

Case number: 14-18A

Testimony of Mackenzie Baris

1530 Rhode Island Ave. NE #401

Washington, DC 20018

My name is Mackenzie Baris and I live at 1530 Rhode Island Ave. NE. I am testifying tonight to 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.

As a close-by neighbor, what happens on this property is of great concern to me. As I have gotten to know residents of Brookland Manor, I 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 can afford a luxury unit. As a renter myself, I urge the Zoning Commission not to allow Mid-City Financial's plans to move forward until or unless they end these practices immediately.

I also want to urge you not to approve any plans for this site that do not preserve all 535 current units at same bedroom size and same rent and 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.

Losing even a few of the families at Brookland Manor would be a great loss to the fabric of our community, on top of the huge disruption to the families themselves.

I've talked with many others in my own building in the immediate neighborhood about this proposal over the past few months and I want to share the overwhelming level of support for current residents being able to remain in their homes and for new development in our neighborhood to create more, not less, truly affordable housing, and especially housing for families.

After my partner and I decided to start a family and began searching for a two-bedroom apartment, we learned first-hand how hard it is to find something affordable in this city. Even with two decent incomes, we couldn't afford to live in any of the new developments opened recently in Brentwood and Brookland and many places we called didn't even have two-bedrooms, no less three and four bedroom apartments.

If any of the family units at Brookland Manor are eliminated, that would just serve to deepen the crisis families in our city face accessing housing.

The Zoning Commission has a profound and urgent opportunity to ensure that the harm that has been done to countless working 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.