?"

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