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FIRST CONGREGATIONAL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

**Supplemental Testimony on ZC 04-33G (zcsubmissions@dc.gov)
Inclusionary Zoning Amendments, Subtitle C, General Rules, Chapter 10
January 1, 2016**

I am the Reverend Dr. Sidney Fowler, Senior Minister of First Congregational United Church of Christ, 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.

Our 150-year-old church has a long history of engagement with people who are on the margins, both as a service provider and as a sponsor/participant in programs such as ThriveDC, Pathways to Housing, the DC Department of Human Service's One Congregation/One Family program, Washington Interfaith Network and Shaw Community Ministry after-school program. Our church belongs to the Downtown BID and Penn Quarter and we have been avid proponents of a "living downtown" since the early 1980's. We have sought vital ways that our own new multi-use building might be a place of 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 may face potential loss of their subsidized housing and dispersion from the communities they have lived in for many years.

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 exclusion of IZ requirements for new properties from Foggy Bottom to NOMA within this zone, the answer seems to be, *"Only the privileged are our neighbors."*

Will the District, and particularly this Commission, defend excluding from our downtown neighborhood the teachers, fire fighters, nurses and police on whom we all depend? The working poor who want to live close to their late-night jobs in restaurants and bars? Or the maids and cleaning staff in downtown hotels? *Who are our neighbors? They are.*

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 04-33G

EXHIBIT NO. 43

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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.

Another fundamental question is **“How can we build diverse communities?”** With more units in the pipeline, the public will soon be able to determine if DC’s IZ efforts are achieving the diverse, mixed-income communities the public has long been promised.

First Church and our Social Action Commission support, at minimum, broadening IZ requirements by:

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

We urge the ZC to even more fully enter into the moral reflection about who is our neighbor in discerning the future. 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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