GOVERNMENT OF
THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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ZONING COMMISSION

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PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE ON ZONING COMMISSION'S RACIAL EQUITY TOOL

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MONDAY

OCTOBER 26, 2026

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The District of Columbia Zoning Commission's Public Roundtable on the Racial Equity Tool convened via teleconference, pursuant to notice, at 4:00 p.m. EDT, Anthony J. Hood, Chairman, presiding.

ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

ANTHONY J. HOOD, Chairman
ROBERT E. MILLER, Vice Chair
JOSEPH IMAMURA, Commissioner
GWEN WRIGHT, Commissioner
CHRISTINE BRUINS, Commissioner

OFFICE OF ZONING STAFF PRESENT:

PAUL YOUNG, Zoning Data Specialist
SHARON S. SCHELLIN, Secretary

OFFICE OF ZONING LEGAL DIVISION STAFF PRESENT:

JACOB RITTING, ESQUIRE
HILLARY LOVICK, ESQUIRE

WITNESSES PRESENT:

RYAN CURREN, Race Forward
WILLIAM JORDAN
PARISA NOROUZI, Empower DC
TUCKER KELSCH
JAMILA WHITE, Chair, ANC 8A
MEG MAGUIRE, Chair, Northwest Opportunity Partners, Community Development Corporation
NANCY MACWOOD
DEVON COLEMAN, Empower DC
MELODIE MARSH, Young, Gifted and Green
BINTA ROBINSON
MARGARET DWYER, Ward 3 Housing Justice
DEIRDRE BROWN, Vice Chair, Northwest Opportunity Partners, Community Development Corporation
LAURA RICHARDS, Committee of 100
MUSTAFA ABDUL-SALAAM, Ward 8 Community Economic Development
SARAH JANE SHOENFELD
SEBRENA RHODES, Commissioner, SMD 5D02

The transcript constitutes the minutes from the Public Roundtable on the Zoning Commission's Racial Equity Tool held on October 26, 2026.

T-A-B-L-E O-F C-O-N-T-E-N-T-S

Case No. 26-RE
Public Roundtable on Zoning Commission's
Racial Equity Tool

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(4:00 p.m.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen. This is a public roundtable of the Zoning Commission of the District of Columbia, which is Zoning Commission Case Number 26-RE. The District of Columbia Commission is holding a roundtable to hear public comment regarding its current racial equity tool.

First joining me -- or soon to join -- well, joining me are Vice Chair Miller, Commissioner Wright, Commissioner Imamura, and Commissioner Bruins. Again, my name is Anthony Hood, Chairman. Also joining us are Ms. Sharon Schellin, Secretary of the Office of Zoning; also our Office of Zoning Legal Division, Ms. Hillary Lovick and Mr. Jacob Ritting; and I'm sure we have other staff who's listening in the background. Today's hearing, as stated, is, again, a roundtable on racial equity, which is Zoning Commission Case Number 26-RE.

A little background. In the 2021 update, the Comprehensive Plan required the Zoning Commission to evaluate all zoning actions through a racial equity lens. And, in order to comply with the Comp Plan requirements more fully, the Commission released its initial racial equity tool on April the 28th, 2022 on the Officer of Zoning's website. So we wanted to look at the initial tool. The initial tool was split into two parts. Part one provided guidance regarding racial equity submissions to the zoning case record, and part two listed questions and themes that

the Commission used in its evaluation of zoning actions through a racial equity lens.

We have our current tool. Our current tool is -- the Commission held a roundtable, and, in doing that roundtable, we wanted to do an examination and a discovery after a few years, and this is what we're doing here tonight. The first initial roundtable to solicit public comment and feedback on the initial tool was in September of 2022, and here we are now in October 26th -- I mean, October 26th, 2026. The Commission had released a racial equity tool on February 3rd, 2023. We had part one, racial analysis; part two, community outreach and engagement from applicants/petitioners; part three, disaggregated race and ethnicity data from the Office of Planning; and part four, the Commission's criteria to evaluate a zoning action through a racial equity lens.

The Commission has some observations regarding the current tool. The Commission also utilized the current tool in its evaluation of zoning actions through a racial equity lens since its release of February 3rd, 2023. Further, even if a zoning action will likely result in negative racial equity impacts, the outcome, alone, is not a basis to deny a zoning application. So we've learned all that. So the purpose tonight -- here's the purpose tonight. The purpose tonight of this roundtable is to solicit public comment and feedback on the current tool. The Commission is particularly interested in

public comment on the following topics:

Community outreach and engagement. What steps/processes can applicants and petitioners implement to improve community outreach and engagement efforts;

Disaggregated race and ethnicity data. Are there data metrics that should be added or removed from the current tool;

And the Commission's racial equity evaluation criteria. What measures can applicants undertake to further mitigate direct displacement impacts associated with the zoning actions.

And, for me, a personal thing -- I'm going to put this in. I'm sure others -- I want to know if it's working. I really want to know if it's truly working. I mean, we can have the conversation, and I said this from day one; personally, Anthony Hood wants to know if it's working. So before we go to the -- before we go to our witness list, I'm going to ask my colleagues if they want to add anything that they're trying to get out of this or looking -- but before we do that, let me thank my colleagues for agreeing to do this. I really appreciate you all taking the time to do this, because I know we want to make sure that we're just -- we're having more than just a conversational piece, and that's what I think my -- at least my goal, and I'm sure others has that goal as well. But let me go to my colleagues and see if you have any opening statements, and let me start out with Vice Chair Miller.

VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. No, I

really -- I don't have an opening statement. I look forward to hearing the public feedback on how they think the racial equity tool is working. I've read some of the comments in the record, and many of them think it's not effective at all, in terms of producing deeper lower levels of affordable housing than our Inclusionary Zoning or IZ Plus require and in dealing with displacement. So I look forward to any specific suggestions.

You know, we're interested, also, in changing the always -- and we have changed in the past the IZ regulations to make them -- to increase the set-asides and have deeper affordability levels, but the IZ really is not designed, as the witnesses -- the public knows, to really reach the deeper lower levels of affordable housing. This is -- because there's no subsidy involved with the IZ; it's the market-rate units that have to subsidize it, and so there are also legal issues, in terms of how much we can do there. It's the public subsidies, both federal and DC, that, in combination with IZ, have contributed to the greatest affordable housing units that we've seen, and I hope there will be those federal and District resources in the future. So that's all I have to say, Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the public hearing testimony.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Commissioner Wright, you have any opening comments?

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Yeah. I would just echo some of the comments made by Vice Chair Miller. I think it is important

and healthy to take a look at the racial equity tool after it's been in place for several years and to try to understand its effectiveness and ways that it can be improved. I think, again, one of the things that I think is a good thing about the racial equity tool is that it definitely, definitely gets applicants -- puts them on notice that they have to engage more fully with the community when they are proposing projects, and that they need to understand the demographics and the dynamics of communities to talk about projects that they are undertaking.

It is not going to solve our affordable housing problem in the city. I think we all know we have a significant affordable housing problem, for many of the reasons that, you know, Vice Chair Miller raised and explained, but I do think that it is important to have the tool to look at the issue of racial equity as we consider projects. And, although this one may be imperfect, I really -- and I am very interested in hearing what the community has to say during this hearing.

I think, you know, that we are, hopefully, all working towards achieving the same goals, to make sure that projects everywhere in the city can do as much as possible to address the issue of affordability, but also to understand and communicate with the communities in which they're being built. And that's, to me, one of the key parts of the racial equity tool. So looking forward to hearing testimony.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Great. Thank you,

Commissioner -- I almost said Vice Chair Imamura -- Commissioner Imamura.

COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'll take the promotion, but defer to Vice Chair Miller there. I don't think I have anything further to add, but other -- just two comments though, Mr. Chairman. One, thank you for calling for the roundtable discussion here. I think it's important to hear from the public. It's also important to identify ways that perhaps the tool can be refined and improved in new and better ways. Commissioner Wright had made a comment about a shared mission or a shared vision for the city, and that's really about creating a better city to live, work, and play. And it is an imperfect tool, but there are things that -- I think it has set a new standard and set of expectations for community input and outreach, and that's really foundational for the racial equity tool here. And so, like Vice Chair Miller, like Commissioner Wright, I'm interested to hear public testimony and with specificity on perhaps ways that we can -- we can improve it. Otherwise, I think this is an opportunity tonight, and so I look forward to hearing what the public has to say. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. I want to thank my colleagues for the comments. Now, I saw Commissioner Bruins. Okay. She's -- Commissioner Bruins, you have any opening statements?

