

**Ms. Serita El Amin – Feb. 23 Testimony**  
**Case No. 14-18A**

MidCity is going about this development in a way that shows no concern for the residents of Brookland Manor or the greater DC community. It's a shame that so many buildings on the property are boarded up when people could be using them. It's a shame because the city pays for poor families to live in them, and there are families in shelters that have income and these spaces are unavailable to them. Why have empty apartments and have people in the streets when apartments are available?

Downsizing the units after the redevelopment does not make any sense because it's already not enough room. For big families, who have a right to comfortable, affordable housing, you have to have a house or a large apartment. We cannot afford to live in anywhere in DC – MidCity has homes for these big families, why are they taking them back? It tells me that you want families on the streets. You know they can't afford homes, you know they're on welfare, you know they don't have money. Why can't we keep what we have? MidCity and Michael Meers are still getting paid.

One day I went to pay my rent, and I was told that if I put a mop outside I would get an infraction letter. I put a rug outside to dry because it was wet. I was told I had to put it in my bathroom. I didn't get a letter but I was threatened with one for if I set my mop or rug outside. One of my friends got an infraction notice for putting a plant in the hallway and decorated the hallway for Christmas. They gave an infraction letter saying it was "hazardous."

The security guards MidCity hired harass us when we try to be outside with our families. MidCity talks about positive economic development – is it not positive to sit outside with your kids while they play? Your kids can't breathe nature? It makes no sense that you can't sit outside your own home – you pay rent and you can't step outside? When it comes to security officers I've seen them smoking drugs with people outside, they share

personal information about tenants with their neighbors. They often hang out at liquor stores, and they don't serve any purpose for us.

The fences that I mentioned that MidCity put up make handicapped and disabled people have to go so far to get to where they need to go. If you're a senior and they put you in an inconvenient spot – it's hard to even get the rental office. The fences make the property look like a jail house. What white area can you go to that has big high fences? If we have fences what do we have security for? We're already in jail.

I think that MidCity has some misconceptions that Brookland Manor is the ghetto – this is not a project community – people might think that because they see security and fences around here, they see all black people around here. We are just like them. Then they put all these liquor stores around here and try to misrepresent and mis-characterize our community.

Let me be clear, the politicians are supporting this because they want the money and support so that they can run again, they support rich people to get what they want and they need their votes. We don't have any money, we don't have anything to offer them, so they're not going to support us.

We do not need anymore luxury apartments in the city. They need to direct money into education, housing, transportation, we do not need luxury apartments that people can't afford. Direct the money to support people with disabilities – direct it to our needs, not their wants. Why do we need luxury? People can survive and thrive without luxury.

During the redevelopment, MidCity keeps coming to us with a bunch of promises. One of them is that they are going to build a big park. Why are they suddenly taking interest in a park? They're taking half of Saratoga to make a park and we have two parks now that we can't even use. They won't let us. They want to build a rooftop swimming pool and a deck – but we can't even sit outside right now. But once they get this rooftop swimming pool and deck, THEN we can sit outside?! They're promising washers and dryers in our new units, but for the last 18 years they have

done nothing to maintain the washers and dryers that they have now on the property. They don't even paint our apartments the way they are supposed to according to their own rules. So the question is, who are they building for? We know the answer to that.

You can provide housing for prisoners and for jail, and here we are in the streets and you provide nothing. You're asking us to go to jail, the next best place to live if you're out in the streets.

On a another note, right now the developer is promoting a plan of segregation, where they want 200 units of senior apartments instead of building apartments for the whole community. We want no discrimination of age, color or none of that. Put back what people have. There are more people who need affordable housing, get some of the people off the streets. We don't have 535 now because you scared people and pushed them out. Half of those people are in shelters, so when you open 535 back, they'll be back applying back for it. Our demands are reasonable, and we should be asking for more. We need a signed contract with our name on it saying that we are coming back.

To wrap up, it doesn't make sense if you're saying we're in a housing crisis but you're giving the ok to tear down and eliminate affordable housing. You're the one who's putting us in crisis. Why don't you all come over here and experience the way we live – let us give you infractions, barring notices, tell you that you can't have visitors, stay here with mice and raccoons and possums. You would not want to, but we have had to.

This why I am testifying today against MidCity's proposal.

Thank you.