



COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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TESTIMONY
CASE 04-33: INCLUSIONARY ZONING
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Good evening I am Phil Mendelson, an At-Large member of the Council I am here to express my support for mandatory inclusionary zoning. Mandatory inclusionary zoning is an essential tool that will enable an increase in the supply of affordable housing for residents in the District of Columbia

I come to this issue with several perspectives. First, as a long-time resident at McLean Gardens, I experienced first hand the success – and failure – of inclusionary housing with the development of a PUD at that location, along Wisconsin Avenue, in the 1980s. As part of its effort to win community support for the development of over 500 housing units, the developer promised that in return for discounted HFA financing it would set aside 20% of the units for low income residents

I was both an active resident at, and ANC commissioner for the McLean Gardens area at the time The inclusion of 20% low income housing created not a ripple of concern or opposition in the community Low income residents lived side by side with market rate residents As a result, the community received a dose of mixed incomes, a supply of housing was made available to low income residents, and there were none of the ills associated with low income housing when its location is concentrated in one location such as with the traditional public housing project.

On the other hand, the requirement for inclusionary housing at McLean Gardens was tied to the financing About 10 years after construction, ownership changed to a government pension entity that did not need the benefits of HFA financing After refinancing, the inclusionary housing was discontinued, and there was great upset with the displacement of scores of low income households.

I have seen first hand that inclusionary housing can be successful, but that its provision through zoning must be mandatory rather than voluntary

My second perspective is as a regional leader at the Council of Governments There is an enormous shortage of housing in the Washington Metropolitan region This shortage is immediate. Yet the region is expected to grow by over 2 million people and by almost 1.4 million jobs in the next 25 years

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CASE NO. 04-33 **ZONING COMMISSION**
EXHIBIT NO. 60 **District of Columbia**
CASE NO. 04-33
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The projected growth has enormous implications, most of which will be adverse if we cannot concentrate more housing in the city and close-in suburbs. The adverse consequences include greater urban sprawl, environmental impact such as on air quality, and a degraded transportation system. If we cannot provide more housing in the District, especially housing that is affordable to the lowest income worker or attainable to the typical middle-income worker, then we will find ourselves in the perverse situation where those least able to afford it will be living farther and farther from the region's core, forced to commute 3-4 hours daily to their meagre jobs.

The Council of Governments has identified the need to increase the supply of affordable housing as one of the region's highest priorities. Inclusionary zoning is a necessary tool to meet this goal.

My third perspective is as an at-large councilmember. The need to maintain and increase the supply of affordable housing is one of the greatest concerns among District residents. Many fear they will be forced out of their homes and communities if we do not do something more to increase the supply. Others are concerned that we are becoming a very polarized city economically (which also has implications racially). Whether it is out of good public policy or fear, I hear the demand constantly, across the city. The proposal before you by the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning is the best land use proposal to meet the demand for more affordable housing.

In this regard I wish to make several additional points.

- First, inclusionary zoning must be mandatory, not voluntary. Otherwise, we will not see a substantial increase in supply.
- Second, inclusionary zoning must be provided on-site, not off-site.
- Third, the affordability control period must be substantial, equal at least to the estimated useful life of the unit before renovation or rehabilitation.
- Fourth, the zoning regulation must be simple, not complicated.

Let me elaborate on a couple of these points. Allowing exceptions to inclusionary housing by permitting payments into the Housing Trust Fund or permitting off-site construction at a specified location defeats many of the benefits. The experience at McLean Gardens was laudable because the housing was provided on site. Further, creating possibilities for exceptions means administering (and overseeing) the regulations will be complicated – and therefore more expensive and less productive -- with the possibility of less compliance.

Finally, you know that the Council recently adopted Resolution 16-218 in support of amending the zoning regulations to include mandatory inclusionary zoning. The details of the Council's position are found in section 3 of the resolution, and are not substantially inconsistent with my testimony.

I appreciate your providing me with this opportunity to comment.