

Laura Kumin, 3620 Kanawha St NW, Washington, DC 20015
Case # 04-33A

Good Evening. My name is Laura Kumin. I have lived in DC for 29 years and at my present address, 3620 Kanawha St NW in Ward 3, since 1983. I am testifying in support of the Office of Planning's map to the extent that it provides for mandatory inclusionary zoning, particularly in my neighborhood in Ward 3.

In recent years I have watched the housing market make many DC neighborhoods, including my own, less diverse. Those with smaller incomes are forced to move out - or never get to move in - as rents, housing prices and property taxes soar. It's not good for those people, it's not good for the District, and it's not good for those of us who were lucky enough to have moved in before the housing market took off. All of us benefit from living in a city with economically diverse neighborhoods. I support the map as a reasonable means to create and preserve affordable housing throughout DC.

I live 1 ½ blocks east of Connecticut Ave between the stores at Connecticut and Nebraska and the stores near Chevy Chase Circle. It's a wonderful neighborhood where my husband and I have raised our children and enjoyed the mix of single and duplex homes, apartments, and shops and restaurants. We treasure the vibrancy in our neighborhood that comes from having people of different cultures, income levels and ages living nearby. We want those of limited means to continue to live in this area, whether they are seniors, working people or children.

One example of the diversity is the east side of Connecticut Avenue at the corner of Chevy Chase Parkway. On that corner's south side, there is a Sunrise Assisted Living facility, with finely manicured gardens and steep monthly charges for residents. On the north side is Regency House, a subsidized facility operated by the District government that houses mostly seniors. When we walk to stores, take our dog out, or simply enjoy our neighborhood, we greet residents of both facilities who linger outside and enjoy a bit of fresh air and company. All seem happy to see us, and we're glad to see them.

As a family, we have benefited from the economic diversity of our neighborhood. Our children attended Murch Elementary School, where they met, played and learned with children of varying income levels who lived nearby. That experience taught them much about what is really important in life. They met children of media stars and millionaires as well as children whose parents live paycheck-to-paycheck. In class and outside, children and their families benefited from the mix - and from the fact that it was the natural result of students in a diverse neighborhood going to the same school. The Murch community is a vibrant microcosm of what's best about our neighborhood. We delight in seeing the children head to school from apartments and homes around us, knowing that the lessons they learn are not just academic.

Providing for inclusionary zoning in our neighborhood is not merely theoretical. There is a vacant lot on Connecticut Avenue (between Kanawha St and Military Road), one of the few vacant lots left in Chevy Chase DC that would be suitable for multi-family housing. Like others in my neighborhood, I am concerned about what may be built there. I hope that if and when a building goes up on that lot, it will have units that are affordable to teachers and other public employees, as well as to the store clerks, waiters and others who work in DC but who cannot afford the rents and condo prices that now prevail in my neighborhood. New developments represent opportunities to serve the needs of the community as well as those of the private market. My husband and I want to see the values of affordability, economic integration, and long-term stability embodied in developments built in our neighborhood.

I urge the Commission to adopt the Office of Planning map that provides for mandatory inclusionary zoning along major corridors in neighborhoods such as mine.

Thank you.