

Case number: 14-18A

Testimony of Alexis Stoumbelis
1530 Rhode Island Ave. NE #401
Washington, DC 20018

My name is Alexis Stoumbelis and I am a Ward 5 resident. I urge the Zoning Commission to listen to, respect and incorporate the demands of the current residents of Brookland Manor regarding Mid-City Financials proposed redevelopment plans.

I live only a couple of blocks away on Rhode Island Avenue so what happens on this property cuts very close to home. In recent years, we have been outraged to hear about Mid-City Financial's underhanded tactics to evict and displace our neighbors in order to make way for tenants who could afford to for a luxury unit. What they've been doing is shameful and I urge the Zoning Commission not to allow Mid-City Financial's plans to move forward until or unless they end this practice immediately.

My partner and I have talked to a lot of our neighbors about this proposal over the past few weeks and I want to share with all of you the overwhelming level support we heard for current residents being able to remain in their homes and for the city to create more, not less, truly affordable housing.

I know how difficult it was, even as a relatively high-income earning family, to find a two-bedroom apartment that we could afford. So if any of the family units at Brookland Manor are eliminated, that would not merely be an inconvenience, it would be a crisis, not only for these families but also for the city.

There are some key actions you can take to prevent this crisis, first and foremost by ensuring that any plans for Brookland Manor preserve at least the current level of 535 units of affordable housing at the same bedroom sizes and current subsidy levels.

It is reasonable, fair and right that the current residents of Brookland Manor be the first and central beneficiaries of any investment made to their homes and to define what counts as a community benefit. To do that, they must be able to remain in their building during any re-building process, as well as to gain access to any employment opportunities that may arise.

The Zoning Commission has a profound and urgent opportunity to ensure that the harm that has been done to countless working class people of color in this city by displacing them from their homes in the name of redevelopment not be repeated in this neighborhood. For this situation to be different, the Zoning Commission must act. Therefore, I urge you to not to allow Mid-City Financial's proposals to move forward until or unless they make fundamental changes to their plan that incorporate the tenants' demands.