COMMISSIONER BRUINS: Hi. I'm sorry. I am joining by phone, but I am excited to listen and learn. I'm on my way back from the airport, but I'm listening in and will join with video as soon as I can.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Sounds good. No problem. All right. So, with that, Ms. Schellin, I know we had an expert witness that needed to come up. The rules today -- the rules of the day are, I think organizations we said six minutes. Did we say -- Ms. Schellin, tell me what we said, because I don't want to mess that up. And then, also, bring up -- let's bring up the expert who has to leave, and then we can go from there.

MS. SCHELLIN: Let me unmute. You guys said four minutes for individuals and six minutes for organizations. And we do have one person who -- of course, there are no experts in roundtables, but he is considered an expert in his field, and so to accommodate his schedule, we said we would take him first, and his name is Ryan -- I think it's Cullen (phonetic) -- let me find him on the list here -- Ryan Curren. I'm sorry. If we could bring him forward.

And I have nothing else to add. As you stated, you guys have eloquently gone over everything. The record's very full with submissions -- written submissions, and we have 20-some people signed up to testify. I did want to ask -- most of them have gone under the undeclared. We may have one or maybe two or three proponents, two or three opponents. In the past,

we've taken these as they've signed up in the racial equity. How do you want to take the witnesses this evening?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: I don't believe there's any opponent, proponent, or undeclared. I just -- we just want to hear them.

MS. SCHELLIN: For this, yeah.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: So just go by -- just go down the list.

MS. SCHELLIN: As we -- Okay. That's what I thought. So did Mr. -- I can't see if Mr. Curren came up yet.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Oh, yes, Mr. Curren is here.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. Did you want to just go ahead and go with him first?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes, go with Mr. Curren, Race Forward.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes. Mr. Curren, you may begin.

MR. CURREN: Yeah. Appreciate it. Thank you for the invitation. And can you hear me? Is my --

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes we can. Yes, we can.

MR. CURREN: Great. Well, good evening. My name is Ryan Curren. I'm here on behalf of Race Forward. We're a national nonprofit working to build a just multi-racial democracy, and delighted to be invited to comment on the Zoning Commission's racial equity tool. I'll refer to it as a RET going forward. I just want to start by saying we really applaud the District's commitment to racial equity, you know, demonstrated through the leadership in the Mayor's Office of Racial Equity and

the Council's Office of Racial Equity. I want to really recognize the District's efforts to translate the commitment into policy and, hopefully, into action, right, which is what we're talking about today. So, you know, including equitable growth policies in the Comprehensive Plan; also the Office of Planning's Racial Equity Action Plan kind of really demonstrates that commitment and showing in a very visible policy way.

So the District has been a longtime member of our Government Alliance on Race and Equity, so a national network of other jurisdictions committed to racial equity, and it has provided inspiration throughout the network. The racial equity tool is an opportunity to really build on that foundation and move from policy commitment to action. So today I wanted to focus my comments on a couple promising practices from across the network in those areas that you're interested in; community engagement, data, anti-displacement measures, and then, also, the capacity actually needed to implement the tool effectively, to strengthen it, right, as I heard some comments earlier.

So, first, thinking about the tool as both an upstream and downstream intervention. The District is among a relatively small number of cities that apply a racial equity tool during development review. So both Boston and New York also use this approach. It helps to identify opportunities for community benefits that address displacement impacts that may -- that are not already adequately addressed by existing zoning requirements

or tenant protections, so this is an important downstream intervention. It allows the city to examine individual projects; you know, who benefits, who's burdened, how can inequities be addressed.

But we also see jurisdictions apply a formal and structured racial equity toolkit upstream to their city's budget for planning and development, to their Comprehensive Plan, their zoning map, their Code updates, and Small Area Plans. So addressing equity at this earlier stage allows the city to bake equity into the rules that shape development, to capture value generated by rezoning and direct it toward community benefits across the city, across multiple properties. And that provides greater predictability for property owners and developers, while giving communities greater assurance that the new development will actually address long-standing racial disparities and get to some of that deeper level of affordability.

In terms of community engagement, you know, the principle being that people most affected by development must have a meaningful role in identifying potential harms and defining solutions. So quantitative data can help you identify displacement risks, and I'll talk about how to improve that, but the residents can actually explain or ground truth those to know, like, what are the pressures that affect their lives and what are the interventions that make a difference, so having really clear community engagement standards that applicants must meet to

complete a RET can help, right.

So this, in best practice, is early engagement, you know, during pre-development, during architectural design process, when, you know, residents can still actually meaningfully influence a project, and also making it easier to engage. So the District could provide -- we've seen this elsewhere -- like, a resource list of community-based organizations led by communities of color and people experiencing housing insecurity. This could include tenant unions or human service organizations to make that engagement easier for applicants.

Going on to data, I wanted to talk about kind of strengthening the robustness of the data in the tool, making relevant data from the city accessible to applicants as early as possible, again, lowering that barrier. This could include historical information about harms experienced by communities of color in the area of the project, such as displacement associated with urban renewal or past infrastructure projects.

It could also include indicators of current vulnerability; housing cost burdens, overcrowding, evictions, foreclosures, the early warning signs of displacement, right, habitility (phonetic) -- habitability complaints and utility shutoff or late payments. That's the kind of data that can help make the invisible visible, right; really help you understand what's happening in the area and what may be needed to -- in

response.

Going on to anti-displacement measures, so kind of really connecting the racial equity toolkit to meaningful measures of anti-displacement. The RET can help identify and mitigate project-level harms, but it can't replace a comprehensive citywide anti-displacement strategy or fair housing plan, right, again, going upstream. These should direct community stabilization resources to areas facing high displacement risk and prioritize affordable housing and rezoning in high-cost areas with histories of exclusion.

But, at the project level, the RET should help insure that any existing tenant protections are enforced. Again, what's the floor you don't want to go below? Applicants should demonstrate compliance with applicable tenant right laws, with appropriate verification, rather than relying on self-reporting. When the residents are directly displaced by development, having meaningful relocation assistance; you know, covering first/last month's rent, a security deposit, like, actual relocation, and, at least, you know, an additional month of rent. I mean, that's what we have seen elsewhere as being really effective in truly helping someone relocate with true choice.

The RET could also encourage applicants to maximize community benefits. So this is where, like, a menu -- this is, like, kind of the Boston model, where you provide a menu of community benefits; family-sized units, deeper affordability,

affirmative marketing to Housing Choice voucher holders, and community benefit agreements that support -- that are supported by the residents themselves.

So, lastly, about capacity, these toolkits are new, right; it's a new muscle; it's a new practice. They require support, making it easier to do, and accountability that they're done with integrity. So we've seen centralized offices, such as your Office of Racial Equity, providing staffing and resources, subject matter expertise, technical assistance to help review completed racial equity toolkits, so something to consider. Also investing in outreach and engagement and that -- for public education; tenant unions, community organizers, community-based organizations can help the city with their public education and outreach, you know, regarding zoning development and displacement, and that should complement, not, of course, replace the engagement required of applicants.

So, in closing, the racial equity tool -- you know, it's an opportunity to make the invisible visible, right; to identify who benefits from development, who bears its costs, and how the District can achieve more equitable outcomes. So I just really encourage the District to build on its leadership and continue developing the RET as a national model for planning, and as the District advances zoning reform and invests in its neighborhood, the RET can help insure that growth expands opportunity, advances fair housing, and does not intensify long-

standing racial disparities and displacement pressures. Thank you for your time and consideration.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Mr. Curren. I know you may have another engagement, but let's see if we have a few questions for you. Any of my colleagues have any questions? And, Commissioner Bruins, if you have some, just chime in.

COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: (Raises hand.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Commissioner Imamura has a question.

COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Mr. Curren, for your testimony tonight. You had mentioned your familiarity with Boston and New York's racial equity efforts or initiatives there, and while each city is a little different and I don't think it's very helpful to compare, because our issues and needs and goals are very different, I am curious, however, to know, from your experience and work or level of familiarity with both of those cities, how our racial equity tool either differs or compares.

I know that their level of sophistication may be a little higher than ours, but that's also in terms of the implementation of their initiatives and tools, only because they have maybe more resources to roll that out. But I'm kind of curious, in terms of sort of level-setting, where -- how our tool might compare to their tools.

MR. CURREN: In terms of -- Thank you for your question. Again, this is -- this is a new practice. Like, a lot of planners

and folks, you know, coming into the field, they're not trained in this. maybe they're trained in environmental impact statements is maybe the best corollary, but this is -- this is relatively new. There's only, like, a couple -- like, one or two generations of this practice, and especially in -- at the development review process. Again, this is, you know, more of a downstream intervention. But what -- you know, what we've seen is just differences in capacity to implement it well with integrity. So I think you're asking some of the right questions, probably using some of the right data. You can -- you know, you can -- but it's about how it actually gets used and when and by who, right. And so that's where some capacity can help, and it does come down to time and money, absolutely.

