

Testimony before the D.C. Zoning Commission
Marta Beresin, Ward 3 Resident
October 5, 2006
Z.C. Case No. 04-33A

My name is Marta Beresin and I am a D.C. home owner and seven year resident of Glover Park in Ward 3. My children attend public school at Stoddert Elementary, four blocks from our house. Our community is a tight-knit, diverse one, but one that seems threatened to lose its cohesiveness and diversity by the ever-rising cost of renting or buying a home in it. I commend the Commission for your recent adoption of inclusionary zoning, which would require new residential developments to include a portion of affordable homes – in exchange for allowing some additional market-rate units on site. Today, I would like to voice my support for locating some of this affordable housing in my neighborhood, where it is sorely needed, by ensuring that requirements contained in the inclusionary zoning plan apply to Glover Park.

This school year I have been struck by the large number of families attending Stoddert E.S. who tell me they would like to establish roots in Glover Park but are experiencing difficulty finding a home they can afford to buy here. Many are considering moving to Montgomery County or Northern Virginia for affordability reasons. Meanwhile, we continue to see new condominium buildings and recently renovated ones in Glover Park advertising two and three-bedroom condos “beginning in the low-700s.” D.C. will continue to see flight to the suburbs unless we create housing opportunities for working class families to live near good schools.

The D.C. Office of Planning’s proposed inclusionary zoning map applies inclusionary zoning evenhandedly across the city and has the potential to create nearly 200 relatively affordable units per year. While this is a very small number compared to the need, if distributed fairly and effectively as the plan envisions, it will have a positive impact on the lives of families with heads of households who are public school teachers, fire-fighters, police officers, artists and the like. The wide distribution of affordable housing will provide opportunities for housing throughout D.C.’s many residential neighborhoods enabling workers to live near where they work and send their children to good schools. (This in turn reduces stress, increases job performance and attendance, reduces pollution and traffic congestion, and increases safety by creating more closely knit and healthy communities.) Therefore, inclusionary zoning should cover as many neighborhoods as possible as this plan does.

I support affordable housing in my neighborhood, Glover Park, because I want the teachers and parents who attend our elementary school to have the ability and choice of living nearby. This will make our neighborhood and our school stronger and contribute to the type of community-building to which we often pay only lip service in the District. I also support the mapping plan and inclusionary zoning in my neighborhood because the D.C. Office of Planning showed how inclusionary zoning will have only a minimal, if any, negative impact on my neighborhood. I appreciate this effort to bring new housing opportunities to my neighborhood while preserving its character.

The D.C. Office of Planning’s proposed map also will ensure that we begin to work towards deconcentrating poverty and breaking down the ever-widening gap between the haves and the have nots in the District. We need more mixed-income communities in the District and this inclusionary zoning plan is a way to achieve that goal. Inclusionary zoning is an important part of a larger strategy to meet the affordable housing needs of current and future District residents. In sum, I thank the Commission for your commitment to inclusionary zoning and urge you to support the Office of Planning’s thoughtful mapping plan.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

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