

City Pledges Aid to Displaced Tenants

Developer Wants to Convert Garden Apartments to Upscale Housing Complex
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The Gaithersburg City Council voted last night to include \$300,000 in next year's budget to help residents whose affordable housing is set to be replaced by upscale development.

The unanimous vote marked a compromise with Mayor Sidney Katz, who this week had considered vetoing the budget because he said details of the plan were unclear. On Monday, the council had approved about \$100,000 more for the relocation assistance.

"We want to give them faith that we will stick to our word," council member Henry F. Marraffa Jr. said before the vote, referring to residents who face displacement.

The council vote last night was to add \$153,000 -- down from \$250,000 -- to an existing assistance fund of \$147,000, which came from a fund for other displaced residents that had gone unused, said Assistant City Manager Fred Felton.

Katz said he was satisfied with the compromise and promised to sign the budget. A veto could have halted city services.

"This is encouraging for us," said Tim Cowley of Action in [Montgomery](#), a faith-based organization working with residents of the Broadstone, a complex that is expected to be razed and redeveloped into upscale housing.

Last year, city officials came up with \$220,000 for the 200 families of West Deer Park who were displaced when that apartment complex was slated to be turned into townhouses. Residents were given \$8,500 toward the purchase of a house in the county or \$10,000 toward a [Gaithersburg](#) house. The townhouse project languished, however, and much of the money for the families went unused.

The developer who owns the Broadstone has agreed to offer 70 units at affordable rents. The complex has 350 units now.

Although many tenants could not afford to buy a house, grants still are crucial, said Alisa Glassman of Action in Montgomery. "I think the city is obligated to do everything it can because this is a plan by the city at the cost of the tenants," she said.

Since learning in February that their affordable housing probably would be replaced by more expensive housing, tenants and advocates have organized efforts to minimize the impact on the families living at the Broadstone.

In addition to grants, tenants are seeking special consideration for housing in other city and county buildings or others owned by the developer. They also want financial assistance, such as rent compensation and vouchers for application fees, and regular updates on the project's status.

But Glassman said that theirs will probably be an uphill battle because the number of affordable houses in the county has shrunk.

"The garden apartment is an entity that's becoming extinct," she said.