Zoning Commission Roundtable, October 26, 2026 – Submission in support of strengthening the Zoning Commission's Racial Equity Tool

I am a resident of Ward 3, and member of Ward3Housing Justice (W3HJ), Empower and other community groups combatting racial injustice, and promoting racial inclusion. Although I am not on the witness list for today, I am submitting this statement in support of others who are asking you to strengthen the current ZC Racial Equity tool.

The tool's inadequacy is illustrated in Ward 3 by the continuing lack of deeply affordable housing in the ward, and the Commission's failure to link data metrics and zoning actions under review, as summarized in the Roundtable Notice: "The Commission has not consistently found a clear link between the data metrics and the zoning actions under review [and]…even if a zoning action will likely result in negative racial equity impacts, that outcome alone is not a basis to deny a zoning action." The result has been that recent cases, such as those on Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues, produced no commitments to low income housing, despite community pleas.

The Commission should require that agencies and applicants apply a racial lens to every planning document, zoning decision, and regulation. It is not enough to address potential displacement, although that is important. Every applicant for development and density projects should incorporate measures that promote racial equity, prevent displacement, repair past harms and require meaningful plans for affordability. This is particularly important in Ward 3, where displacement occurred years ago; the Commission's standards should insure that applications include remedies for prior displacement and other discriminatory housing practices.

To insure that residents can participate in the standards setting and review process in a meaningful way, the Commission should review and improve the entire zoning process to make it more accessible and equitable, including enhancing notice requirements, providing more education for the public and making information about cases more understandable.

Thank you for providing this roundtable. We hope that you will use today's recommendations as the basis for specific changes to the Racial Equity tool's requirements.

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
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EXHIBIT NO. 10