



COALITION FOR
SMARTER GROWTH

Celebrating 10 Years of Smart Growth!

7/26/2007

Testimony before the District of Columbia Zoning Commission, regarding:

CASE No. 04-33B

Support amendments for Refinement and Expansion of
the Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) requirements of
Chapter 26 of the Zoning Regulations

By Melissa Bondi
Housing Director, Coalition for Smarter Growth

Good evening, and thank you for the opportunity to speak. My name is Melissa Bondi, and I serve as the Housing Director for the Coalition for Smarter Growth. The Coalition is a regional non-profit headquartered in Washington, DC that supports communities in accommodating appropriate growth while providing more housing and travel choices within the District and our greater metropolitan area.

I am here tonight to express the Coalition's support for the Office of Planning's proposed Inclusionary Zoning amendments, and to request that you adopt them as presented in the report.

Inclusionary zoning ordinances are widely recognized as a 'best practice' for local governments in addressing affordable housing demand. IZ permits communities to create new affordable housing choices in a variety of neighborhoods and through a broad spectrum of building types, while integrating within the existing fabric of their communities. The District's IZ program has been designed to reflect these important goals, and through the leadership of the Zoning Commission and many others, is poised for implementation later this year.

Regionally, Montgomery County, MD, and Fairfax, Loudoun and Arlington Counties in VA have also adopted their own versions of inclusionary zoning as part of a balanced portfolio of new housing production tools. As an author of the Arlington ordinance, I can attest to the success of the program throughout recent cycles of waxing and waning in the residential market.

The predictability of IZ allows builders to estimate upfront any *pro forma* and balance sheet calculations, and the generated affordable units serve as an important by-product of the region's steady economic growth. Already recognized as a regional leader on this issue, expanding the District's IZ program further showcases the private sector's ability to contribute to the affordable housing needs of our entire community.

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ZONING COMMISSION
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EXHIBIT No. 14
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The Coalition has analyzed the proposed amendments, and finds them consistent with the District's current IZ program and in keeping with its intent to provide simplicity, equity, effectiveness, and balance. The Coalition agrees with staff's rationale and careful implementation recommendations, such as including R-2 zoning within the IZ umbrella, helpful administrative clarifications, and introducing the proposed overlay districts as outlined in the report.

The recommendations are simple in that they are easy to describe within the overall context of the existing IZ program. The proposed application in R-2 zoning is comparable to R-3 and R-4 residential zoning, which are already incorporated, and overlay districts provide clear and illustrated implementation provisions. Staff has clarified the technical and consistency language within the ordinance and has acknowledged the need for clear administrative regulations to ensure straightforward compliance with the program.

The recommendations are also equitable, including R-2 provides more opportunities for additional neighborhoods to participate in the program throughout the District. The income eligibility requirements are the same as for the existing provisions, helping those between 50 – 80% of the area median income. For those residents who will be able to live in the newly created affordable units, the R-2 and overlay districts also allow greater access to transportation choices, from proximate Metrobus and rail services, to walkable adjacent trips for daily needs

The recommendations are effective in increasing the opportunities to achieve additional affordable units. They further support the goals and implementation provisions already adopted within the IZ program. The recommendations do not force housing in places where the lot sizes are not appropriate for additional units; they do allow for modest increases in the production of affordable semi-detached housing choices for families. And every unit produced through IZ will be a unit in perpetuity. Given the tremendous depth of need for affordable housing of all types in the District, every single additional housing unit reinforces the value of the program.

Finally, the parameters for implementation are balanced, as demonstrated by the staff analysis. The recommendations accommodate additional opportunities for onsite affordable units without negatively impacting neighborhood scale, form or character. They also allocate options for affordable housing in a variety of locations and building types. The recommendations are not over-reaching, and appropriately acknowledge and respect the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. These reasonable and relevant considerations are evident in the proposed amendments.

For all these reasons, the Coalition for Smarter Growth is pleased to support the staff recommendations for amended application of the Inclusionary Zoning program. On behalf of our organization, we thank the Zoning Commission for your commitment and continued leadership in exploring the best ways to apply principles of IZ throughout the District. Again, I appreciate the opportunity to present our views to you this evening.