

Reverend Glenn Hoburg of Grace Church DC
Testimony in Support of the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning's Proposal
Case number: 04-33
July 28, 2005 6:30pm

Good Evening, my name is Glenn Hoburg. I live at 208 10th street, NE on Capitol Hill, and am here to speak in support of the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning.

My family moved to Washington, DC from Boston/Cambridge two years ago. We came to start a new church in the District. Our church has grown rapidly, partly because its demographic makeup reflects the recent demographic changes in DC. We are a church of young urban professionals--85% single and the average age is about 27. So, my reference point is a community of "gentrifiers".

Typically this demographic approaches the city as consumers. DC is a place to work and enjoy nightlife. Urban renewal is equated mostly in terms of amenities—new restaurants, Starbucks, Baseball, etc. And, in this way there is a real temptation to use the city, rather than serve it. Our religious community has come to the conviction that our leader, Jesus, won't allow us to do that. He came to serve, not to be served, to give his life and not rob life from others. Nor, did he allow his global/national concern to compromise his local concern—which is particularly relevant in this city. I say to our community, "You can't simply walk by your neighborhood on the way to the Capitol". Christians are never allowed to use the city, and are explicitly called to serve it. The Prophet, Jeremiah said. *But seek the welfare of the city.. for in its welfare you will find your welfare*

So, we feel a call to seek prosperity for the entire city—for Christian, non-Christian, rich and poor, all races and ethnicities. And, we begin to ask different questions. *I wonder what business was there for 20 years prior to this new business moving in? I wonder how the long- time residents feel about its loss? I wonder what its like for this family who has had a history in this neighborhood and can no longer afford to have a history?*

I realize that gentrification is viewed by some as part of solution, and for others part of problem—I think its both. But, I'm most concerned about contributing to the problem. For instance, my willingness to pay outrageous cost for housing has driven the property tax up for my neighbor—who bought his home 60 years ago for a tenth of the cost. But, I made that choice. It's the people for whom there is no choice, I'm concerned about.

I know myself to have a great proclivity toward self-centeredness. If my family is taken care of than I'm happy. But my faith calls me beyond that. When I take a few moments to put my family in the emotional shoes of what many other families are facing, that is, being forced to move with little options, suddenly the "renewal" taking place seems ugly and sad. I live in an area that's gentrifying rapidly and quietly—in fact, the silence is unnerving. I don't know where the old neighbors have gone or had to go, perhaps it's because I'm not listening, or they've given up hope that anyone would listen. I also dread the day when my neighborhood will be a bunch of people like me. At that point, my children lose their adopted neighborhood grandparents, a chance to see that their God is

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bigger than their race, and I lose both my history teachers and advisors on how to avoid getting my car stolen, or my car ticketed. And, so I am very grateful for these hearings and those who have labored hard over these issues

I don't think the answer is that some should have never moved in, and others will just have to move out-- I think that both of us should have a choice to stay—which I feel many of them do not.

I thank the zoning commission for the opportunity to testify and for your consideration