

# SMEAC Fights Back



## What if this was YOUR neighborhood?

Lisa Williams stands in the middle of a vacant lot that used to be her neighborhood. Over 500 families have already been forcibly displaced by East Baltimore Development Inc. (EBDI).

EBDI works on behalf of the City of Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University and other power players. EBDI is attempting to create work with Johns Hopkins and the private BioTech industry to create a shiney new neighborhood here – with

jobs, housing, and even a new charter school.

It all sounds good until you take a look again at the picture of Lisa Williams – Lisa's neighborhood was destroyed to make way for Johns Hopkins' plans.

But where are EBDI's vast improvements? All we see right now is a vacant lot.

## The Fight for Dignity

***"You have to treat people with dignity, you have to do it with integrity, you have to put people in the place where they can have hope because this is a project (EBDI) that has really allowed people to feel hopeless.***

***It's not that we are fighting against progress at all, we are glad they are doing it but how do they leave me out of it, how do they not include me in how do you just dismiss me as a person."*** - Donald Gresham, 20 year Middle East Baltimore homeowner

***"I got in with SMEAC there working with the community taking care of myself and other residents because there was nobody to speak for us but SMEAC."*** – Lisa Frances of Ashland Ave.

***"It's still encouraging me to stand because no matter how they knock you down...I am proud myself, I'm more proud of now being through what they took me through – they still think they got the upper hand, I'm proud cause I know they still don't got the best of me..."*** – Charlotte Johnson who was displaced from Washington Street.

## SMEAC VICTORIES

- increased compensation for relocated residents
- no restrictions on where displaced families can move
- safer demolition standards

***"Even though I move out of here I will always remember this used to be my home"***

- Lisa Frances



Donald Gresham, SMEAC President, talks with the press at October 2008 RALLY FOR JUSTICE

## SMEAC RALLY FOR JUSTICE – OCTOBER 18TH



On Saturday October 18th the Save Middle East Action Committee (SMEAC) held a rally attended by about 200 residents and allies at John Wesley AME Zion Church just blocks from the Johns Hopkins East-Side medical campus. The rally was in response to broken promises made by East Baltimore Development Incorporated (EBDI) to residents affected by the 90-acre urban renewal project—a collaboration between the City of Baltimore and Johns Hopkins University. Referred to by many as the "largest urban removal project in the nation," the plan has already relocated more than 500 families in the first of its three phases to make

way for a bio-tech park and EBDI's "New East Baltimore." After seven years of fighting for fair relocation packages and the right for residents to return to their neighborhood, **SMEAC secured a promise from EBDI** in February of 2008. That promise was for a "**House for a House**" program allowing existing Middle East homeowners to purchase fully rehabilitated houses within the EBDI project area using the official EBDI Relocation Benefit. According to the plan, **no new mortgages would be created and homeowners would not be in greater debt after the move than before it.** On April 25<sup>th</sup> the first fully rehabbed homes will be ready for residents who are ready for a "House for a House".

### Remaining Homeowners Win

- Right to Stay in their homes
- \$100 to \$140,000 in Grants
- Right to Choose Contractor

Homeowners on the blocks of the EBDI project area where they will not be tearing everything down are safe – for now – and are largely safe because of resident homeowner activism thru SMEAC.

SMEAC won the following gains for homeowners on these blocks:

- Right to stay in their homes and not be displaced by EBDI
- \$100 to \$140,000 in grants to homeowners to bring their homes up to housing codes. They can use any \$\$\$ left over to do home improvements.
- Choose their own contractor with EBDI paying the bills.

### SMEAC ACTIVISM WORKS



SMEAC leads the Fight for Affordable Homeownership in EBDI's so-called "NEW EAST SIDE"

## SMEAC

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Committee**

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**Make Our Community  
Whole**

## A special message from the families of Middle East

We love our community! And we will always remember the people who made it what it was. We must now rebuild our community from the damage that EBDI has done.

*"The lady I told you about that used to clean up in front of the Church every morning was also the neighborhood block captain, I called her our unpaid security for the Church, she watched it like a hawk for mischief going on and she would immediately call the police, when now that she is gone...there is a lawlessness on the streets that wasn't there even a year ago." – Fr. Peter Lyons of St. Wenceslaus Church*



## Join the Fight for People's Rights

The power players have all of us in their sights eventually. **We have to stick together.**

### Join SMEAC at our MONTHLY MEETING

- **Monday, May 11<sup>th</sup> at 6 PM**
- **1731 E. Chase Street in East Baltimore**