

Testimony before the DC Zoning Commission
Regarding: Zoning Commission Case No. 08-06A Subtitle C (Parking and Inclusionary Zoning)
By Leslie Steen, non-profit affordable housing developer, former Housing Chief for the District of
Columbia, and long term resident of DC.

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Good evening. My name is Leslie Steen. I have been a resident of DC since the mid-1970's and a developer of affordable housing in DC and the region for most of those years. My husband and I have been a one car family for over 25 years. Our life in DC would not even require one car if it were not for my work. We live in an apartment building built in the late 60's that is massively over-parked. I would estimate that one third of the parking spaces are vacant and many that are occupied are occupied by cars that are not used.

PARKING MINIMUMS

- I support reducing parking minimums. It is a huge cost to affordable housing and can reduce or even destroy feasibility.
- Car ownership is a huge expense (\$8,000+/yr per AAA) and for many DC residents, it's entirely optional (38% of DC households don't own a vehicle).
- I can tell you that many low income residents in areas that are close to transit don't own cars. They cannot afford it.
- In many instances the cost of parking cannot be passed along to the low income residents. In the structures under which I build affordable rental housing, the DC tax payers through the District of Columbia government are bearing this burden because a low income resident cannot.
- Parking requirements unnecessarily increase housing costs, make housing projects less feasible. If parking spaces cost \$50,000 per parking space, as some underground spaces do, the cost translates to \$316 per month of debt service alone plus maintenance costs. A resident would have to earn \$12,600 more a year to pay the debt service alone.

INCLUSIONARY ZONING

I commend the Zoning Commission for creating the Inclusionary Zoning program. I was the Housing Chief for DC and shepherded the first version of the regulations for this new program.

- The program was slow to start due to the housing crash and has had administrative challenges. All of these administrative problems are being addressed by DHCD and the pipeline is now doing very well.
- While Inclusionary Zoning may be new to us, it is not a new approach. Our program was built on a sound policy framework after much research of other programs that have been operating over longer terms across the country.

- It is critical that we realize that housing built under inclusionary zoning will be new production housing built in higher cost locations. If this housing is lost, it will never be replaced.
- While a relatively small program in relation to other homeownership and rental preservation programs, designed and implemented at earlier times and funded by DC, inclusionary zoning has come into being as policy makers have recognized the importance of maintaining the affordability of newly created housing for the long term.
- Research shows that our program has been well designed to sustain affordability for the next homeowner while optimizing wealth creation for individual homeowners. Other programs funded by DC offer more in the way of wealth creation, which is fine. One size does not have to fit all. For the small number of homeownership units to be created under inclusionary zoning in high cost locations, it is critical that they be preserved as affordable.
- Thank you again for creating this farsighted affordable housing program. It promises to be the only way we will succeed in creating new housing in high cost, resource rich locations and prove to be an invaluable resource to low income families seeking better opportunities.