

**Public Opposing Testimony**  
Claudia Barragan  
DCBZA Public Hearing, Brookland Manor Case 14-18A  
**Wednesday, March 16, 2017**

Good evening, my name is Claudia Barragan, and I am providing testimony as a ward 5 DC resident and a seasoned Urban Planner and Policy analyst, with over 15 years of experience in Urban Design and Planning, and 5 years in environmental justice and social equity advocacy. Professionally I solely worked for companies such as Torti Gallas and for developers like Mid City. I am also an immigrant-women who was raised by a single-mother household with 4 children, in low income housing communities like Brookland Manor. I am living proof that Mid-City's assertion that concentrated poverty perpetuates cycles of poverty is WRONG! It devalues my own existence and that of communities of color in the District. It is a racist and unfounded assertion that must be removed from the application. Racist, xenophobic and discriminating statements like Mid City's should not warrant an approval from this Zoning Board.

As an urban planning professional, I want to reiterate and agree with all the testimonies in opposition that you heard and MUST read and include in your deliberation. The approval of the First-Stage Order was done with biases and ill-employed urban design principles. It basically allowed you the zoning board to create a clean canvass for further marginalization of communities of color, immigrants and low income residents, who pay taxes and are vital to this city. It certainly neglects fair housing mandates, and comprehensive plan equity mandates in its entirety. But let's face it, this board approved that stage and therefore cares-less if this project displaces, resettles and marginalizes communities. If this were the UN we would be talking about human right infringements. Housing and right to city is a human right, please board prove that you care. I will now refer to the applicants request and block 7:

Mid City the developers, say they are continuing with this prejudiced master plan, to address 3 urban planning problems in this community:

1. Buildings are too old. Yes we all agree and according to OHR and DC human rights mandates the building owners must renovate it, at the very least for public health concerns, such as asthma, lead in water, etc. The commercial strip did offer ethnically diverse food options; it was not bad. Displacing business due to ethnic discrimination, is wrong.
2. Existing Urban Design is obsolete. It is obsolete for high end market value housing. Garden style apartments are still very common and in fact the design accommodates for mixed families. Elderly people can walk up to their units, children do not get lost in a sea of hallways, there was plenty of space for children to play until management caged off the green areas, and handed out fines for playing. Low density garden style apts create opportunities for visual community monitoring. Mid City paints a racist picture in their description, and redefines "defensible space" per the standards of these white rich men.

The existing street patterns around block 7 do not create bad vehicular access. As a frequent driver and pedestrian, in this neighborhood, I can travel in this block without problems. Please provide accident records and BTW there are zero dead end streets other than service roads.

3. Attempt to end intense concentrations of poverty. Urban design, planning and architecture are not social engineering tools, it doesn't have that authority. If Mid City wants to end perpetuating cycles of poverty, then they should focus on hiring and achieving diversity within their own company. They should invest in improving the condition of buildings for the sake of the

community's public health, asthma, diabetes, etc. Which would have entailed designing many community centers, parks basketball courts, and even an educational use in their first stage approval. Deconcentrating poverty by using gentrification and further fragmenting families and black/brown communities, is not responsible urban design nor architecture. It certainly isn't stated as a mandate in the comprehensive plan. Therefore, it is racist and discriminatory for this board to approve this PUD under those statements

As per the 6 solutions offered by Mid-City, in relation to block 7, this is my professional testimony:

- 1- Technically it is easy for mid-city to preserve a one-to-one, affordability in this block because at 4 stories high and nearly doubling its number of units, they can equate the units, but they are not accounting for the number of families and children and seniors who live in the current 64 units. The phasing plan doesn't say how many existing families will be relocated and how many seniors will be relocated and kept united. Mid-City is resettling 100% of 3 br apartments. It is only building 15% 3 br units in the new construction. That should not warrant your approval. Its deceitful.
- 2- Block 7 is not closest to transit and amenities in terms of easy pedestrian access along Rhode Island Avenue. Those blocks will be reserved for the high-income residents in future PUD's.
- 3- This plan is marginalizing 200 unit seniors (I assume most black) to a block that lacks accessibility. It is segregating future residents, and therefore not creating the mixed-income community it claims to do.
- 4- Open Space in this new plan is a joke, in block 7. Where is the allocated open space? The backyards of townhomes do not count as public open space. The developers/designers failed at providing sound open space design per community planning standards.
- 5- Per Mid City statement, the First Stage approved a total density for block 7 of 3.0 FAR. This proposal is offering 2.97 + 2.98 for a total of 5.95 FAR. It doubles the original approval. This PUD cannot be approved!
- 6- Finally, Ward 5 residents we want to know how long in the future will building B be kept for senior independent living? The developers must state that in this PUD.

Thank you for allowing this immigrant who was raised in poverty but is now here attesting that poverty is not a cycle or an ailment. Instead it is a reality and a consequence of greed and a wealth gap created by developers. Board you can alleviate poverty by including moral values to architecture and urban planning, rather than using it as a tool to marginalize, discriminate and displace our communities of color. Do not approve this PUD.

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