

ZONING COMMISSION HEARING ON INCLUSIONARY ZONING—7/25/05
Case Number 04-33

Good evening. My name is Elinor Hart. I live at 1651 Hobart Street, N.W. in Ward 1.

I bring two messages: First, thank you for seriously considering what I believe is an absolutely essential affordable housing tool for our city. Second, please do all you can to make sure that the proposal by the Campaign for Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning becomes public policy as soon as possible.

I realize that you do not need to be reminded that the District of Columbia is facing a severe and worsening affordable housing crisis. And I'm sure you're also aware that the absence of an inclusionary zoning program means that every day we are losing opportunities to provide housing affordable to low and moderate income people. Equally regrettable, we are also losing opportunities to preserve economic and cultural diversity in our neighborhoods.

There is nothing that anyone can do about the opportunities we have lost, but your prompt action can halt the loss of future opportunities.

I am convinced that the inclusionary zoning policy proposed by the Campaign will be of greater benefit to the city than the one proposed by the Office of Planning. And I want to use my time give you four reasons why I feel that way.

- 1) ***Longer Length of affordability:*** The control periods should be as long as possible. Longer control periods will help the city develop and maintain a stock of affordable housing. Please consider the control periods in the Campaign's proposal as the minimum acceptable length. I believe the shorter control periods recommended by the Office of Planning should be rejected.
- 2) ***Broader range of income levels:*** It is unfortunately not practical to require developers to provide inclusionary units for people at very low income levels where the city's housing need is the greatest. However, following the example of Montgomery County, under the Campaign's proposal, qualified nonprofits and the DC Housing Authority will have the first right to purchase or rent up to 40 per cent of the inclusionary units. Nonprofits and the Housing Authority do have programs for reaching people with very low incomes.

Another significant advantage to this feature of the Campaign's proposal is that the units acquired by nonprofits and the Housing Authority will remain affordable beyond the control periods.

- 3) ***Substantial rehabilitation:*** The Campaign's proposal involves substantial rehabilitation as well as new construction. The only

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residential construction that will occur in many District neighborhoods will be rehabilitation. Whenever the scope of that rehabilitation includes major systems and results in a significant increase in the market value of the property, it's essential that the rehabilitation produce affordable units

- 4) ***Transparency, clarity, and consistency.*** Transparency is critical to the city's new inclusionary zoning policy to being accepted and respected. People need to know what to expect, and they need to be able to determine whether or not these expectations have been met. The Campaign's proposal which measures the set-aside requirements in units and provides a simple, straight forward process for seeking relief is transparent.

However, the Office of Planning's policy with the set -aside requirements measured is square footage and a very complicated, wide range of options for being excused from these requirements will make it very difficult to know what to expect and to know whether the requirements of the policy have been met.

In conclusion, I want to restate my two messages: Thank you for your leadership in holding this very important hearing and giving me the opportunity to testify. Please act as quickly as possible.