

Zoning Commission Hearing
Testimony of Shonta' High, President of the Council @ Park Morton
Tuesday, October 12, 2021

Good day to the Commission. I'm Ms. Shonta' High, President of the Council @ Park Morton here to thank you in advance for the opportunity to submit my forthright testimony in its entirety.

Having celebrated my 20th anniversary at Park Morton on the 8th of May 2021, I as a resident and acting President have been at the very beginning of this redevelopment as the Apprentice of the late, great Mrs. Marie A. Whitfield since she was the President and ANC for both Park Morton & Ward 1. I have attended every meeting, helped design the original blueprint plans for Park Morton when we dealt with the Landex / Warrenton Group redevelopment team in 2007 as well get to know the Dante's Partner's & The Community Builders in 2014 because they did not engage the community in designing our homes they way Landex / Warrenton Group did, they only created a plan, showed us the designs then pressed us to get onboard with it, I've attended the Steering Committee Meetings as a Resident, followed by as the Chair / President, I've organized Resident Council Meetings to inform residents of the truth of what was truly going on with our property onto try to be quietly bought off. When my price to have equity, to own a home, to be free of the enslavement and oppression of these failed Hope 6 / revamped "New Communities Initiatives" was too high for the cost to be paid, well, that's when the battle to bury Ms. High and many residents like her began.

For many years our residents have lived in squalor, lived with cracking paint, lead pipes, lead paint, lead dust, & even asbestos flooring underneath our feet that have caused us and our children to develop lifelong health conditions, myself included. However, this doesn't give them the right to use the situation to disrupt our lives abruptly the way they have with "Interim Controls" in 2019 only to forcefully remove families from their homes in the middle of the Coronavirus Pandemic throughout 2020.

Having taken full advantage of the 2019 situation when I had been struck by a car, the powers that be moved as quickly as possible to hamper whatever progress I had made with residents to connect the community helping them to fully understand the redevelopment process, connecting residents with lawyers to help them fight illegal 30 Day & 90 Day Notices that were served as part of their intimidation tactics to get residents to move. Park Morton went from having 131 occupied units to having less than 20 occupied units in less than one year. The Coronavirus Pandemic did not stop this redevelopment 1 bit. It seems to have sped up the process in fact.

Not having the Resident Council President at the table to contradict a lot of things that are necessary to speak on makes it easier for this process to work in the favor of the developers, the politicians, & the rich. You're stealing from us, and you don't want us to argue with you about it. You're displacing us from our homes, lying to us, smiling in our faces, laughing behind our backs, and expecting us to be fine with that, when we are not fine with that. I am the voice that is going to say that we are not fine with that.

In a news report on MSNBC on August 16, 2021, I saw and listened to them say, "There is a \$220 Billion Dollar wage gap between Black and White Americans and a \$1.6 Trillion Dollar Revenue Gap for Small Black Owned Businesses." I snapped a photo of this & tweeted it because it shook me to my core. As the Founder of High Alert Emergency Preparedness (HAER Prep), a Small Black Owned, Woman Owned, Disabled, Section 3 Registered Business, I immediately thought, "Well, what does this mean for me and my girls?"

I was befuddled. If we are not given equity now, we will never start to close this gap. The Park Morton Equity Plan means that our community, that our families, that our children get invested in. DMPED, DCHA, NCI, and everyone at this table has taken my Park Morton Equity Plan and whatever parts that have suited them and worked them to make themselves shine to the brightest polish that they can glow because as you can see, this thing is moving forward with not a single promise fulfilled.

The 1st lie was, "We're going to keep you in Ward 1." Most of the families that have moved are outside of Ward 1. The 2nd lie was, "We're going to minimize the disruption to your lives." Total crock if I ever heard it. 1st it was the Interim Controls where they had everyone pack everything up, put everything in the middle of the room for them to shrink wrap it, then we all go to hotels for a week to live off fast food given to us bought through gift cards provided by DCHA. People returned home to property that had been broken, stolen, deep freezers & refrigerators had been unplugged and people lost all their food. DCHA refused to replace it or their deep freezers. They wanted the residents to produce receipts for their food and for their deep freezers that they had in their possession for many years. It was their way of not having to pony of the money for their personal items. SN: If you Google Search 601 Morton St., you can see the workers laying around on the ground. The 3rd lie was, "You have the Right to Return." They have told families this, but I have not seen anything in writing saying any of this. The 4th lie that I'll leave with you here because they've told so many, "There won't be any more stringent requirements to return than there were before." Well, there certainly won't be enough units for everyone to return because they have been promising everyone since 2014 that they can return.

I certainly have not covered everything in this testimony; however, I will be adding and / or revising what I've submitted. Thank you.

Ms. Shonta' High
President
The Council @ Park Morton