

The Committee of 100

on the Federal City



March 29, 2023

Committee of 100 Comments on Case Number 21-23

Setdown Report for a Text Amendment to Repeal the Downtown Exemption from Inclusionary Zoning Requirements

The Committee of 100 on the Federal City (“C100”) has reviewed the setdown report filed by the Office of Planning on the proposed text amendment (Case No. 21-23) which proposes to repeal the exemption from the City’s Inclusionary Zoning rules for residential construction in the Downtown Zones. **The Committee of 100 on the Federal City recommends that case number 21-23 be set down for a public hearing.**

The petitioner in this case asks that the Inclusionary Zoning rules apply to residential developments in the Downtown Zones, which are exempt from these rules that apply to all other areas of the City. As the Zoning Commission knows, the Committee of 100 has long advocated for repeal of that exemption. The exemption and its possible repeal are at the center of this petition.

The need for more affordable housing is one of the top crises facing the City. This petition provides the opportunity for public discussion of how this matter can be addressed in the central city. We are disappointed that, 15 months after the filing of the petition, the Office of Planning filed a report in which it is attempting to kill the proposal. We all know that much of Downtown is filled with office buildings, where the vacancy rate is around 20 percent. Further, much of the remaining space is underutilized, and the prospect of more vacancies looms as leases expire. The Office of Planning’s economic analysis is based on speculation layered on top of speculation. It also presumably is based on OP’s bias for office development. Back in July 2021, before the filing of this petition, Andrew Trueblood, then Director of the Office of Planning, in a presentation before the Zoning Commission, stated in response to a question from Commissioner Miller about office to residential conversions that there is “nothing there.”

The office world has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. OP’s set-down report seems to be based on the hope that the office market will come back. The Committee of 100 also hopes for improvement. However, the writing on the wall suggests that remote work is here to stay. Further, the need for racial equity driven by the 2021 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan is more than ever part of the public debate. Inclusionary Zoning is one of the tools available to make the City, including Downtown, more diverse and equitable. There should be a full public

hearing on the petitioner's proposal to discuss all the issues involved. To reject the petition just seven days after the Office of Planning filed its economic analysis is a disservice to the City.

In summary, the Zoning Commission should set down the petition for a full public hearing.

Thank you.

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