

Mandatory Inclusionary Zoning Testimony

Z C Case No. 04-33A

October 5, 2006

My name is Darya Mattes, and I live in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, DC. Over the past three years, I have lived in Georgetown and Columbia Heights as well, and I have worked in Dupont Circle and Anacostia. Even during the short time I have lived in the District, I have observed neighborhoods changing, and seen how low- and middle-income people have an increasingly difficult time finding and maintaining housing in convenient, accessible areas of the city. I am opposed to the increasing economic segregation in this city, and I strongly support inclusionary zoning for that reason.

I believe that affordable housing is most valuable if it is integrated throughout a variety of neighborhoods. It is important that lower- and middle-income families are able to live in the District, but even more than that, it is essential that they have the ability to live in neighborhoods with high-quality schools and libraries, and access to jobs, public transportation, and community resources. Last year, I worked in mostly low-income Anacostia, where the public library was closed indefinitely for renovation. In the middle-income Shaw neighborhood where I currently live, our library is in a similar state. When I lived in Georgetown, though, our neighborhood library was well-stocked, well-maintained, and open in the evenings and on weekends. Segregating the city based on income will only intensify inequalities like this one. Inclusionary zoning should apply throughout the District so that as many people as possible, irrespective of income level, have access to the basic services that many of us take for granted.

Both Columbia Heights, where I lived last year, and Shaw, where I currently live, are neighborhoods in transition. New building and development in both areas have pushed housing prices up, forcing longtime residents to move to less desirable parts of DC, or out of the District entirely. Last year, the neighbors who lived in the house to the left of mine were recent immigrants from Latin America, while the neighbors to my right were an African-American family who had lived in the District for decades. Similarly, this year

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my street is a mix of longtime District residents and recent arrivals I appreciate being able to live in places like these, where economically and ethnically diverse groups can live together and, ideally, learn from one another. If housing costs continue to rise, however, neighborhoods like Columbia Heights and Shaw will change. The middle-income people who live there now will be forced into the suburbs, and the neighborhoods will become increasingly economically segregated and homogenous DC needs a strong, effective inclusionary zoning policy that will prevent this from happening, allowing the people who have lived and worked in the District for decades to remain in their homes and in their neighborhoods.