I've appreciated Boston's use of their development review process to bring multiple departments together to assess this together and look for ways that community benefits can be enhanced, because it's never, you know, just one department's responsibility, so that kind of cross-departmental approach has been -- and that's where, like I mentioned, the Office of Racial Equity, like, they can really help you keep an eye and a laser focus on the racial equity implications of the answers that you're seeing or, you know, see how well they're answered even.

New York has an incredible data layer, like, really targeted. It, you know, makes it very easy for the applicant to know the data. They don't have to, like, go research it

themselves. And I believe -- and this is where I'm pretty sure they have, like, some community engagement standards. Don't quote me on that. I'm pretty sure there's like -- it's like -- it's not just you define it and self-report; they have some like -- some direction they give. Again, if it's new for the city, it's definitely new for developers to be asking these questions and doing this kind of outreach -- you know, this, like, early outreach with these -- with these concerns in mind, so making it as easy as possible for them to do it, you know, because some may not be willing, but the ones who are willing to do it, they also need help.

COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: Terrific. Thank you, Mr. Curren. I appreciate your response. And, you know, one of the takeaways here for me from your testimony is that, you know, it's innovative, forward-thinking, and progressive here. So, hopefully, others that are listening in and waiting to share their testimony, I think that's a great start for DC and for the roundtable tonight, so thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you. Any other questions?

VICE CHAIR MILLER: Yeah. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you, Mr. Curren, for being here and testifying this evening. Do we have a copy of your statement that you just read and any backup in the record? I was looking for it and I didn't see it, but if you can submit it, that would -- if -- with the Chairman's agreement, could you submit that for the record? That

would be helpful I think for us and the public to have a written copy of your testimony and any studies on this particular topic.

MR. CURREN: Yeah, happily. I'll submit it after this. And I'll end with just, also, a caution of these, you know, not being misused as well and just checklists for folks to just kind of check the box and move on. They can also be co-opted, as we've seen with environmental impact statements, so just putting some guardrails in, so that, again, these are done with integrity and with an eye toward that deeper affordability and those community benefits to really capture that value that's really created through these zoning changes.

So thank you for the time, and I am going to hang out a little bit and listen. I don't have, like, an immediate thing to run to, so I appreciate your willingness to have me come early. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Sure. Don't run off, because I do have a question. And I appreciate the compliments you're giving to the city. I think this is relatively new for us to try to go through this process, and we're only a small bite or a small piece of the pie. There are other agencies -- and I heard you mention about coordination. I do know that we have reached out to our Office of Racial Equity. We've been trying to figure those things out.

One of the things that came out previously in this whole process was the expertise of evaluating some of our cases

that come in front of us. I'm not sure where we are. That's still -- for me, still looming, but I'm going to put this to you, and I want to hear your response. What I feel like, process heavy, conversation heavy, but it's -- and results light. So my problem has always been, through this whole conversation piece about racial equity -- and, you know, our tool is great; we come down; we get the disaggregated data; we get the comments, but I'm still trying to figure out if it's getting to the people where we need to get to. And, through your experience, how do you know that, other than what somebody comes and tells you? People can come and tell us anything. I'm not saying they're doing that. But how do you know it's really working and it's really getting to the people that we're trying to -- the audience we're trying to reach, if you understand my question? If not, I'll move on.

MR. CURREN: No, I do understand your question, and I think, you know, changing material conditions in people's lives is what matters and it shows -- should show up in the data, right. And then measuring displacement is -- risk is easy; measuring displacement and stabilization is harder, and so going back and doing an analysis of, like, what -- you know, a classic kind of program evaluation of what would this have -- what would development patterns or -- you know, it even comes down to bedrooms and affordability and, you know, the things you care about; would they -- would you have gotten -- would things have looked differently without this intervention, you know, with the

community benefits that folks asked for? A, were they delivered; B, what kind of impact did they have on people's lives? And so having some kind of -- you know, if it's annual or more frequent, but some kind of review of both, for the -- not just for the developer, but for -- I think for some of the residents in the -- you know, in the community; how has this benefited you? And that --

COMMISSIONER IMAMURA: It's a feedback loop.

MR. CURREN: Yeah, which is -- you know, it's time intensive and it's more capacity, but it's really going to show you whether you're in the right direction or not.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. All right. All right. Thank you for that answer, Mr. Curren. Any other questions, colleagues?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: And, again, thank you for taking the time to come and speak to us. Thank you. All right. Ms. Schellin, I think -- I think we've satisfied that request, so I guess we can start with the list. Ms. Schellin, I'm going ask you to call the names or do you want me to call? Hold on. Let me see.

MS. SCHELLIN: I can call them.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah, why don't you, so you can keep track of it. Yeah, you can call them. Thank you.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. Sure. How many would you like up at a time; four, six, five?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Let's bring four up at a time, and I'm going to ask everyone to be cognizant of the clock, because I think we do have a number of people that want to testify. We may have some questions -- follow-up questions. And those who can stick around, stick around, because, in our discussion, we may -- if you're able -- we may have some follow-up questions later on, as we go through this, so we'd appreciate it. If not, we'll figure out how to get in touch with you.

MS. SCHELLIN: Sure. Okay. So we have William Jordan. We have Parisa Norouzi and Ann Hoffman, both from Empower DC. They can let you know which one's going to take -- I mean, speak on behalf of the organization. And then we have Salim Adofo on behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 8C; Tucker Kelsch. I'm sorry. That was five. Let's see how many we got. I thought I --

CHAIRMAN HOOD: That's all right. We can bring up five, Ms. Schellin. I just don't want my screen --

MS. SCHELLIN: Are they all here? I thought we were missing one.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: They all are here?

MS. SCHELLIN: One, two, three --

MR. YOUNG: I was missing two of those.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. So we are. That's what I thought. Okay. So one more. How about Jamila White?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: If Miss White is here, I only see four.

MS. SCHELLIN: I think she might be under -- is she under -- is she still a Commissioner? Yes, she might be under Commissioner White. I did see Commissioner White up there.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah, she's on, she's on. Now we need to call one more.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. One more. Meg Maguire.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay.

MS. SCHELLIN: And I thought I saw her earlier.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: And I hope --

MS. SCHELLIN: Margaret -- Meg Maguire.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah, she's on, she's on.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. So, Mr. Jordan, your name was called first. For some reason, I remember your name, so, Mr. Jordan, you go first.

MR. JORDAN: Good evening or afternoon. I appreciate the Commission's willingness to tackle racial equity, as required by the 2019 Comp Plan amendments, primarily the mandate to evaluate zoning actions through a racial equity lens. Unfortunately, the Commission's current tool and processes fall short and will never get us even close, because they resulted in the lenses, which is rose-colored with blinders. Therefore, I make the following recommendations.

First, in DC, any racial equity evaluation must start with the assumption that policies in the amended Comp Plan are

anti-equity and particularly anti-Black-family. Second, the DC Office of Planning is biased against Black families. Relative to income and wealth growth, affordable housing built around rentals at 30 percent contributing income for achieving racial equity and, particularly, for Black residents is faulty. Any evaluation tool policies must use data going back to at least 2000, with acknowledgment that the Williams/Rivlin (phonetic) 2003 100,000 new residents focused on singles created to build -- was created and builds a bias against Black families in DC and economic development policies.

Acknowledge most housing production. First, policies are anti-equity and anti-Black, because of unit size and debt structures, the hidden hand of displacement in public policy.

Potential fixes. Hire an outside racial-equity-focused planning services outside of OP. Partner with the CFO to get real economic and real bill analysis, especially deals receiving significant public subsidies. Affordable housing income levels need to be about 15 percent of income as a base to be considered affirming and contributing to equity. However, a study needs to be done for the correct number. The Office of Zoning should adopt the racial equity -- the Council's racial equity evaluation scale when evaluating projects, because it has a gradient in it.

And then there are some things that I think the Commission needs to study. It needs to go back and study the Park Morton and Barry Farm NCI projects; all projects that were

approved for Donatelli development, which we know now was a big fraud; all OZ projects which receive significant public land TIFs, PILOTs, and tax abatements.

Also, overall, we need to adopt the drill-down study methods and really look at the LIHTC churn deals, which we think create affordable housing, but, really, they're just finance churn deals. And the reason, you know, all of these are important is because, if you don't have a true, thoughtful baseline, you're really evaluating against something that doesn't have meaning. We're talking equitable development or equitable -- not just I'm here, it's affordable. So affordable -- I'll just make this last statement. So if I get affordable housing and I live in a neighborhood, but I can't take advantage of anything in the neighborhood, because I don't have the income or structures to take advantage of anything, that's not equitable. It helps with integration. You got a Brown face in a White environment, but that's not the same. I mean, slave quarters achieve that on plantations. That's not taking us anywhere. So that's the crux of my testimony related to -- you know, those kind of things have to be integrated into the tool. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Mr. Jordan, and I hope you can stick around. We may have some questions for you. I'm sure we do. I know I do. Ms. Norouzi.

