

November 2, 2006

Ms. Carol Mitten
Chair
Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

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D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

2006 NOV -2 PM 2:44

Re: Inclusionary Zoning Proposal 04-33A

To Be Submitted Via Fax

Dear Chairman Mitten:

Please add these comments to the many others opposing the Inclusionary Zoning proposal for Historic Districts now before your panel.

There are many reasons why so many experienced and observant individuals and organizations believe this proposal would be disastrous to our historic districts. It needs to be rejected.

1. Developers should be required to provide affordable housing because it is necessary to maintain diversified neighborhoods and work forces in our city. No bonus should be given for being a responsible business. (I use the term "affordable housing" to mean housing built for a range of income groups now shut out of market rate units.)

Why should our teachers, firefighters, clerks, nurses, nursing aides and others have to travel from far distances to jobs in the city, clogging our roads and straining transit? It's just good business to keep them here, in our communities.

This requirement should have been imposed years ago during our building "boom." Other cities have set specific, mandatory formulas not only for affordable housing but for developer contributions to the city infrastructure costs created by the project.

Now, we have a major housing crisis and we are scrambling to add transit services, fix streets and build bridges, fire stations, libraries and recreation centers for new residents.

2. The Office of Planning needs to do its homework, before it asks for public comment. I have been told that the Office of Planning cannot provide estimates for the number of affordable units that would actually be built under this proposal. And I have also been told that the Office of Planning has promised to present supporting case studies from other cities -- at some future time. This is

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District of Columbia

CASE NO.

04-33A

EXHIBIT NO.

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not the kind of professional and convincing presentation our city deserves for a proposal of this magnitude.

In fact, the Office of Planning should never have asked the Zoning Commission and the public to consider this significant change without providing this information. How can any of us fully evaluate it before testifying?

3. A 20-percent density increase, even with the "fine print" restrictions and protections for some zones, would likely destroy the integrity of many historic districts, including mine. It would effectively reduce many of the minimum requirements in many zoning categories for green space, and other elements. Trees and green space, along with our low-scale bungalow architecture, are our character, and what we seek to protect in a historic district.

The city gives these qualities its endorsement in our master plan and our historic district brochure, but seeks to deteriorate it with this proposal.

In the Takoma Historic District, for example, a community with primarily one and two-story buildings, the Takoma Central District Plan, our new master plan, calls for a maximum building height of four stories. Last year, the Office of Planning won an automatic increase of five-feet through a new "Overlay Zone" for C2A buildings in the historic district and elsewhere. "It's just five feet," the proponents argued. (Please note that the bulk of our vacant and underused land is C2A.)

Now, lot occupancy could increase again, further eroding our district. And developers could always ask for a variance to do even more, arguing, "it's just five more feet, or six, or eight."

4. Historic Preservation Review Board (HPRB) review is not sufficient to protect historic neighborhoods.

Unfortunately, and by its own admission, HPRB has a mixed record with new Takoma Historic District buildings. Recently, HPRB board members expressed extreme disappointment with Cedar Crossing, a building at the corner of Blair and Cedar Streets, N.W. that they reviewed and approved. Many others in the community agree.

HPRB staff and Chairman Tersh Boasberg have repeatedly said their agendas are too crowded and that it is necessary to give staff an increasing amount of control over critical elements of the building. These staff members approve significant portions of HPRB projects behind closed doors, without community

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input and board review, and under great pressure from developers. The HPRB system is now not working. This change would strain it further.

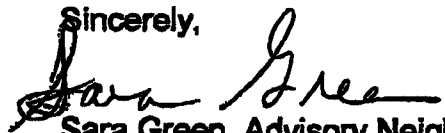
5. This change is not needed to give developers additional density.

In fact, developers can already win more density and helpful zoning changes by using a PUD, requesting a rezoning, or a variance or special exception.

The advantages to the public and the city are clear. All of these processes are handled on a case-by-case basis and in the public eye, with public comment and input. The Office of Planning, through this proposal, seeks to limit public review.

Please do not approve this proposal. It is destructive and not necessary. Please note also, I am writing for myself, not for Advisory Neighborhood Commission 4B.

Sincerely,



Sara Green, Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 4B01.
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THIS FAX HAS 4 PAGES, INCLUDING THIS COVER SHEET

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**To: Ms. Carol Mitten, Chair
Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia
727-6072**

From: Sara Green - Advisory Neighborhood Commissioner 4B01

RE: Inclusionary Zoning Proposal 04-33A

Please contact me if all of the pages do not come through. I can be reached at 202 829-8802 or by email, ANCSaraGreen@yahoo.com