

Metro DC DSA Testimony
Brookland Manor Zoning Hearing: Case No. 14-18A
Thurs, Feb. 23, 2017

DC is in the middle of an affordable housing crisis. The D.C. Fiscal Policy Institute recently found that the share of DC households considered "severely rent burdened" has grown 50 percent as compared with a decade ago. Acting in callous disregard of this situation, Mid-City Financial has outlined a plan to demolish all 535 units of affordable housing at Brookland Manor and replace them with over 1700 units of mostly luxury apartments. Under Mid-City Financial's proposed plan, overall affordability will be reduced from 535 to 373 units. All five, four, and most three bedroom units will be eliminated from Brookland Manor, which blatantly discriminates against families.

I am here today as a representative of Metro DC Democratic Socialists of America. We are a rapidly-growing organization here in DC that fights for social, racial, and economic justice. We call upon the Zoning Commission to halt Mid-City Financial's violent displacement of working class people of color at Brookland Manor. We view Mid-City Financial's proposed plan as not only a violation of tenants' rights to affordable housing, but a promise to compromise the health and well-being of the entire community. The disastrous public-health effects of forced displacement are well-documented; the CDC found that displacement widens health disparities faced by low-income people, women, children, the elderly, and members of racial and ethnic minorities. These populations, of which many tenants at Brookland Manor are part, are at increased risk for experiencing these horrific consequences of gentrification and displacement.

We support the demands made by the Brookland Manor/Brentwood Village Resident Association and ONE DC that the Zoning Commission block this redevelopment from moving forward, until or unless Mid-City Financial immediately stops doing the following:

- Engaging in intimidation tactics to force tenants off the property, including harassment at the hands of a private armed security force;
- Discriminating against families by eliminating three, four, and five-bedroom units from their redevelopment plan;
- Discriminating against low-income individuals and exacerbating the affordable housing crisis by cutting the number of units of affordable housing in their redevelopment plan;
- Contributing to the forced displacement of residents through the erection of fences that restrict the freedom of movement of disabled persons, and that restrict the ability of residents to move freely within their own community.

Zoning guidelines make it clear that any plan not considered a "community benefit" should not be approved. DC DSA argues that any plan that does not cede to the reasonable and viable demands of current Brookland Manor tenants cannot be considered a "community benefit" and should therefore not be approved. In order to benefit the Brookland Manor community, redevelopment should heed demands of Brookland Manor tenants to preserve 535 units of affordable housing at the same bedroom sizes and current subsidy levels. Redevelopment should also allow Brookland Manor tenants to remain on the property during the process of redevelopment, and should provide Brookland Manor tenants access to employment opportunities through the rebuilding of their own community.

Metro DC DSA will not stand by while our neighbors and fellow DC residents are violently displaced from their homes in the name of profit. We implore the Zoning Commission to heed the eminently reasonable and viable demands of Brookland Manor/Brentwood Village Resident Association and ONE DC and preserve racial and economic diversity in our neighborhoods.