

Testimony for 04-33G - Amendments to Inclusionary Zoning Hearing

April 14, 2016

Good evening Chairman Hood & members of the Zoning Commission.

My name is Elizabeth Vogel, and I live in Ward 2, specifically in the Logan Circle Neighborhood.

I am here this evening as a concerned DC resident and a volunteer with Jews United for Justice (JUFJ). I urge you to make Inclusionary Zoning more affordable. We need to make sure we are taking every opportunity to ensure that DC is an affordable city and that affordable housing exists throughout all of our neighborhoods.

I want to tell you a little bit about myself, so you know exactly who the Office of Planning's Option 1B could be assisting directly.

I graduated from Georgetown Law School in the Spring of 2015. While many of my friends graduated and took jobs at law firms where they made six figures, I knew that wasn't for me. I went to law school with the intention of using my legal skills to serve historically underserved communities. So upon graduation, I excitedly accepted a position at a DC non-profit that provides free legal services to low-income DC residents. I love my job, but it comes with a sacrifice. When I started working there earlier this fall, I was making \$43,500 a year. I just got a raise – I now make \$45,500 a year – but this still leaves me just under 60% of the AMI. My salary makes it challenging for me to afford to live in DC, a place I have called home for the last three and a half years and also the community I want to serve. Furthermore, since my rent is such a large percentage of my income, this makes it challenging to save money each month. Since my employer does not offer a 401(k), I should be putting money into my savings every month, but the high cost of living in DC forces me to prioritize my current needs rather than my future ones.

While Logan Circle is not the most affordable DC neighborhood, I made the choice to live there for several reasons. First of all, I am aware of the gentrification happening across DC. I did not want to move into an “up and coming” neighborhood knowing that my presence there would mean that I was pushing out longer-term residents. Second, I choose not to own a car, for cost-saving reasons, which means that I prefer to live in a neighborhood where amenities like a grocery store and the metro are in walking distance. When I tell people I pay \$1469 a month for a studio apartment, they remark that what I pay is less than what they currently see advertised. This rent, however, is more than half of my monthly take-home pay; it doesn't exactly feel like a good deal when I look at my bank statements. I'm here tonight because I want to urge you to provide affordable housing for people like me; people who are committed to serving the DC community and also want to be able to afford to live here. Residents of DC should not feel like they have to choose between a job in public service or affording to live in the community they serve.

Simply put, Option 1B makes sense. It's a good compromise. Developers can afford to do it. It's an obvious solution to help ensure that DC remains an affordable place to live.

Elizabeth Vogel
1301 15th St NW, Apt 602

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CASE NO. 04-33G
ZONING COMMISSION
EXHIBIT NO. 20
CASE NO. 04-33G
EXHIBIT NO. 220