MS. NOROUZI: Hi, everybody. I'm Parisa Norouzi with Empower DC. Chairman Hood, thank you for pushing to hold this

conversation. I think it is very much needed. Definitely have a lot of work to do, not just the Zoning Commission, but the city, as a whole. All of the agencies that play a role in the development process are holistically failing the residents of the District of Columbia, especially lower-income Black and Brown residents, and I'm going to speak a little bit to that.

Anyone would agree that talking about an issue, alone, does not solve it. So, right now, we have a racial equity tool that requires applicants to discuss racial equity, but it does not actually require any particular action to address it. The -- I want to talk a little bit about the context, because we're saying this is new and, you know, the tool's only been in place for a few years. And while it's true that we got a lot of new racial equity policies after the racial reckoning of 2020 and the murder of George Floyd, the reality is that Black residents, in particular, have been protesting the unjust land use policies and practices that have caused displacement for decades, whether it was urban renewal, aka Negro removal in Southwest DC, hopeless Hope IV, the demolition of public housing, White Men's Roads Through Black Men's Homes, aka the freeway battles that the city experienced, the closure of 40 DC public schools in only ten years' time that displaced thousands of Black students, public land giveaways for a dollar to build million-dollar condos at The Wharf, McMillan, and other places, among others, District residents have always been fighting for racial equity. So I

don't want to set the context of our discussion as though we're brand new to this. It is something that we're actually far behind on, rather than we're ahead of the curve.

So we are evaluating a tool today, and I'll talk about some tangible ways that I think the tool could be more effective, but we also need to look at that in the context of a system of land use decision-making that has -- that has consistently harmed Black people in the District, especially lower-income Black people, decidedly so through intentional policies, to, quote-unquote, attract new residents, like what Mr. Jordan just said, the 100,000 new residents, quote-unquote, raise the tax base, improve educational outcomes, or so-called deconcentrate poverty. Whatever the slogan was of the year, it was always at the expense of Black residents, who have been routinely displaced from their homes and communities. The zoning process, of course, has been long complicit in this removal, and, still today, we are operating within an inequitable system.

A few observations of that. One is that we actually have no racial equity goals when it comes to zoning and development, so we can't really measure our progress, because we have no goals from which to measure. Also, you know, outside of Inclusionary Zoning, which, ironically, is not inclusionary, it does not include the families earning below 50 percent AMI, there are no specific measures required of applicants to advance affordability through their projects and meet the needs of the

majority of Black residents. The zoning process, itself, has not become more inclusive and accessible, remaining largely the domain of land use attorneys and developers, and the Zoning Commission does not have adequate support from the Office of Planning, in particular, its own staff, to effectively assess and pursue racial equity within the matters before it. It has, also, no connections with outside parties or third parties, experts, or community organizations to help guide these steps.

A few things that could happen within the tool, itself, that I think could make a significant change; one is defining the community engagement standards. This was even referenced in your own notice or in your own evaluation. And I'm glad it was mentioned, because we cannot have a debate at each case hearing about whether or not the engagement has been meaningful.

We need to, at least, have a baseline standard for what applicants must demonstrate to show that they did engagement. And I have to say, this, for me, is one of the possible areas that could be a real gamechanger, because, in my experience, when people who are most impacted are in the room, the conversation changes, and there -- from there, the outcomes change. So having people most affected in the room is a critical thing that this Commission could really push for.

And I heard you say, Chairman, earlier, well, how do we know, you know, that we're reaching people? Well, you -- there's, you know, demonstrated metrics; numbers of flyers

placed, numbers of doors knocked, numbers of phone -- you know, phone calls placed, numbers of people attending meetings. There's all kinds of standards -- or even numbers of mailings that went out. There's all kinds of measurements, but what we've seen consistently is, actually, a very disparate treatment of this. You know, we give a notice to an ANC, but then there's no actual requirement of what the ANC does with that. So, depending on where you live, you might have a very active ANC who does a lot; you might have one that doesn't have the resources and you never hear about it. So we cannot use that as a conduit, unless we're making it more standardized, so that we're eliminating that disparity. And there should be -- you know, we should be able to embrace that a little bit of leg work is necessary in order to engage people, and you will see that in who is actually in the room discussing these projects when they come before you.

I think we need to require racial equity interventions in these projects. What we keep hearing is "Oh this is racially equitable, because there's Inclusionary Zoning." And that's almost -- it's almost an insult -- slap in the face to everybody who is saying "But actually Inclusionary Zoning is not inclusionary". It does not include anybody earning 50 percent AMI and below, and it is not the solution to our problems. Otherwise, it would have already been solved, right? We have -- we've had Inclusionary Zoning for quite some time.

We could consider a menu of options and requiring that

the applicants incorporate some of these tools to further racial equity, whether it be more family-sized units, affirmative marketing to voucher holders to ensure that we're not, you know, continuing this discrimination that happens against voucher holders; of course, more or deeper and more permanent affordable units; community benefit agreements, et cetera. And, further, all applicants that are doing projects in displacement risk areas must be required to incorporate displacement prevention measures. This is not just on the site; this is the displacement effect as well. If there are tenants in place, we must insure that tenants' rights were upheld.

There was a case recently that I know, because we supported tenants -- Empower DC did -- that came before you and let you know that their rights had been violated, and I believe, as a result, you set that case back and required them to do some other things. But if those tenants had not been in the room to let you know this, then, you know, how would the Commission know? The applicant should have to affirmatively demonstrate that they have complied with tenants' rights and rules. Environmental laws, as well, are often ignored, and this is another thing that harms Black and Brown communities. A relocation plan -- if there are tenants in place, a relocation and return plan that was cooperatively designed with the residents must be a requirement.

I want to -- I think one pretty easy thing that you could do, also, is to require that the tool be filled out as a

form, because what's happening right now is people sort of pick and choose what they're responding to in their text, and then it's very hard to see, well, which questions did they answer and which ones did they not. And so some topic areas, like off-site displacement, sometimes are completely skipped, and somebody would have to point that out during the hearing process for you to maybe notice it, but, again, you have a list of questions; it's easy enough to have them fill it out as a form. Maybe they still don't have to answer every single question, but we can more clearly see which ones are answered and which ones are not.

I want to -- I don't know how much time I have or if I've gone over, but I have a couple of other thoughts that have to do with the system that we're operating in. I am deeply concerned that the Office of Planning is failing in its role to advise the Zoning Commission on Comprehensive Plan consistency, particularly with regard to racial equity.

One of the other requirements of the 2021 Comp Plan was that the Office of Planning or that the city create an anti-displacement strategy, and we still have yet to receive this, but that study was supposed to be really understanding and highlighting the forces of displacement and the interventions that are necessary to address it -- all of these different, unique types of displacement. We still don't have that tool, and I believe that the Commission should really argue that it is -- you know, we need it, especially when they have released a

Displacement Risk Area Map, so you can see if a project is within a risk area, and then it begs the question. So what are the tools and strategies to address this?

We're also missing this data point about the District's housing gap, that is the gap of -- that currently exists for current DC residents who need housing that is more affordable. We -- currently, according to the National Low-Income Housing Coalition, the District lacks 37,531 units for households under 30 percent AMI, 28,608 units below 50 percent AMI, so a total of 66,000 units for households that are not covered by Inclusionary Zoning, not included by Inclusionary Zoning. So what is our -- how are we getting there? We're not hearing about this from the Office of Planning, from the Mayor's Office, and it's not coming up in the racial equity analysis.

I'll try to just close up here. So -- and I also was, you know, disappointed. I was in communication with the Office of Racial Equity about supporting the Commission with its evaluation, and while they were open to the idea, they simply stated that they did not have the capacity to do that. And that is -- you know, I think it points to our failure as a city to put the resources in place to do this well. So we have a surface level kind of thing happening that's actually not addressing the core issues.

I do urge the Commission to communicate with the incoming administration to ask them to convene and coordinate

efforts across agencies to insure that we have racial equity goals and standards that influence the full development process. I think I can leave it there. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Norouzi. Hold tight, if you can. I want to expound some more on some of the things that you said as well. Ms. Schellin, I think the next person was Tucker Kelsch. Tucker Kelsch, if you can unmute.

MR. KELSCH: Good afternoon.

MS. SCHELLIN: That is correct.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay.

MR. KELSCH: No comments for me. No comments for me. I just appreciate this chance to participate in the public process. Thanks.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Commissioner White.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Good afternoon. Hello, everyone. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes, we can.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Okay. When I put my video on, my internet gets really weak. Is it okay if I testify without video?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Sure, you can turn your video off, yes.

