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2016 MAR -3 AM 9:27

February 25, 2016

Anthony J. Hood, Chairman
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th St, NW, Suite 220S
Washington, D.C. 20001

Subject: Case No. 04-033G: Make Inclusionary Zoning Affordable

Dear Chairman Hood:

I am writing, and will submit my testimony, to urge the Zoning Commission to change the Area Median Income (AMI) requirement from 80% to 60% or lower (Case #04-033G). As a resident and full-time student in the District of Columbia I am directly affected by how the current inclusionary zoning AMI level does not work for the people who it is designed for – with an 80% AMI requirement those who actually are of low or moderate income cannot afford it. The formula for AMI is flawed and only a narrow margin of the populace it is directed at can utilize it.

The Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) program was originally created in 2005 to respond to DC's growing housing needs. I understand that this program is still in its infancy - issuing its first unit in 2009, therefore, we can see that the AMI requirement of 80% served as a good starting point, but:

- One of the first things that can be done is to revamp how the lottery is done. A number of the locations in which you have to go to attend the mandatory have the orientations at mass capacity without an opening until months. Others are done during the workday in the middle of the work week. Leaving those who must work unable to attend the orientation or having to take *unpaid* valuable time away from work. Surely, there is a way to streamline this or perhaps hold webinars? Giving access to a larger number of people to attend.
- In an article from Greater Greater Washington it states that only have 280 affordable dwelling units have come available. A striking gap in relation to the 4,900+ households that have registered for the IZ lottery (Johnson 2015).

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- In addition, when studying the Annual Inclusionary Zone reports from 2011 to present, it appears that only three units have been produced for those considered low-income. Whereas there have been 33 produced for median (DHCD). With a difference of over 166%! These numbers look skewed to advantage so that those in the moderate income category can enjoy the benefits of the IZ program.
- Lastly, it would seem that DC is coming dangerously close to repeating its past: developing new, pricier housing and rental developments under the pretense of “urban renewal” in lower income neighborhoods, that only serve to push those who can’t afford it out of their homes. Never mind that these demographics happen to be those who ethnicities are what has and is otherwise called, “Minorities”.

Again, Chairman Hood, I humbly request that you revisit the AMI 80% request and change it to 60% so that the citizens of the District of Columbia that it is meant for can benefit, not just the developers.

I thank you for your time and the opportunity you have given me to provide my testimony,

Sincerely,

Musaab A. Ali
Student
University of the District of Columbia

References

DHCD. 2011-2012. *Inclusionary Zoning Annual Report*. Annual Report, Washington: Department of Housing and Community Development, Government of the District of Columbia. <http://dhcd.dc.gov/service/inclusionary-zoning-affordable-housing-program>.

Johnson, Brian. 2015. *Here's how DC's inclusionary zoning program works*. September 1. <http://greatergreaterwashington.org/post/27924/heres-how-dcs-inclusionary-zoning-program-works/>.