

My name is Vincent DeLaurentis and I am a student at Georgetown University and an intern at ONE DC. Through my work at ONE DC, I have been meeting with and getting to know the residents of Brookland Manor for around a year and a half now and I have spent a significant amount of time at the property. I am here today to testify against the proposal submitted by MidCity Financial and to urge the Zoning Commission to vote against this proposal.

My Jesuit education has taught me that it is important to act as men and women for others. This is a lesson that MidCity Financial would do well to learn. In my time at the property, I have seen MidCity act in a way that does not demonstrate even the most basic concern for the people who live at Brookland Manor.

This has included failing to perform basic maintenance and repairs of people's homes or if they do perform the repairs they refuse to do them in a way that respects their needs, for example using paint and pest removal techniques that are safe for young children and people with asthma. The message has been clear from MidCity to the tenants, we do not care about you and we do not want you here.

Additionally, in the year and a half that I have been on the property I have seen numerous fences put up and a large reduction in the amount of green space heavily reduced. The fences makes it incredibly difficult for people, especially seniors and people with disabilities, to get around the property and has stopped elderly and disabled people from attending meetings and community events. Not only does this isolate these people from their communities, it cuts them off from vital information about the redevelopment process and their rights during it. The lack of green space has made it difficult for children to exist on the property. When children are outside, they are subject to constant surveillance and harassment by the security forces. They are made to feel unwelcome in their own homes and unsafe in their own communities. This constant surveillance, lack of green space, and new fencing makes Brookland Manor look and feel like a prison. This is no way to live and it is unacceptable that the residents of Brookland Manor, who are majority black and low income, are subjected to this. Again, the message from MidCity to the tenants has been to leave and to leave quickly.

Finally, MidCity has implemented an aggressive security program that has made living on the property difficult for tenants. Tenants are constantly being watched by the security guards and the smallest incident is turned into a notice of infraction. Tenants cannot feel comfortable walking around the property or being outside. In my time on the property, I have noticed that the security is constantly present, not to make the property safer, but to regulate and punish the tenants, handing out warnings and infractions that threaten

the housing security of BM tenants with impunity. I myself have dealt with these security guards. On two separate occasions, I have been threatened with arrest while talking to and canvassing tenants with the express permission of the resident association. This has interfered with the tenants right to organize and has intimidated tenants when they are standing up for their rights. MidCity Financial has talked about creating a diverse, mixed income community at the new property they are seeking to build. Why then, are they so afraid of me, a middle class white person, talking to the tenants now? I can only imagine the security situation getting worse for low-income and black residents after this redevelopment.

From my time at Brookland manor, it has become apparent that MidCity is trying to do everything in its power to clear out large families and most other residents by making them feel unwelcome and unsafe. In doing this, MidCity will have to build back fewer affordable units. It is clear that MidCity and Michael Meers are putting their profit over the people of Brookland Manor.

To conclude, I would like to urge the Zoning Commission to vote against this proposal. The demands presented by the residents tonight have been more than reasonable and ensuring these demands would prove the public benefit of this project in the middle of a housing crisis in the District. Based on my experiences at Brookland Manor, I can see no public benefit coming from MidCity's plans because the corporation has mistreated and harassed residents of Brookland Manor and continues to do so. I would also like to remind the Zoning Commission that the fact that MidCity will turn a profit off of this project does not prove public benefit. Private profit is not public benefit, however affordable housing, especially in these times, is. For this reason, I urge you to vote against MidCity's proposal and to refuse to allow this project to continue until MidCity agrees to the tenants of Brookland Manor's demands to bring back all of the affordable housing on the property at its current bedroom size.