

Z.C. Case No. 04-33A

My name is Robert Friedman. I live at 2001 12th Street NW, and, as a Ward 1 resident, I support affordable housing in my neighborhood. The potential of inclusionary zoning to enhance the vibrancy of communities and create comprehensive and long-lasting benefits to neighborhoods throughout Washington, DC is what has inspired me to be here this evening. My support for the most widespread implementation of inclusionary zoning is a product of both personal and professional experience.

Many young residents like me, who wish to make long-term commitments to the district, plant roots in the city, raise families here, and build strong and diverse communities, have a vested interest in the sustainability of a reasonable and pragmatic housing policy. Unfortunately, many future public servants, school teachers, and small business owners are being priced out of the housing market and many others are discouraged from even contemplating a move to the area.

One reason I was drawn to Washington was the myriad of racial, cultural, and economic threads that comprise the heart and soul of the city. We must make efforts to preserve this fabric in order to enrich and strengthen our community. For inclusionary zoning to be most successful, implementation needs to reflect an equitable distribution across the district. Mixed income communities provide openings through which low- and moderate-earning families can buy homes in appreciating housing markets, accumulate wealth, and share part of the American dream.

On a professional level, I have seen first-hand the tremendous potential of an equitably applied inclusionary zoning policy. Until recently, I worked for a Member of Congress who represents a district that utilizes extensive inclusionary zoning. Part of my job entailed handling housing issues and I communicated often with both participants in the county's inclusionary zoning program and families living in the same neighborhoods as these participants. I observed two important things: First, the program participants felt truly invested in the community in which they lived and made efforts to contribute, not only through vocation, but through community involvement and civic engagement. To them, inclusionary zoning was not a temporary fix to a housing shortage; it represented a community value and a sincere dedication to mixed-income housing.

Second, many of the negative perceptions of affordable housing programs by the community at large were changed when people began to understand the program, its participants, and its intended purpose. The affordable homes created through inclusionary zoning were not government subsidized housing, but rather housing made affordable to many of the area's working families. Moreover, residents reported that, contrary to initial fears, inclusionary zoning had a minimal impact on their neighborhoods, and they truly appreciated the diverse racial, ethnic, and economic backgrounds of program participants.

This experience provides important lessons and inspires hope that inclusionary zoning can be successful in every corner of Washington, DC. While the ultimate goal of this affordable housing program is the creation of units to serve the target population, the widespread placement of those units is essential to promote economic integration throughout the city. Thank you for your consideration.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

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EXHIBIT NO. 18
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