

Good evening,

My name is Sequely Gray, I am the Project Coordinator of DC Jobs With Justice, a local coalition of over 60 labor, community, faith, and student organizations dedicated to protecting and advancing workers' rights and economic justice here in Washington, DC. I am also a 4th generation Washingtonian, a wife and mother of 6 beautiful children and a subsidized housing recipient. I am here today to support the tenants of Brookland Manor and to help them fight for their basic human rights; HOUSING.

I was raised in a community very similar to Brookland Manor; a subsidized housing community with hard working families committed to making their lives and the lives of their families better. To us that didn't necessarily mean moving on to something different; it meant strengthening the foundation that was already built. Since 2008, the District of Columbia has aggressively displaced low income families of color for high priced condos and profits and it has to stop. Organizations like ONE DC and Empower DC have been fighting the housing displacement crisis for many years now and DC's administrators need to be allies in this fight – helping to keep residents in homes they can afford, not displace them. Of course folks want a nice and safe environment to live and raise their children but no one should have to be displaced or discriminated against for that to happen. Unfortunately, the residents of Brookland Manor have had affordable housing, but not a safe environment as the owners have harassed them, evicted them, and refused to make basic repairs as they are required under the law. Now, the property will be in good condition, but the residents will not be able to remain there. This redevelopment project eliminates 162 truly affordable housing units and it discriminates against large families to return to the property in the midst of a continuing housing crisis. This is exactly the kind of apartment building that can be home to families currently stuck at DC General and in hotels with nowhere to go.

As a family of 8 my partner and I have had many challenges with finding a suitable place to live with our 6 children even though we hold a housing choice voucher. The moving cost alone is a stressful thing to worry about on top of your children being uprooted and displaced from the community they call home. Has anyone stopped to think about the children in this situation? We want them to behave, we want them to do their best in school and to be a law abiding citizen. How can they do that when the place they call home will be destroyed and the powers that be are showing them the complete opposite of what they think is the right thing to do? Brookland Manor should be a place

that welcomes all District residents. The blueprints and implementation should have been drafted and planned with the current residents of Brookland Manor. Residents should have had to the choice to help rebuild their community and welcome those new. This redevelopment project can be done while residents are still on the property; which means no one should have to move off of the property during the redevelopment.

When these redevelopment projects come into play; I often hear that there is concentrated poverty in the specific area and we want to show poor colored people how to live. The idea is that if poor people live around people with money that will motivate them to do better so we want to create a mixed used income space. Well, properties like Brookland Manor are already mixed income. There are seniors, working families, entrepreneurs, college degree holder and those that need more help than others to better themselves. With the proper resources to foster community development and improved living conditions, Brookland Manor can be a thriving community that includes longtime residents and new comers as well. In closing, I call on not just Kenyan McDuffie and the zoning commission to stop this but all of the city council member and the Mayor to stop choosing profit over people. Do the right thing by your constituents. Meet the demands of the Brookland Manor!

They are as follows:

- Zoning should not approve any plan that discriminates against families by eliminating large bedrooms.
- Zoning should not approve any plan that is facilitated by the forced displacement of residents through underhanded tactics such as a private armed police force.
- Zoning should not approve any plan that is facilitated by the forced displacement of residents through the erection of fences that restrict the freedom of movement of disabled persons, and that restrict the ability of residents to move freely around their own community.
- Zoning should not approve of a plan that proposes to eliminate affordable housing in the midst of an affordable housing crisis.
- Zoning should not approve of a plan that will result in the displacement of working class people of color in order to make way for luxury apartments while thousands sleep on the streets.

- We support Brookland Manor tenants in their reasonable and viable demand that the redevelopment preserve 535 units of affordable housing at the same bedroom sizes and current subsidy levels.
- We support the Brookland Manor tenants in their reasonable and viable demand that they not be displaced from the property during the process of redevelopment.
- We support the Brookland Manor tenants in their reasonable and viable demand that they gain access to employment opportunities through the rebuilding of their own community, which they have a fundamental right to be a part of.
- We implore the Zoning Commission to block this development from moving forward, until or unless Mid-City Financial immediately stops engaging in intimidation tactics to force tenants off the property
- We implore the Zoning Commission to block this development from moving forward until or unless Mid-City Financial fundamentally changes their current plan to incorporate Brookland Manor tenant demands.
- In Zoning guidelines, it makes clear that any plan that is not considered a “community benefit” should not be approved. Any plan that does not cede to the reasonable and viable demands of Brookland Manor tenants cannot be considered a “community benefit” and should therefore not be approved.

Thanks you for the opportunity to speak,

Sequnely Gray (Project Coordinator)

202-674-2847)

1875 Connecticut Avenue NW

Washington, DC 20009

sequnely@dcjwj.org