

January 22, 2015

District of Columbia Zoning Commission

Case ZC 13-08

Testimony by Clarence Taylor

Alabama Ave/13th Street Tenants Coalition

Honorable Members of the Zoning Commission,

My name is Clarence Taylor and I have been a tenant at 1331 Alabama Ave SE for 8 years. I would like to testify in detail to the deplorable way that Sanford Capital manages the buildings that they are requesting be demolished, and state my opposition for the PUD that they are requesting before the Zoning Commission.

Throughout the time that I have lived on this property I have experienced many different housing problems. I have had continual mice and pest infestations. Recently I had to have repaired due to damage caused by a large pothole in the parking lot that me and other tenants had continuously notified Sanford Capitol about. It took years of having a refrigerator that didn't work before Sanford provided me with a new one- I don't even know how much food I had to throw away over the years that I was waiting for the new refrigerator, but it was a lot- and they always said "we're going to bring you one" but never did. The stoves also don't work half of the time. Sanford still has not finished fixing my air conditioning, and it has been years also since it stopped working properly. There are many issues with the unsafe and unsanitary conditions of the basement under 1331 and 1333 Alabama, which is often so bad that tenants can smell it from their units. When it's warm out we have to fight bugs whenever we go downstairs to the basement, and sometimes just to get to our apartments because there is often standing water in the basement. There were also problems with exposed electrical wires, leaky pipes, broken washers and dryers down there for years, and it wasn't until we took Sanford Capital to Housing Conditions court that these things were partially addressed. There are also bigger problems in the buildings that have to do with security. There are often people in the buildings who are not residents. They are attracted to the vacant units that Sanford has intentionally keeps empty. Every morning I open up my door and I always find somebody laying in the halls. Sanford hasn't dealt with the security issues in the building, and this is just one of many of the problems we tenants are experiencing in these buildings.

When you call Sanford to request a repair, they say they're going to take care of it but they never fully do. Often they start doing maintenance work but they never finish the job, and sometimes they don't show up at all. When I call the office they tell me to call maintenance. Maintenance will usually tell me that they have received my work order number and request, but then they never show up. I have to call them 3 or 4 times to get anything fixed, and that's if they ever come at all I have a light socket now that they never even came out to look at, and I had

been calling them consistently for three months. I got tired of calling and finally just ran an extension cord myself. We've also started using our own bulbs just to have light in the hallways. It's not right in a building where there are elderly people for tenants to have to walk three or four days in the dark. The hot water goes out often in our buildings, and it takes just about everyone in the building calling them to get them to come and fix it. We usually all sit outside and call together so we know for a fact that many of the tenants have called, and Sanford used to tell each tenant that calls that they were the first person to complain about the problem. They treat us as if they don't want to talk to us, and we're really not even asking for a lot.

Ever since Sanford Capital took over ownership of the building where I live the housing conditions have gotten worse. When the last owners had the buildings the basement was in good condition, and we could use it to do laundry and for storage. This was the perfect place to live. Now it's like hell. They treat us like they don't want us here. The maintenance man told me that our housing problems could easily have been fixed a long time ago, but that Sanford didn't want to spend any money on the buildings because they want to tear them down. I don't feel safe in my home anymore, which is why I asked Sanford many times for better security. But since they don't address the problems, it seems that we're all on our own. Many tenants who are home in the daytime have been threatened by management, and many of my neighbors are scared of retaliation such as the hundred dollar late fees that they charge us. Many tenants don't know any better. They think they don't have any rights and Sanford takes advantage of that and keeps it so that they are scared to speak out.

Sanford Capital doesn't take care of their tenants or their properties, and they don't deserve this new building. They gave us their word that they would deal with the violations but they didn't do anything until we took them to court almost 9 months later. If it takes me as a tenant years to get problems addressed in my apartment, then something isn't working right with this company. Maybe once they have higher rent-paying tenants they'll straighten up, but why haven't we deserved decent treatment from Sanford as the tenants they are already responsible for? Our buildings now are a little place. I don't see any evidence to make me, the zoning commission, or anyone else think that they could run a big new complex. There aren't many of us tenants here now, and they can't even handle our problems adequately.

In conclusion, Sanford Capital does not deserve to be approved for a new property for the sake of the tenants who will be displaced, the neighborhood as a whole, and future tenants, based on a long record of irresponsible property ownership and management. Thank you, and I hope you will consider my and other residents' testimony and disapprove this PUD.

Clarence Taylor 
Tenant of 1331 Alabama Ave. SE