COMMISSIONER WHITE: Thank you so much. As you all know, I live in the digital divide over here in the great Ward 8, the best part of the city. My name -- good afternoon. My name is Jamila White. I am the Chair of ANC 8A, and I am here today before you as the Single-Member District Commissioner for

8A05, representing the Anacostia community. I thank you all for the opportunity to have this roundtable and to discuss this very important issue.

I am here today to urge the Zoning Commission to strengthen its racial equity tool and to improve how racial equity is considered throughout the zoning process. As a six-year ANC Commissioner, I had no idea this tool was being consistently used in zoning cases or how the results of the current developers' racial equity analysis is being shared with the public outside of ANCs. This, alone, speaks to the lack of transparency and accessibility in a process where community participation is supposed to matter.

In my experience, the current racial equity tool does not do enough to advance racial equity. It feels more like a token gesture, a box to check -- a box to check to justify approving development, even when the community has raised serious concerns or formally opposed the project. Instead of challenging applicants, the zoning -- it seems that the -- instead of challenging the applicants to address racial inequities, the tool has become a part of justification for moving a process forward.

Current usage needs to do a lot more to show and demonstrate what -- how racial equity was considered and even define how they are -- this project is looking at racial equity. It needs to demonstrate how racial equity influenced the Zoning Commission's decisions as well. It needs to be expanded and use

many of the recommendations that several experts, including Empower DC and my brother, William, have provided today. I want to just bring up a first no example, right, of where a proper racial equity tool -- let me say an intentional racial equity tool could have benefited a community, my community.

So, in September, I came before this very body -- this very Zoning Commission on behalf of ANC 8A, which voted unanimously to oppose Redbrick's design review application for a new hotel development, a part of the North Howard Road zoning process. We are not opposed to development at all. We were asking for Redbrick to demonstrate meaningful community commitments and benefits for this new development that is and will change the shape of Anacostia, Congress Heights, and Bellevue.

I remember when this hearing first started, Chair Hood, you could not participate in the entire hearing -- you had another obligation -- but you spoke directly to your fellow Commissioners, telling them about the importance of considering the voice of the people. You referenced a new administration coming in that is putting forth a people's government. Yet, despite your kind of speech or guidance you gave to the Commissioners, the Zoning Commission moved forward with the application -- with the applicant's application, against the ANC's unanimous recommendation and, therefore, voted against the community.

This Zoning Commission has a reputation amongst many residents for being anti-community and, particularly, anti-Black community. I'm going to be very, you know, intentional with the words that I say, right. This Zoning Commission has a reputation in the community of being anti-Black, anti-community, and to favor developers and development that contribute to displacement and gentrification. And I don't say that lightly; I say that as someone who's participated in several processes with the Zoning Commission, who's represented residents and seen how difficult it can be for actual community voices to influence the outcome. A meaningful racial equity tool could change that reality. It could help rebuild trust and insure that people most impacted by the development have a real opportunity to not only shape it, but to own it. But this requires a Zoning Commission to do more than acknowledge community concerns during a hearing. We need to see how our concerns are actually considered in what happens to a project moving forward.

Let me go back to Redbrick. Our primary concern with Redbrick was the applicant's refusal to enter into a project-specific-based community benefits agreement. Redbrick maintained that the law did not require one, but the absence of a legal requirement does not mean that community benefits is not -- is unnecessary or not demonstratable, nor does it lead to anywhere near racial equity. The ANC previously supported Redbrick's development, because, as you know, this is a huge development.

We previously supported one of the iterations. Yet, from that support, we had little to say on how they would use that site, and we complained to Redbrick for years about some of the promises that were made not being delivered, including them getting several million dollars for one of their businesses to provide food access, and that business never provided food access and closed down very rapidly.

Very few -- no Ward 8 businesses or residents have actually benefited, as a business owner or economic investment, into this development, and we've told Redbrick this. For years we've tried to help them problem-solve. We said, "Redbrick, do public RFPs, when you have opportunities, instead of closed-door favors or negotiations with people you find, and they still won't open up their public process. So when the second phase of development came before us, we did not want to repeat this experience.

This is prime land. Eleventh Street Bridge project, Poplar Point in the Bridge District, will change the face of Ward 8, will change the face of Black DC for the next 20 to 30 years, and this is the only opportunity we have. We have raised concerns with Redbrick about the exclusionary internal practices, around contracting opportunities, and actual community benefits. And when we came to the Commission, even though with the current, you know, law, we cannot say, "Hey, stop the design review, because they have not done community engagement, because they haven't

been able to demonstrate community benefits." We were shut down.

So I use this as an opportunity where an actual racial equity tool could have made a difference, because a tool could have required Redbrick to demonstrate who was engaged, whose voices were missing, what residents requested, and what they decided to do, what they agreed to, what remains unresolved, and, also, what happened to the engagement from the previous project. What Redbrick did is counted a few community meetings and talked to a very select few of privileged individuals, and I can include myself a privileged individual, who could support that. But as empower DC said and so many other of our folks who participate tonight said, that is not community engagement. You can't go to one or two privileged people to say, "Can I get a letter of support?" and count that as community engagement. That is checkbox, and that is racist. That is racist policy. It should require more than that.

So a real racial equity tool and a real racial equity process can help, actually, repair generations of disinvestment for communities, such as Ward 8. It could have identified these gaps in the process, instead of minimizing community yet again. We, as a community, not -- should not have to be zoning experts, find thousands of dollars to hire land use lawyers and all these lawyers that we don't have access to, to help us, to sit here and fight against inequities and money differences, because we don't have a fighting chance to begin with. It's extremely

frustrating, it's extremely disheartening, and I have lost all faith in the current Zoning Commission to do right by Black residents in Washington DC.

So, no, I do not expect you all to do more; I do not expect you to do better; I do not expect you to help our community so that everyone can thrive no matter the color of your skin, no matter where you were born, and no matter what family that you were born into. However, a racial equity tool can take it out of the Commission's hands and make it institutionalized, something that really works. And I believe in changing systems and institutions, that people who take up those positions will be required to follow or to lead.

So that's my testimony. I appreciate you all for allowing me the time.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Thank you. Stick around. We have some questions for you. I think the last person on this panel is Meg Maguire.

MS. MAGUIRE: Yes. Thank you. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes, we can.

MS. MAGUIRE: Okay. Thank you. Good afternoon. I'm Meg Maguire, Chair of Northwest Opportunity Partners CDC, an organization dedicated to expanding affordable housing and economic opportunities in Ward 3.

Several points. First, since 2022, the Office of Planning and the Zoning Commission have selectively applied a

racial equity tool to individual development projects, but not to upzonings on major corridors, such as Wisconsin Avenue and Connecticut Avenue. Instead of requiring deeper affordability opportunities for home ownership or family-sized units as a condition of development, OP recommended and the Zoning Commission accepted a massive matter-of-right upzoning without seriously considering racial equity or requiring advancement of long-held citywide goals. While we appreciate your concern for urban design issues along these corridors, what you finally adopted does virtually nothing to acknowledge the effects of past racial exclusion in Ward 3 or to address the current challenges of income exclusion that disproportionately affect people of color.

Second, a racial equity tool can easily become performative; a checklist that planners, Commissioners, and developers apply, but does not result in meaningful changes to projects. Fortunately, since its inception, the Council Office of Racial Equity, CORE, has distinguished itself with thorough and insightful racial equity analysis. While Council has exempted emergency legislation, thus seriously weakening the potential to impact legislation, CORE has, nonetheless, been a beacon of racial equity truth-telling. Can the Zoning Commission claim the same, based on your four years of project data? Have you systematically evaluated the racial equity tool's use and what did you learn? And I've seen the report, which was on the

website. It's pretty sketchy. Were any projects -- or how many projects, really, were made more racially equitable through relocation, through design, level of affordability, and displacement mitigation? You cite only a couple of examples.

Third, the current tool focuses on displacement of residents, but not businesses. Future development along Wisconsin Avenue will not result in substantial direct residential displacement, though it will negatively impact the quality of life of adjacent communities with endless construction and no community benefits, but future development along this corridor will negatively impact small businesses, many of which are either Black-owned or staffed with minimum-wage earners. Developers should have been required to assess their projects for small business displacement, produce a relocation plan, and offer an enforceable opportunity to come back when the project is complete.

Fourth, project sponsors seeking upzoning should be required to report contributions to the public good, based on established racial equity policy goals, such as increase in home ownership, family housing of three or more bedrooms, location of truly affordable housing projects in deficient areas of the city, benefits for income groups earning too little to qualify for IZ, new forms of housing and finance, such as social housing, environmental sustainability measures beyond building requirements. However, it is too late for any public good

requirement along Ward 3's upzoned corridors because, with matter-of-right, you have given developers a pass on racial equity mitigation and exempted the community from negotiating public benefit agreements. There is literally no process to represent the interests of those who continue to be denied a stake in our community and are not, for the most part, eligible at all for Inclusionary Zoning. That would include grocery workers in our ten grocery stores along -- just in Ward 3; child care workers; health care aides; store clerks; and many others who work in Ward 3, but have no realistic opportunity of living here. This was and is a big mistake.

