

My name is Daima Lewis. I support the tenants of Brookland Manor and all those who face potential displacement as a result of the Rhode Island Avenue project. I believe it is the responsibility of the city to make decisions that promote and advocate for affordable housing in all areas of Metro DC area. When I relocated to the District approx. four years ago I had a very difficult time finding nice housing in an affluent neighborhood for my family. I relocated here from Frederick Maryland by way of Binghamton, New York, when my children were accepted to Duke Ellington School of the Arts. Despite starting my housing search eight months in advance with voucher in hand, I was unable to secure affordable housing for my family. As a result, what should've have been a smooth transition, for what I considered an opportunity of a lifetime for my children's education, started as a traumatic experience. Thus, leaving my family displaced for nearly nine months, living in a hotel infested with water bugs, mice and roaches. My family moved from a four bedroom gated community in pursuit of a artistically diversified education at one of the most prestigious schools in the country and subjected to bedbug bites at a shelter because the District fails to build more and enforce substantially suitable housing with high standards for ALL of its residents. I was prevented from securing preferred housing because the voucher policies wouldn't allow me to pay as little as \$15 over the allotted rate in the program.

Fortunately, my children did exceedingly well at Duke Ellington having graduated class of 2016. However, we have had to endure the hardship and suffering of renting from a slumlord.

My unit has consistently failed inspections as a result of severe and unsafe maintenance issues. For example, my family had to be evacuated the first six months in the unit because of a deteriorated and outdated furnace that was leaking large amounts of carbon monoxide. That incident landed my family in the emergency room. Likewise, there is a consistent leak in the walls of both the living room and dining room ceilings providing a breeding ground for the mice. That leak consistently causes a hole to form over time. Instead of the landlord paying contractors to fix the plumbing, he simply sends someone to patch the hole and repaint 2-3x per year. If the problem "appears" to be fixed, this allows the unit to pass inspection and the landlord continues collecting state funding. There are many loopholes and inside deals that allow slumlords to continue to receive payments for units that are not suitable or safe. When my family and I arrived to the district I was fortunate enough to know how to advocate for myself. However, there were tons of pregnant women with much younger children looking for shelter, who did not. We waited all day long at the Virginia Williams Center filling out paperwork to be told at the end of the day we were not being placed in shelters because of the

summer season. Then, someone actually had the audacity to tell me to go back to the city where I came from.

Homelessness is traumatizing. The district is one of the most economically flourishing areas in this country. DC is the place where the President of the United States resides and for that reason alone, no one in the district should be homeless unless it is by choice. While there is plenty of "affordable" housing in the district, most of those units are not suitable for habitation. They are rundown and unsafe. It appears the city limits affordable housing to certain parts of the city that are run down, dangerous, riddled with crime and filled with unsafe conditions.

In other cities my family and I have lived -such as Binghamton New York and Frederick Maryland, low-income families and affordable housing existed within economically blended communities. You didn't know if someone owned their home or rented with a voucher subsidy. All the children went to school together and there were no obvious signs of economic class based upon residence. I have a very difficult time understanding why the capital of the United States does not serve as the blueprint for the model of Blended communities. The effort and financial investment that the city is putting into building condos and high-income developments should be consistent within low-income communities. Governing agencies need to hold landlords who provide affordable housing accountable to ensure that units are safe, suitable and families are not placed in danger. The governing agencies should abide by their own policies and sanction landlords who do not adhere to the rules and regulations set forth by the code of inspections.

It is unfair that when you are low income that you are automatically locked into a certain areas or neighborhoods or limited to certain type of conditions because of those stereotypes. It is unfair that people think of low-income persons as ignorant, not deserving to live in certain areas, are considered careless about their housing conditions, or assumed that we don't need to be safe. If the city is in support of building mixed-income housing it's anticipated that the city will ensure that Brookland Manor has more than 131 units of affordable housing in the property proposed in the plan. I believe shared responsibility is needed from both community members and Developers for housing to be maintained by keeping our neighborhoods clean safe and affordable for all. I do not believe making people feel imprisoned as a scare tactic by increasing security presence like that being done at Brookland Manor is an effective way to gain trust or convincing its current residents that their best interest is being held in regard. In order for affordable housing to remain, it is important that this shared responsibility is displayed and

demonstrated by the community to include the city and the developers in support of people having homes from all income levels. Developers should not be allowed to come into low-income communities to push or bribe people out of their homes because they prefer higher-income earners small-size families and those past childbearing age exclusively in any particular neighborhood. We, as in COMMUNITY, ought to have shared responsibility and accountability in keeping communities clean, family friendly, culturally enriched, employment ready, safe, economically diverse and reflective of all populations residing throughout the city. Mid City Financial cannot remove affordable housing because they want exclusivity intended to benefit those privileged populations by strategically displacing thousands of low-income families for their convenience and wealth. Thank you for listening and I welcome any questions.

Ms. Daima Lewis