



**COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
THE JOHN A. WILSON BUILDING  
1350 PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE, N.W.  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20004

February 23, 2017

Anthony J. Hood, Chairman  
Zoning Commission  
441 4<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 200S  
Washington, D.C. 20001

**RE: Case #14-18A**

Chairman Hood and Members of the Zoning Commission:

The affordable housing crisis is multifaceted and it is not endemic to the District of Columbia, but is being felt nationwide. Demand for affordable housing is on the rise and so too is the cost of housing units, especially in metropolitan areas across the country.

According to a 2015 report published by the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, there is not a single state in the U.S. where a minimum wage employee working full-time can reasonably afford a one-bedroom apartment at fair market rent. This is particularly challenging here in D.C. where rents have risen by more than 30 percent over the past 10 years.

Due to the scarcity of the affordable housing stock here in the city, we are writing today to request that you carefully consider the proposal before you, paying acute attention to whether or not everything, within reason, is being done to preserve all of the housing affordability on this site.

While we recognize and appreciate the developer's commitment to maintaining the Section 8 contract in perpetuity, we believe as a city we need to be far more deliberate, creative, and strategic in how we plan our communities.

Brookland Manor is comprised of 535 units, of which only 373 are technically considered "affordable," with the remainder reserved for housing voucher users (100) and market rate units (62). In the affordable housing debate there is often a semantics argument. "Affordable housing" typically refers to properties that were originally built using a tax subsidy and "market



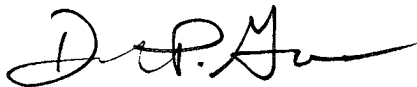
rate" is often defined as properties owned or rented by those who pay market value, without any subsidy.

Currently, a "market rate" four bedroom rents for roughly \$1,600 at Brookland Manor. This is significantly below any comparable unit in most parts of the city. To us, the goal of this project should be to preserve that **same** level of affordability in the new planned development. We understand that the developer requested greater density, perhaps with the hope of increasing availability to more affordable units, but unfortunately this initial request was denied by the Zoning Commission.

Brookland Manor has been home to many low-income families for generations. As a city we should want to continue to foster this strong sense of community and empower longstanding residents to remain comfortably in their homes as the city enjoys great economic times. Though this project is not a New Communities project, we believe the tenets of that initiative are applicable here. If we are to truly build vibrant and inclusive mixed-income communities we should always seek to employ similar strategies utilized in New Communities, to ensure that we are not encouraging and/or accelerating large-scale displacement.

In weighing the plan before you we ask that you think critically about the long-term implications on affordable housing and we ask that our comments be made part of the official record.

Sincerely,



David Grosso (I-At-Large)  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Chairperson, Committee on Education



Elissa Silverman (I-At-Large)  
Council of the District of Columbia  
Chairperson, Committee on Labor and  
Workforce Development