Finally, there is an inherent conflict of interest when the project sponsor is also the racial equity analyst. Have you considered requiring that sponsors of large-scale projects contract with CORE to examine their proposals? If the Office of Planning also contracted with CORE to conduct racial equity analyses before coming to the Zoning Commission for any corridor of zoning, you would have a much better and more objective information about impacts than you are now receiving. Yes, this will cost money and potentially new legislation to make CORE services available on contract, but, at least, the public would have confidence that the best analysts in the city have impartially studied the effects of their proposals.

The Zoning Commission is empowered to make the best decisions for racial equity and development projects. We, the

public, need confidence that, as the city grows and changes, you will give highest priority to insuring a just and equitable place to live, work, and become invested in the future. Thank you for this opportunity to testify.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you very much. I think we've gotten everyone on this panel. I'll ask Ms. Schellin to help me make sure that I've done that, but let's see if we have any questions of this panel. Let me -- let me just look around at any of my colleagues, if they have any questions or comments. Anyone? Vice Chair Miller.

VICE CHAIR MILLER: Well, I would just thank each of the witnesses for their testimony and specific suggestions. I think, early on in the process, we looked at -- or somebody looked at, on our behalf, using -- asking CORE to help us with this process, and they said, as you've pointed out, they didn't have the capacity to do that and didn't think that was their role, but I think that's worth exploring or another third party, but it is resources that would need -- be needed to be devoted to them. Anyway, I appreciate each of you being here, and we will consider what you have to say.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Anyone else?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. I want to ask a couple of questions, so bear with me. And, first of all, Mr. Jordan has been talking about racial equity for a long time, and I appreciate

his forthness (phonetic) and being straightforward. I like anybody who's straightforward, because I'm going to be very blunt. I mean, I know sometimes it may -- it may be piercing, but it's the truth. Commissioner White as well. But I want to ask this, Mr. Jordan. Again -- first of all, did you -- and I looked and if I missed it -- I don't know how -- I didn't see your testimony. Did you provide it?

MR. JORDAN: Late, at the last minute.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Well, you know, I was looking for your -- I was looking for yours. Now you give it to me late, so I'm going to have to ask you some questions later, because I was looking for it and I still don't see it, but I'm looking for the -- I'm looking for the fixes. I'm looking for how we can fix some of what we have here, and that's where -- I'm going to go straight to that. I want to know what the fixes are.

MR. JORDAN: So I can give you quickly how the --

CHAIRMAN HOOD: But you turned it in though, right?

MR. JORDAN: Huh?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: You did turn it in, right?

MR. JORDAN: I e-mailed it in, yes.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Because I'm going to go straight to yours, specifically, and others. I'm going to look at everybody's, but I want to know the fixes.

MR. JORDAN: So I do want to -- I mean, since you opened that up, you know, one of the things -- I think it was -- has

been mentioned, you know, there there's a need for outside or independent evaluation of -- particularly from the big picture, of outside of OP. I mean, to be honest, OP is a servant of the executives, right, and so they're going to rationalize whatever has come through the pipeline.

So I'm from Columbia Heights. I participated in the process. So projects, particularly in DC, are heavily subsidized by the government. So a lot of times -- and if you look at some of the submissions to the Commission, there's actually a letter that comes from the city with the developer, and it says this developer now represents the city for all practical purposes of this zoning process. So, basically, the city outsources its public position to a private developer. That private developer comes to the Commission and makes their case, and, basically, they say the city has deputized us -- deputized us to move forward, right. And so that means people in the community are fighting uphill, right.

Then, once the project goes through, right, the other signatory on these public/private partnerships, and almost all of them are public/private partnerships -- there's very few projects that come through this Commission that are of substantial size that are not public/private partnerships with TIFs or you name it, right. So it comes back through the process, and then, when it's time to evaluate the project, who's on the signator on the other side of the development agreement. DMPED,

who just turned its authority over to the private entity, so when it's time to hold someone accountable, the other end of the ledger is included in, et cetera. So I raised that because the Zoning Commission, therefore, has to kind of take a --

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Mr. Jordan, let me -- Mr. Jordan, let me ask you this, not to cut you off, but I want to get --

MR. JORDAN: Oh, no.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: -- I want to get -- I want to get -- here's one of the things. I've learned a long time ago though, control what you can control. And some of what you're talking about, you know, I don't want -- I can't -- I've learned, also, a long time ago, I can't reach and make OP do anything; I can't reach and make DMPED do anything; I can't reach -- but what I can do is deal with what's in our bailiwick. So you -- so far, you have mentioned DMPED; you mentioned the Office of Planning. I want you to mention -- this hearing is about the Zoning Commission and the racial equity.

MR. JORDAN: Right. And so --

CHAIRMAN HOOD: What can we -- what are the fixes for us?

MR. JORDAN: Right.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Give me the fixes --

MR. JORDAN: So the fixes for you is to have an outside third party, if you can get it in your budget, to help with that, right -- that evaluation, right. so that was the first statement.

I was trying to give a context. The second thing that I mentioned is partnering with the old CFO -- the CFO. The CFO has economic data and already does economic reports. Because they have access to tax return data and other data, they can do aggregate reports that really help you kind of create a net of which to evaluate things, so partnering with the CFO. And the CFO generally partners with universities to do their -- partners to do their analysis, so I would say that.

The second is, let's really talk about what affordable housing means with regard to equity, right. And I raised that by talking about -- generally, we look at affordable housing is you spend up to 30 percent of your income, right, and we check that as affordable housing. However, 30 percent is actually one step before being income-burdened, right, and so what's really -- therefore, you have to be below that number if you're going to do the investments in the future that make you more equitable; family or individual, education, savings, and all of those kind of things. So the Zoning Commission can really start to put some gradient on what is really affordable housing and when affordable housing is really equitable and, really, when affordable housing is just kind of a placeholder or widgeting people and just putting them somewhere and say, "Well, they're housed; it's better than being on the street" kind of thing. So I think defining, since we -- since housing is the basis of a lot of what we do, really breaking that down and say, "Is housing

itself equitable, but is housing a wealth development tool, because that's part of equity?", so that's the difference between owning and not owning and paying rent. You have to own to get equity in some way or you have to rent so cheaply that you can build equity elsewhere.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Mr. Jordan, I'm going to -- I'm going to -- I'm going to hold those three points. I can only do a little -- we can only do a little bit at a time. You gave me three good points. Let me start there. You got to crawl before you walk. Let me start with those three points. And I'm actually going to go to others and ask for points as well, so let me move on with my questions. So thank you, Mr. Jordan, and I'm sure we will finish -- I have another idea that's come to me, and I'll bring that up towards the end, which, hopefully, you will be involved and others.

I don't know if I can -- if we can pull that off, because I can tell you, from my standpoint, we need help, but, as you all have mentioned a number of times, for me, hearing that outside -- and then, as the Vice Chair mentioned, I know we looked at it last time. I know my legal counsel will tell me what happened the last -- what happened. I did talk to the Chairman of the Council about some of this stuff, and I know Empower DC has done a lot of leg work as well, but I can't remember what actually happened. I know that they would not -- they didn't have the manpower to help us, and we're not the subject matter

experts.

I think the law requires, really, the Office of Planning to do this, but, anyway, it's a lot of stuff going on, but, at the end of the day, we got to get -- we got to get to where the rubber meets the road. Let me go to Ms. Norouzi. First of all, let me thank you, and, you know, no holds barred. This is just a roundtable; it's not case specific. And I want to thank all those who did not talk about a case -- a case specific. But, Ms. Norouzi, I want to thank you for what you all have been doing. I attended one of the events -- I think it was two weeks ago -- and I attended that for this very reason we're doing this hearing, because I'm still trying to figure it out. I'm trying to figure out -- with all the different roadblocks, all the different nuances, all the different agencies, I'm still trying to figure this out; at the end of the day, how do we get to where we need to be, instead of having a conversation? But you mentioned something, and I'm going to push back on you, Ms. Norouzi. Now, I'm going to do it too.

You said you got a new administration coming in. And you all have been very good advocates about getting things done. I would agree, when I have the opportunity, I'm going to see where we're going to land as well, when I have an opportunity to talk with the new administration, but I think it's going to be key if everybody's working on both sides, first of all, to get us some funding, as Mr. Jordan mentioned, so we can do some of

this, because it can't -- we can't do it without funding. And I heard something new today, Hopeless Hope 6. I've never heard that before.

