

**Testimony in Support of the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning's
Proposal, case number: 04-33."**

July 28, 2005

My name is Rabbi Toby H. Manewith. I am the associate rabbi at Temple Micah. I live at 4545 Connecticut Avenue in the Van Ness neighborhood and serve a Congregation in Glover Park.

I am here this evening, as a private citizen who both lives and works in the District of Columbia, to speak in support of the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning's proposal.

Two days ago, I received notice of an eight percent increase in the rent on my apartment for the coming year. I know that it will be difficult for me to meet this burden. Over the past few days I have thought a lot about the affordability of some of the nearby suburbs. But I am committed to city life. I enjoy joking with the proprietor of the neighborhood Chinese restaurant and feel fortunate that the neighborhood seamstress knows my name. I love that the clerks at the bookstore/coffee shop know what each of their young customers is reading. So I will make the sacrifices necessary to remain here. I am fortunate to be able to make this choice. Many of those I spoke about - the restaurateur, the seamstress, the barista - are not able to make the choice I made. The present housing market in the District has forced them to look for affordable housing elsewhere.

All of those I mentioned have been good neighbors at their places of business. A mandatory inclusionary zoning policy will allow these low and middle income wage earners, as well as others like them, to become true neighbors - to live in the city in which they work and experience, as I do, all that city life has to offer.

These prospective renters and homeowners are not the only community members that stand to gain. Of course, there is the monetary gain which will be enjoyed by developers. But current residents of the district stand to gain the most. By guaranteeing that owner-occupied affordable units remain affordable for 20 years and rental affordable units remain affordable for 50 years, we guarantee that our teachers and the members of our police and fire departments will be able to live in the District. We will gain because, through daily living, they will learn about the community which they serve, and therefore be able to serve it better.

Mandatory inclusionary zoning not only addresses the cost of housing but also its location.

According to Jewish law, members of the community are commanded to provide housing for those in need. In the biblical book of Leviticus we read:

And if your neighbor becomes poor and his means fail him, then you shall strengthen him, be he a stranger or a settler, he shall live with you.

Leviticus 25:35
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

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EXHIBIT NO. 86
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Not only do we need to find housing for those in need, but the text suggests that we need to find this housing in our midst. Whether this person is of a similar ethnic, religious, or socio-economic background matters little. "Stranger or settler", the bible says, "he shall live with you". An inclusionary zoning policy will allow for just such vibrant, multi-racial communities with the socio-economic diversity envisioned in the Leviticus.

The Jewish community holds the idea of affordable housing as such a high value that it allows for communal needs be disregarded until the needs of individuals are met. The "*Sefer Chasidim*" - the "Book of the Pious," a twelfth century work suggests:

If a community lacked a synagogue and a shelter for the poor, it was first obligated to build a shelter for the poor.

The Jewish community, along with many other faith communities, has responded to the needs of DC's poor. Fifteen years ago, members of Temple Micah began Micah House, a transitional living facility for formerly homeless, formerly drug addicted women. There are countless other such programs and homes. An inclusionary zoning law asks us to take notice of a different group of people. Those workers whose incomes have not kept pace with the housing market in the District. Jewish values support this as well.

Maimonides, a twelfth century Jewish scholar suggests that the best thing you can do for a person in need is to give him a gift or a loan, or enter into a business partnership with him. Inclusionary zoning does just this. It is a partnership between developers, community members and deserving low and middle income workers.

The prophet Isaiah suggests:

If you put an end to oppression, to every gesture of contempt, and to every evil word; if you give food to the hungry and satisfy those who are in need, then the darkness around you will turn to the brightness of noon

Isaiah 58:9-12

Our nation's capital is often described as a beacon of hope and freedom in a dark world. An inclusionary zoning policy will allow this beacon city to shine with the brightness of noon.

In conclusion, I would like to thank the members of the zoning commission for this opportunity to testify.