

Save Middle East Action Committee

WHAT WE HAVE WON BY STANDING TOGETHER!

The following are just some of SMEAC's victories since our founding in May 2001.

- Since May of 2001, we have lobbied and organized to make the residents of Middle East whole and have fought for all of us to obtain a "house for a house" in a stable community – as well as to allow those who wish to move back into the new Middle East community to do so.
- We organized for and received a seat at the Relocation Committee table. As an active participant we have gotten many things changed:
 - Elimination of the restriction that you have to move in east Baltimore to obtain the maximum benefit. And, finally, in December 2004 at SMEAC insistence, all geographical restrictions were lifted.
 - Elimination of the 5 year lien which they were originally going to place on the funds given each relocated resident.
 - Elimination of provision that the city will hold the payment for purchase of your property in escrow.
 - Won increased relocation benefits (some families have received nearly \$200,000). Average is about \$90,000-\$100,000 including fair market value).
 - Won \$5,000 benefit to assist people having to move twice (ie those wanting to move back). We are still working to increase this.
 - We negotiated for seniors who didn't want to own another house to receive a supplement benefit of \$10,000 over a five-year period. SMEAC is still urging that a one-time lump sum payment be made.
 - We are still working on winning a "Guaranteed Right of Return" for displaced residents to return to the new neighborhood
 - We are working to make sure low and moderate income housing is built in the new neighborhood – especially for people wanting to return.
- We established a network of block captains and they have been trained and meet regularly to address issues of concern to residents, including organizing several neighborhood-wide clean up events, and monitoring illegal dumping.
- We continue to advocate for full resident participation in the design of the new neighborhood
- We continue to lobby for resident representation on the East Baltimore Development Inc (EBDI) Board. The "community" representatives live in Silver Springs and Washington DC.
- We held elections for our Board of Directors during the summer of 2003 at a meeting attended by 80 members. Our second elections were held in the winter of 2004. We have an active board of eight people. New elections are this fall.

- We completed a community made documentary, "Voices from Within: A Displaced Community Speaks Out" which documents our struggle and which we premiered on April 15, 2005.
- We raised funds to pay for staff and office space; hire an executive director and a community organizer.
- Since May of 2001, we have held consistent monthly meetings (every second Monday) with participation by community residents and we have informed residents about important public meetings and hearings, and generated strong public turnout.
- We surveyed residents across the project area in May of 2001, to learn their feelings and knowledge about the redevelopment and to get their primary concerns. We have continued to hear resident concerns through more "listening" and at our meetings.
- We encouraged citizens to write over 300 letters to City Council members Johnson, Carter, and Young, asking them to continue their support of the residents in this process of fair urban renewal.
- On August 19, 2002 we conducted a well-publicized Rally for Safe and Healthy Demolition Practices, which generated several television and newspaper stories.
- We have been featured in many press stories – mainly the City Paper and the Sun – and have appeared on Maryland Public TV. We have also been on WOBL and WEEA radio.
- We received technical assistance from the Urban Research Institute @ Morgan State University and from the University of Baltimore School of Law Development Clinic.
- We gathered over 500 signatures on a petition for the Guaranteed Right of Return, and Low & Moderate Housing for the new neighborhood (1/3 low, 1/3 moderate, 1/3 market rate) and called for housing for seniors in the core area.
- We collected over 400 signatures of citizens who support the residents in Middle East Baltimore on the joint housing resolution for low-moderate income housing (signed October 21, 2003). These signatures were presented to Councilwoman Paula Johnson Branch at the May 2004 Advisory meeting.
- Along with our partners from Morgan State University, we advocated for and fundamentally changed how demolition will occur in the Phase 1 area of the redevelopment project. And, our advocacy for safe demolition practices resulted in objective public health professionals being brought in to assess the health impact of demolition in the project area.