MS. NOROUZI: Oh, you didn't hear that? Back in the day, that's what they called it, yeah, Uh-huh.-huh.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Hopeless Hope 6. That's -- that was kind of sad for me to hear that, but let me ask you this. Councilmember Parker's disparity legislation, will that help us -- will that help the Zoning Commission and others move to where we need to be or is that -- or is that some -- a totally different -- that has nothing to do with what we're doing, but I think that would help us, correct?

MS. NOROUZI: I don't know about that one. Disparity legislation?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah. He had -- he has some legislation -- okay. Well, let me do my research on that too.

MS. NOROUZI: Okay. I'll look into it.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah, yeah, look into that.

MS. NOROUZI: But let me just say, I think, you know, we're at a point where we do a lot of calling for a study of this report of that. You know, there was a whole Poverty Commission established and then dismantled within a few years, I think. And, you know, again, not being willing to just say, no, we have to build units -- you know, units of housing below 50 percent AMI; we have to finance it; we have to require it be incorporated

into all of the different projects of a certain size or in a certain place, you know. And so I agree, it's a -- it's something that has to be a whole government thing, but I would hope that the Zoning Commission would be, you know, part of that -- you know, part of it, because you understand what is happening when the projects come to you and these details haven't been worked out, right.

A lot of times, I think the projects are coming to you prematurely. Why are we having a conversation about upzoning on a site, but we don't even have a project to look at, and, yet, we're being promised affordability, but there's no actual promise of affordability, because there's no actual project, and there's no actual funding for a project. So, you know, again, it's like the whole system sometimes is backwards. It's like we use zoning as a -- you know, to accelerate something, rather than to have it at the tail end to check all the boxes that -- to say, yes, everything was done correctly; you know, it's according to the plans; it's financed; it's delivering the needs of the city; you know, move forward, if you get what I'm saying.

I mean, I think U Street was another example of that, where, you know, you have public land that hasn't even been declared surplus. There hasn't been the Council process to say, "We don't need this land", to say, "Here's what -- you know, we're going to enter into a land disposition agreement around it and to define the affordability." And, yet, we're having a zoning

discussion about upzoning it or changing the zoning. So, again, to me, it's backwards. And so I think you guys also pointing that out, you know, to the people in the new administration, but guiding how -- what is the order of operations between DHCD and DMPED and the Housing Authority and, you know, all of the agencies involved in it. And, you know, rarely do I ever hear anything about the environment at the zoning hearings, you know, except for a surface level, but, you know, these are considerations as well.

We don't have robust transportation analysis. We don't have robust environmental analysis. We don't know whether the tenants' rights have been protected and upheld. So all of this should be, you know, verified ahead of it coming to you, is part of my point.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. I will tell you that I am interested -- and I'm going to ask Ms. Schellin to help me keep track of some of these. I am interested in the three points that Mr. Jordan mentioned, as well as a lot of things I've heard that I'd like for -- to have discussions with my colleagues. The standardized form; I know that we need to talk about that, so everybody's operating off the same sheet of music.

I do know that -- to your point, Ms. Norouzi, I do know, at my last confirmation hearing, that was a question of the person; who's going to be the next Mayor. For the most part, I'm sure -- I'm pretty sure I can go out and say that. That was

her question to me. And so, again, that's something I think that can be advocated for, if the citizens think that needs to be a change, because that was her question to me about process and should this be done before it gets to you all. And I actually think it does, but, unfortunately, right now, we're operating up under the way it's been written, so maybe some of those are some of the changes that need to happen. We really need to start doing these things that help benefit and where we meet (indiscernible). I think the Zoning Commission pushes as much as we can. I really think so. I know people may not agree, but we have so many other factors. Just like some of this conversation we're having here now, I hear from other people in the city who disagree with this conversation, so we get it all kinds of ways, and we try to balance that. And I think this Commission -- while I know everybody may not agree, I think this Commission right now -- and I've served on many different Commissions -- this Commission right now balances for such a time as this, and I'll just leave it at that.

Again, Norouzi, I want to thank you for all the work that you all -- that you have done, and I -- and please invite me to those non-case-specific endeavors. And I'm publicly saying I do attend, and I think I participated, because I'm --

MS. NOROUZI: Yeah. and let me -- if I could just say, to me, it just shows that there is broad interest in these topics, that all I have to do is put out a notice and I get a hundred

RSVPs. You know, not every single person who RSVPs comes, but it -- I think that District residents are eager to talk about land use and shape land use. And the fact that you're not seeing the result, you know, of people in the room -- impacted people in the room with the cases is because the engagement -- the outreach is not happening. People will be in the room, if they are given the opportunity.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: And that's another thing, Ms. Schellin, I want to look at. Let's look at the engagement, and I want to talk to my colleagues as well. But the other thing I want to mention to Ms. Maguire, and this is not really a comment or a question of you, but you said something that is exactly why we're here. You said about ten grocery stores in Ward 3. I know there are people on this line that don't have two grocery stores in their Ward, so that started long before this Commission, long before Anthony Hood. It's been in the pipeline. Now it's time for us to change it around, so, Ms. Maguire, I appreciate you -- appreciate you, basically, proving the point. You said ten grocery stores in Ward 3. Do y'all have ten grocery stores in Ward 3?

MS. MAGUIRE: They're more -- well, they're more than ten in Ward 3. I'm talking about just from the -- from the top of Georgetown to the Maryland line on Wisconsin. I mean, so we have lots of people who come here and work, and work for very little money, and make life in Ward 3 very comfortable, and they

don't have the prospect of living here. I mean, think of the childcare workers, the health care aides. So that's got to be a point of departure about -- we've got to get back to the people of this city, and we've got to be building for people to live here through the life cycle and become citizens of the District of Columbia, not just passthroughs or, you know, temporary residents who are always wondering, "Can I afford it?". And I know we all agree on that, basically.

But one thing, if you will indulge me, Commissioner, if there were more daylight between the Zoning Commission and the Office of Planning, if the Office of Planning did not have this role of both presenting to you their ideas about, you know, how the city should shape up, and then serve as reviewers of those same kinds of proposals, it would be a lot better. And I just think the Zoning Commission needs an independent staff, and I realize that's a big ask and it's a budget ask, but it's hurting the work of the Zoning Commission, in my opinion.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Well, the oversight hearings happen in February and March. It'll come better from you than it will for me. If I ask for it, it won't happen.

MS. MAGUIRE: Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: But if you ask for it, it might happen.

MS. MAGUIRE: Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: So I'll give you that. Okay. So thank you. I don't have any other questions of anyone else. And I

will say this though, Ms. Maguire. I appreciate this grocery store, because I'm sure there are people, like Commissioner White and Anthony Hood, who are on here that would say, "We would love to have that many grocery stores in our Ward", so I get it. I get it, and I hear you. So any other questions, colleagues? I'm going to move on.

MS. MAGUIRE: Yes. Remember -- okay. These grocery stores are just on one corridor. I'm not talking about all the grocery stores in Palisades or the grocery stores on Connecticut Avenue, okay, because I haven't counted up the total grocery stores.

VICE CHAIR MILLER: I did count it up when we had one case, and it was almost 25.

MS. MAGUIRE: Almost 25. Okay. Well, there you go. That's better.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. So there are some people who would love to have two, so I get it.

MS. MAGUIRE: I know that. Right. Right.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. All right. We're going to -- we're going to move on.

MS. MAGUIRE: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: I shouldn't have got into that.

MR. JORDAN: Can I comment quickly on the grocery store issue?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: How many y'all have? Yeah, go right

ahead.

MR. JORDAN: In Columbia Heights, we got too many, but the key to a grocery store and most retail is the disposable income of the population that's there, as well as the cost of real estate in those areas. So when you do equitable and include equity, you're considering if people -- in certain areas, you got to have more income, more jobs. If the only thing you build is housing, you don't get more jobs.

Second, if you pay too much of your income for housing, you don't have the disposable income for grocery stores. And this is where you start to get to the fundamentals of these projects. So if you do a big project and their retail space, because they have to finance the project, does not allow the kind of cost-effective retail, then you can't get a grocery store in that building. And if you watch all these projects, particularly in the eastern half of the city, a lot of the grocery stores have failed to materialize, because of the way the project is financed, based on housing costs related to upscale housing, because everybody wants the real estate tied to upscale housing, so it matters. And when DMPED doesn't negotiate those lower rates for these projects, then you don't get a grocery store or you get one that fails, because the income and the other supports are not there, so that's why it has to be holistic.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. I tell you, I'm going to move on, because I know my colleagues -- we want to hear from others

and we have other people, but I can tell you all what I'm thinking. I need to put that out there now for this panel, just in case anybody leaves, and I need to talk to my colleagues. I have only one vote. I'm thinking that we -- I want to put together an accelerated think tank to help us about the form and some of the things -- the questions. We have an accelerated think tank. When I say "accelerated", not that it's going to be six months. I need somebody -- you know, I know it's volunteer time, because we can't -- I can't ask for no money from the Council, with the way things are for such a time as this, so I want to do an accelerated think tank to give us recommendations of how we can get to exactly what everybody's saying. I don't know. Everybody think about that. I just threw that out there. I didn't -- you know, I heard it, and I'm thinking, you know, we got a lot of other work that we do, but I do understand what I'm hearing.

