

Jason Barnes
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February 27, 2017

Councilmember Kenyan McDuffie
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Suite 506
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Councilmember McDuffie,

This letter is to support of the residents of Brookland Manor. I request that you write a letter opposing the 2nd stage PUD and publicly affirm your commitment to your constituents at Brookland Manor in helping them achieve their reasonable and viable demands to protect their homes and to preserve affordable housing for families and working class people of color in Washington, D.C.

I am deeply concerned about displacement tactics employed by Mid-City Financial at Brookland Manor, and the rapid loss of affordable housing in Washington, D.C.

My objection to the 2nd stage PUD echoes the demands of Brookland Manor residents, who have been fighting a displacement campaign led by Mid-City Financial for over two years. As has been well documented by various media outlets, including the Washington Post, residents of Brookland Manor have been subjected to discrimination based on family sizes; have faced documented harassment at the hands of a private armed security force; and mass evictions that were only slowed down after public exposure.

Mid-City Financial has outlined a plan to demolish all 535 units of affordable housing, and replace it with over 1700 units of mostly luxury apartments. Under their proposed plan, overall affordability [in the midst of an affordable housing crisis in the nation's capital] will be reduced from 535 to 373 units, and all five, four, and most three bedroom units eliminated. Covington & Burling, along with the Washington Lawyers Committee recently filed a groundbreaking lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of development plans that target a protected class (families), by effectively eliminating family housing.

At the first stage zoning hearing, representatives of Mid-City Financial suggested that due to "natural attrition," some tenants would leave Brookland Manor, and that their absence from the property would help to justify Mid-City's plans to build luxury apartments in place of deeply affordable housing. What the developer refers to as "natural attrition," residents experience as violent displacement.

Councilmember McDuffie: It is my position that as a representative of Ward 5 constituents at Brookland Manor, you should oppose plans that discriminate against families by eliminating large bedrooms. We implore you to oppose a plan that is facilitated by forced displacement through underhanded tactics such as a private armed police force, the erection of fences restricting the movement of disabled persons and others from freely moving around their community, and the restriction of children from being able to step on the grass or play in their own playgrounds. I strongly urge that you support Brookland Manor tenants in their reasonable and viable demands to:

1. Preserve 535 units of affordable housing at the same bedroom sizes and current subsidy levels

2. Remain on the property during the process of redevelopment
3. Access employment opportunities through the rebuilding of their own community, which they have a fundamental right to be a part of

I ask that you emphasize in your letter to the Zoning Commission that Mid-City Financial must immediately cease its attempts to intimidate and force tenants off the property. I also ask that you emphasize in your letter to the Zoning Commission that a plan that discriminates against families – one that fails to cede to the reasonable and viable demands of Brookland Manor tenants – cannot be considered a “community benefit” and should therefore not be approved.

In the midst of an affordable housing crisis, I would like to partner with Mid-City Financial to preserve affordable housing in the nation’s capital. I hope that we can work together to be leaders in the building of a truly inclusive community that we can all be proud of. I extend my support to Mid-City Financial and to you and our other elected officials to make our vision of affordable housing a reality.

Given that this decision is forthcoming, I am requesting that you do everything in your power to oppose the 2nd stage PUD pending

1. resolution of outstanding legal issues regarding family status discrimination and
2. the incorporation of Brookland Manor tenant demands into Mid-City Financial’s redevelopment plan.

I look forward to your attention to the situation at Brookland Manor and your support for the best possible outcome for Brookland Manor tenants and for working class people of color throughout Washington, D.C., and those across the nation engaged in similar struggles against violent displacement.

Sincerely,

Jason Barnes