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April 20, 2006

Sharon Schellin
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, N.W.
Ste 210S
Washington, DC 20001

Re Comments in Support of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning

Dear Ms. Schelling

Enclosed for your consideration and attention are an original and 20 copies of my comments in support of the Commission's Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning proposal, ZC 04-33

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. If you have any questions concerning them, please do not hesitate to contact me at 328-5506

Sincerely,


Marta I. Beresin

Enclosures

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 04-33

EXHIBIT NO. 216

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-33
EXHIBIT NO. 216

Written Comments in support of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning-ZC 04-33

My name is Marta Beresin. I am an 18-year resident of D.C. and own a home in Ward 3's Glover Park with my husband and two children. We bought our house 1998 for \$315,000. It is now worth more than twice that amount. If we were buying a house today, we would not be able to afford to live in our modest northwest D.C. neighborhood despite the fact that we are both working professionals. In addition to being a long-term resident of D.C., I am also an attorney at the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless where I represent low-income families in the District in a variety of civil cases ranging from housing to public benefits. This work has made me keenly aware of the need for inclusionary zoning as one of the policy tools that the District can use to develop affordable housing.¹ I am writing to support the Zoning Commission's Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning program because it will help create thriving, mixed-income communities in D.C. and save those few remaining ones. I am also writing to encourage the Commission to make the proposal even stronger by adopting three additions to the program. These additions, listed below, were part of the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning's initial proposal but are absent from the Commission's proposal.

While creating housing for folks earning between \$40,000 and \$70,000 per year -- as this proposal would do -- would not create housing for my clients who work at minimum wage jobs, it would create more moderately priced housing throughout the city. This, in turn, would decrease the competition that my clients face in finding lower income units, providing more housing for the poorest of the poor and enabling some of them to escape homelessness, a wrath on this illustrious city. For this reason, I applaud the Zoning Commission for making the inclusionary zoning program mandatory. Mandatory inclusionary zoning will increase the variety and supply of affordable housing for low and moderate income families throughout the District. I also support the 99-year affordability control period that the Commission is recommending. This is an important way to ensure that units remain affordable for the very long-term.

Absent from the Commission's proposal, however, are the following items:

- 1) A mixture of low and moderate income units in high-rise developments;
- 2) The inclusion of PUDs in the program in order to increase the production of affordable units, and
- 3) A requirement that the same leasing rules apply on "for sale" units for both inclusionary and market rate units.

¹ Many of my clients work at full or part-time jobs in the District but cannot afford to rent housing in the District. The fair market rent for a 2-bedroom apartment in DC is \$1187 per month. Most of my clients earn the minimum wage (still only \$6.60) and would have to work approximately 150 hours per week (or 20 hours per day) in order to afford a 2-bedroom unit at the area's Fair Market Rent. Moreover, there are over 50,000 households on the D.C. Housing Authority's waiting lists for subsidized housing.

Inclusion of these items in the Commission's final proposal will help ensure that good schools and safe communities are not just a luxury of the very wealthy in the District. We can build safe, thriving communities for ALL District residents by creating mixed income communities that include very low income households. Minimum wage workers are not going away and we need to do everything possible to ensure their inclusion in our communities

I hope that the Commission will reconsider whether to include the three provisions listed above in the final inclusionary zoning program. No single solution will solve the affordable housing crisis in the District of Columbia. However, having a mandatory inclusionary zoning program that includes the above three items will help ensure that we bring a substantial amount of good, quality housing to a variety of working families in this city. Thank you for making this proposal possible and for your consideration of these comments.