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Sent: Wednesday, September 21, 2022 8:57 AM
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Subject: Testimony at Racial Equity Roundtable

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Testimony at Racial Equity Roundtable

September 22, 2022

By
Rev. Dr. Wanda K. Thompson

Good Evening. I am here today to say that the Racial Equity Tool, as currently proposed, is not sufficient. It does not go far enough. If it is not modified and adjusted, it will not achieve the goals intended. In addition, it does not adhere to Comp Plan requirements.

One major concern I have is the need for engagement of the community. Development decisions should not be made without the input and feedback from those affected and impacted. Such engagement must be purposeful, deliberate, and intentional. To that point, an analysis should be done to address racial equity in all zoning decisions. This should be outlined explicitly in text amendments.

Prevention of the displacement of residents is another critical concern. Who is at potential risk of displacement by development should be analyzed so that such displacement can be prevented or mitigated. Affordability is always discussed but what is needed is deep affordability. Otherwise, those at the lower end of the economic scale will not be available to access or obtain housing and other opportunities. The impact of this will be that the racial wealth gap will be increased.

Who should perform the analyses I mentioned earlier? It seems to me that the Community Planning section of OP would be the most obvious choice. These analyses should be done prior to any development to determine whether such development is warranted. The demographics of the area; benefits to, and opportunities for, the community; displacement risk; real and deep housing affordability; are factors that should be considered as well as housing availability for families; and, access to employment opportunities must be part of the racial equity and development tools.

I hope that you will seriously consider all that you hear from community advocates today. I appreciate the opportunity to lend my voice to the discussion.

Rev. Dr. Wanda K. Thompson

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