

To: Zoning Commission

From: Abra Pollock, Washington D.C. resident

Date: Thursday, Oct. 5th, 2006

Re: Testimony in support of Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning, Z.C. Case No 04-33A

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to share my perspective on why Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning (MIZ) is a critical policy that should be mapped extensively throughout our city

I come to speak with you as a D.C. resident who has witnessed firsthand the turmoil that the lack of affordable housing in my NW neighborhood has caused in people's lives. In just the past six months, I have seen at least 10 residents move out of my building due to the rent becoming less and less affordable. One couple had lived here close to ten years. My own roommate was pushed out of living in the building and in the neighborhood just last month because, with the new rental increase, she would have been paying approximately 75% of her income in rent. Housing costs in my neighborhood have leapt outside of what anyone who is a young professional or even a young couple could reasonably afford – even when these people are working in vital jobs to support our city, such as my neighbor who works for D.C. transportation.

I also come to speak with you tonight as someone who knows firsthand the value of diversity. As a youth director who trains high school students and teachers in anti-discrimination workshops, I've witnessed the fear, ignorance, resentment, and prejudice that isolation can produce in even the most well-intentioned people. This is true in instances where racial and ethnic groups live isolated from one another, but more often than not, socio-economic class plays a role. Without meaningful and constructive interactions with people from different economic backgrounds, individuals may develop false accusations and assumptions about "the other." By mapping this policy extensively throughout D.C., you have the ability to take a first step towards integrating our city economically. You have the power to demonstrate to the residents of D.C. that we value all types of diversity, and that we recognize that our city will be better off, better informed and more closely-knit when people from different backgrounds live as neighbors – including people from different economic backgrounds.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 04-33A

EXHIBIT NO. 5771

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 04-33A
EXHIBIT NO. 27

You might not guess that many residents of NW D.C. agree with me, but they do. Over the past few months, while canvassing for MIZ in the Tenleytown, Van Ness, and Cleveland Park neighborhoods (among others), my fellow canvassers and I collected over four hundred postcards. Over four hundred individuals from NW are asking you, their Zoning Commission, to help enact this policy in their neighborhoods. Allow me to read an excerpt from one of the cards:

“Yes in My Backyard”— our community needs Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning

Housing costs in DC have skyrocketed and the supply of affordable housing is shrinking, making it more difficult for ordinary citizens to continue living in their neighborhoods → Rising costs and new developments continue to displace residents from their homes, concentrating wealth in some parts of the city and poverty in others. Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning can help moderate-income employees, such as teachers, nurses, firefighters, service workers, and many other working families and individuals, to continue living in the DC neighborhoods they serve and support. I believe there is great value and opportunity in living in an economically and culturally diverse community. Therefore, I urge the Zoning Commission to apply Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning in my neighborhood and widely throughout the District of Columbia.

You don't just have my support – you have the support of countless D C residents. I urge you to work to ensure that this inclusionary zoning policy covers as many neighborhoods as possible and that the D C Office of Planning's map proposal is equitably applied all over the city.