

September 6, 2005

Ms Carol Mitten
Chair
Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW
Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

Re Case No 04-33

Dear Ms Mitten and Members of the Zoning Commission

The Zoning Commission is currently considering two inclusionary zoning proposals—one developed by the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, and one developed by the Office of Planning **I wish to go on record in support of the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning's proposal.**

The proposal submitted by the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning is deliberate and thorough. It is based on the findings of a rigorous, national analysis conducted by PolicyLink of the most effective inclusionary zoning programs in place in communities across the country.¹ Its provisions for income-targeting, percent of set-asides, length of affordability, application to rehabbed buildings, and limited exceptions assure that thousands of affordable units will be added to DC's stock of affordable housing over the years to come. I strongly urge the Zoning Commission to adopt the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning's proposal as submitted.

¹ PolicyLink is a national nonprofit research, communications, capacity building, and advocacy organization, dedicated to advancing policies to achieve economic and social equity based on the wisdom, voice, and experience of local communities. Please review their report, *Expanding Housing Opportunity in Washington, DC: The Case for Inclusionary*, for an in-depth analysis of effective inclusionary zoning principles and their relevance to the District.

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I have worked on economic and community development issues in this city for nearly four decades. President Linden B. Johnson appointed me to the National Capital Planning Commission in 1968, before Home Rule. I chaired the two NCPC committees focused on planning and development in the District - the Urban Renewal and Housing Committee and the District Public Improvements Committee. It was during my tenure that we determined the track alignments of our subway system and, in the wake of the riots following the assassination of Martin Luther King, acquired the urban renewal parcels at Metro Center, Gallery Place, 14th and U Streets and elsewhere around the city.

After Home Rule, during the first term of Mayor Marion Barry, I was responsible for planning and development for the city government. It was during this period that the city built the first convention center, sponsored re-zonings throughout the city that spurred new hotel and apartment development, provided the land use policy framework for the redevelopment of the U Street corridor, and commenced development of the Downtown Plan which created the policy template now being implemented with such success.

Our city is experiencing an unparalleled, and much welcome, resurgence of economic investment. The District's downtown is newly vibrant with nightlife and starting to be repopulated with affluent young professionals and empty nesters. A new state of the art convention center distinguishes Washington, DC among the nation's major meetings venues, and the office vacancy rate is the envy of other cities. In fact, new residential and commercial development and cultural and entertainment offerings are increasing in neighborhoods throughout the city. Experience allows me to attest that we have come—if not full circle—at least to a point many degrees from the low point of the early sixties when we struggled in the wake of population loss and economic decline.

Today's resurgence is neither an accident nor a random outcome of private investor enlightenment. It is the product of deliberate public policies and investments made over many years—and a testament to their efficacy. While investment is returning, the benefits of renewed economic activity are not as widely shared by District residents as the city's income realities, quality of life, and vital social needs demand. A broader cross section of our population must have access to the community improvements and asset creation accruing from our past substantial public investments. I engage the underside of this reality daily as Chair of the Board of our city's Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness.

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The affordable housing proposal submitted by the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning is one important vehicle by which the Zoning Commission can ensure that the benefits of development are shared more broadly across the income spectrum. The Campaign's inclusionary zoning proposal will help us more fully realize the goal we have striven for over the years—building a racially diverse, vibrant, mixed income community where quality housing is accessible to the broadest possible cross-section of our community.

Sincerely,



James O. Gibson
Senior Fellow