



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

ORAL TESTIMONY ON APRIL 14, 2016

Supplemental Testimony on ZC 04-33G (zcsubmissions@dc.gov)

Inclusionary Zoning Amendments, Subtitle C, General Rules, Chapter 10

Good evening Chairperson Hood and Commissioners,

I am Sid Fowler, the Senior Minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ. I am testifying in favor of proposals to make Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) more inclusive. This testimony draws from our congregation's current conversations about and commitment to greater affordable housing for the District.

For 150 years, our church has a long history of engagement with people who are on the margins – from our being a service provider, a spiritual home, and a full participant in other ecumenical and service programs such as ThriveDC, Pathways to Housing, the DC Department of Human Service's One Family/One Congregation program, Washington Interfaith Network and Shaw Community Ministry. Currently we seek vital ways that our own new multi-use building at the corner of 10th and G NW might be a place of continuing service and hope for the downtown.

Yet we are increasingly concerned as luxury housing dominates our neighborhood while low-income residents such as those at Wah Luck House in Chinatown may face potential loss of their subsidized housing and dispersion from the communities they have lived in for many years.

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The fundamental questions as we look at the community around us are ***“Who is our neighbor?”*** and ***“How do we care for our neighbors?”*** With the tripling of the boundaries of downtown approved by the Zoning Commission, and the exemption of IZ requirements for new properties, we are especially concerned.

Will it be impossible for so many of those who are vital to our downtown community, our diverse and wonderful neighbors, to maintain and find housing there?

Yet, there is a real possibility for including these neighbors as well. By requiring IZ in the areas now added to the downtown, the Zoning Commission can define “neighbor” in a way that reflects the highest aspirations of our city as a place guided by equity and justice.

First Church wishes for and supports, at minimum, further exploration about broadening and revising IZ requirements by:

1. Increasing the proportion of qualifying households that are low-to-moderate-income by lowering the top tier income threshold (set at 50% area median income/AMI or lower).
2. Increasing the number of IZ units produced for substantially lower-to-middle income levels.
3. Capping the amount that occupants of IZ units must pay at 25% of their income.
4. Strongly encouraging developers to provide larger IZ units for family housing. (Most housing units built today are studios or 1-2 bedrooms, hardly adequate for growing and/or extended families.)
5. And also by requiring that all new or substantially renovated residential or mixed-use with residential buildings in the expanded downtown provide IZ units.

We urge the Zoning Commission to even more fully enter into the moral reflection about who is our neighbor in discerning the future and determining what Chair of the Council, Phil Mendelsohn, called “balance” at the last time we gathered for IZ testimonies. In the midst of prosperity and possibility, how do we serve those vulnerable to displacement and share

in the blessings of this time? We believe that the Zoning Commission and a more inclusive Inclusionary Zoning are both critical factors in building such a future and a better DC.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

Sidney D. Fowler

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