



Sanford Capital:

A D.C. slumlord based in Bethesda

Who is Sanford Capital?

A Bethesda-based landlord, Sanford owns many properties in Washington, D.C., and describes its business as follows:

“[A]cquiring value-add apartment properties in up and coming submarkets with tangible growth prospects in Washington, DC. Our business model includes acquiring mismanaged and underperforming properties, the signs of which often include high vacancy, below market rents and/or higher than normal bad debt expense. We add value to our properties by increasing income and decreasing expenses and minimizing collection losses.”

But what is Sanford really doing in D.C.? They buy buildings occupied by low-income residents, force out the tenants, and then sell those buildings to big developers for a profit. They aren't building affordable housing; they can charge as much as \$1,625 per month and still call it “affordable.” But more than that, they simply are replacing this housing with high-cost units.

Sanford's tenants face displacement and slum conditions

Sanford's main project right now is what they call “Congress Heights's transformation.”

Congress Heights is a working-class neighborhood in the Southeast quadrant of D.C. Sanford plans to tear down four residential buildings and replace them with two towers of retail, office and luxury apartment space. They call it “Shaping the future of Congress Heights.”

To do this, Sanford must first rid itself of its current tenants. They do that with buyouts.

Sanford's representative recently threatened a resident who refused to take a buy-out: “Guess what: If you don't take [the deal], in two weeks you'll be on the street.”

When buyouts don't work, they just make conditions so bad people have to leave. Current tenants described their living conditions at a recent D.C. Zoning Commission, leading the Chair to declare conditions in Sanford buildings “deplorable.”

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- *There are rodents everywhere; the odor of feces is so strong, you have to cover your nose every time you walk in the building*
- *The basement floods every time it rains, the washing machines are rusted and broken (According to the Washington City Paper: “Pieces of rusted washing machines and dryers are ripped out and sitting on top of the defunct appliances, some of which are missing their front covers. Piping for the machines lies crumpled in a corner. There’s grime everywhere.”)*
- *The locks on the doors and mailboxes are broken, allowing access to private information, and creating dangerous conditions from squatters*
- *There is no heat, some residents use their stoves for heat, others just pile on blankets*

Sanford can’t be trusted

Here’s what happens when Sanford “agrees” to make things better: Sanford purchased Terrace Manor in 2013, with \$500,000 loan from the District. That transaction included a Memorandum of Understanding with Terrace Manor tenants, but after the purchase, Sanford reneged on every promise. It made no repairs or renovations, and evicted 50 percent of the residents. And it isn’t repaying the loan, but is instead trying to sell the property to a developer.

In fact, in order to win even minor repairs from Sanford, its tenants have had to sue them. Even then, they haven’t complied. The tenants’ legal representatives have testified to Sanford’s continued dilatory practices and bad faith.

We don’t want a slumlord in our backyard!

Sanford lies to tenants and it lies to the District. Sanford’s treatment of tenants is so bad it has landed it in court. Given the way Sanford treats its tenants, it doesn’t deserve to build new units, and it certainly shouldn’t be profiting off of making people live this way.

Montgomery County is rightfully proud of its progressive reputation. We believe in affordable housing, and our policies reflect that.

We won’t allow Sanford to use our home as a base for exploiting tenants in D.C. We want to expose their misdeeds – and what their version of “transformation” means. Sanford’s behavior deserves punishment, which is up to the District, but it also deserves shame, which we are more than capable of doing ourselves.

Stand against Sanford’s slumlord practices! Sign the petition at JusticeFirst.Org