I do like the form. I like some of the things I've heard, but we also -- I need -- I think the Zoning Commission, at least from my standpoint, we need some assistance to getting there. Now, I haven't even talked to the legal folks yet. I'm sure there's some road -- some stop signs for me, but we -- I can -- I can -- I can always detour and go around and see how we can get there. So thank this panel. Any other follow-up questions for this panel?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank y'all. Appreciate the conversation and all the work everybody's doing. Thank you. All right. Ms. Schellin, if we can call the next five. You're on mute, Ms. Schellin. You're on mute.

MS. SCHELLIN: Well, there we go. Nancy MacWood, Devon Coleman, Melodie Marsh, Binta Robinson, and Margaret Dwyer. That's five. So we have five up?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Let's see, one, two -- we have four.

MS. SCHELLIN: Four. Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Oh, no, we have five. I'm sorry. I'm sorry. We have five.

MS. SCHELLIN: We got five?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah, five.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. There we go.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Ms. MacWood, I think your name was called first.

MS. MACWOOD: Yes. Okay. Thank you, Chairman Hood and Commissioners, for scheduling this roundtable, which I hope will be the start of an ongoing discussion about how the Zoning Commission can mitigate and work to eliminate racial disparities in DC. I am Nancy MacWood, and I have testified before on this subject. Today I will excerpt comments from my fuller statement, which is already in the record.

The Comprehensive Plan states that zoning is a tool for implementing the Comprehensive Plan, and its implementation reach

is broad and is not limited to areas of conflict between the Comprehensive Plan and the zone map. The CP lays out an expectation that the Zoning Commission will use its authority to address a range of racial inequities. For example, you can use zoning incentives to advance equitable development and meaningful racial equity outcomes and increase housing and affordable housing supply.

The CP tells you to leverage map amendments and PUDs to convert land value increases into meeting equity needs, including requiring deeply affordable housing. So far, the Commission has not been willing to do that. You are avoiding the potential of PUDs to provide positive outcomes by approving map amendments without racial equity purpose and intent statements and that grant matter-of-right density so extreme that they preclude PUDs. This eliminates their potential to address a range of racial disparities through PUD zoning conditions.

The scope of your current racial equity evaluation is limited to whether there will be general changes to the environment or public space, infrastructure, housing, healthcare, and jobs based on a decision. You fail to provide goals, which are essential to convey how you intend to lessen racial inequities. If you did that, you would learn more about how an area suffered from urban renewal and resulting displacement, from concentrations of public housing, from a lack of investment in transportation and services that forces residents to depend on

cars to get to jobs, healthcare, and grocery stores. You need to know if an area lacks trees and suffers from extreme temperatures not seen in other parts of the city that exacerbate the symptoms of high levels of asthma and other disabilities. You must understand what residents are experiencing to make racial equity lens analysis result in better outcomes. Disaggregated data is essential, but it must tell you a complete story and not just provide a sketch.

Real implementation of a racial equity tool should include structural zoning changes and not just a case-by-case analysis that absolves a development from addressing racial disparities. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Ms. MacWood. I'm just going to go by who I see next. Ms. Marsh -- Melodie Marsh.

MS. MARSH: Hi, everyone. My name is Melodie Marsh. I'm a proud graduate of Howard University and a health advocate representing Young, Gifted and Green, a nonprofit organization dedicated to the environmental justice, public health, and racial equity across the District. I'm testifying today on Case Number 26-RE. In our work alongside in our work alongside District residents, we see daily how land use zoning decisions and real estate development directly impact health disparities, housing stability, and environmental equity. To insure that development DC serves all residents, particularly historically marginalized communities, we urge the Zoning Commission and the Board of Zoning

Adjustment to adopt and enforce the following essential standards.

One, require complete transparency evaluation tools. We urge the Commission to require that evaluation tools and equity checklists be completed and submitted as a formal application form. The public must be able to clearly see which questions have been answered, which remain unanswered, and how applicants justify their impact on surrounding neighborhoods.

Two, to establish and enforce baseline community engagement standards. The Commission -- I'm sorry -- the Commission must define clear required community engagement standards as a baseline minimum acceptable from applicants before a project is reviewed. Meaningful engagement cannot be a simple box-checking -- box-checking exercise after plans are finalized. If an applicant fails to meet these rigorous standards, the Commission should refuse to hear their project.

Three, require robust racial equity and anti-displacement data. Decisions must be grounded in comprehensive data. We must request that the Office of Planning provide robust racial equity data, especially incorporating the anti-displacement strategy required by the Comprehensive Plan, as well as a thorough housing gap analysis that details the critical shortage of housing accessible to low-income residents in DC.

Four, to protect existing tenants and insure cooperative relocation plans. Where existing tenants are

affected by proposed developments, the applicant must be required to demonstrate full compliance with tenants' rights and laws. Furthermore, we must mandate a binding tenant relocation and return plan that has been crafted collaboratively and transparently with affected residents.

Five, mandate specific racial equity and anti-displacement measures. Finally, every applicant should be required to incorporate explicit measures into their projects that advance racial equity and prevent displacement. These measurements should include family-sized units, deeper levels of affordability, affirmative marketing to Housing Choice voucher holders, and enforcement -- enforceable community benefit agreements that directly support community-identified racial equity initiatives. Development in Washington, DC cannot become -- cannot come at the expense of our most vulnerable neighbors or our climate targets. By holding applicants to these standards of accountability, transparency, and equity, the Commission can insure our land-use decisions build a fair, healthy, and sustainable city for all. Thank you so much for your time, your leadership, and your commitment to District residents.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you. And hold tight; we may have some questions. Devon Coleman.

MS. MARSH: Also, I did submit my -- I submitted it in e-mail.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. We'll make sure we get that. I think Devon Coleman.

MS. COLEMAN: Hello. Yes. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes.

MS. COLEMAN: I did submit my testimony. I just wanted to kind of just speak freely from how I feel. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I do think that we need to take a step back and maybe do a think tank. I'm kind of new to zoning, but I have some information and I have some understanding around displacement and with red zoning.

I am currently going through -- living through some of the things that you all are speaking about. I don't have grocery stores that I can just walk 10 minutes to. It takes me about 20 minutes to walk to my nearest grocery store, and there's no stores near me to get the essential things that I need. So when we speak about zoning, for example, I think it's called Buzzard Point at this part -- Navy Yard, we have all of these amazing apartment buildings in this area and it's great, but I know a lot of people who work there. They can't afford to live around there. So when we say things like, we're going to do development in DC and these places are going to bring jobs, well, are these jobs going to be able to have us actually live in DC, because the minimum wage, I think, is like not even $20.

So all I'm asking is that, when we do have these think tanks, we actually put up some type of infrastructure for data

to be taken, actual data from people who are actually living in the places that are being developed. Because if my building gets tore down and I want to come back and there's a beautiful building in its place and it has a grocery store at the bottom of it, I would like the opportunity to come back here. I wouldn't have someone to tell me that I have to make thousands of dollars in order to live in a place that I had to move out of so something else could be rebuilt. I mean, I just would like to stay in DC. I would not have to be -- I would not like to be pushed out because I can't afford to live here. I would like to leave DC for another reason, not because I can't afford to for something else.

I don't want to just have criticism without constructive criticism, so I would -- as a Ward 5 resident and a community activist, I would like to be a part of anything that is going on in the city, especially when we're not getting information from the residents that you are saying that you're doing the thing for and they're being displaced and no one hears them. I have so many residents and people that are coming to me from the work that I'm doing. They think no one cares and they don't have a voice, and it's really sad, because I'm pretty sure if some of you had to have your own families or your mothers or yourselves had to live in some of these conditions, you would not, you would not. Some of you would not even have your dog to live in some of these conditions. Some dogs I know get better

treatment than some people I know. So I'm just saying, they have more dog parks and more places for the dogs to get food than some people do, and I think that's crazy. That's all.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Hold tight. We may have some questions. Bonita (sic) Robinson.

MS. ROBINSON: Hello. Yes. Good afternoon, Chairperson and Commissioners. My name is Binta Robinson testifying in my individual capacity. The racial equity tool has a fundamental timing problem. It evaluates zoning actions after the District may have already adopted Future Land Use Map policies supporting greater development intensity. By then, consequential decisions may have escaped neighborhood-specific racial equity review.

Consider DC 2050, Change Area 4.3, encompassing parts of Crestwood and 16th Street Heights. These communities have a rich history of long-standing Black home ownership and intergenerational investment, alongside a substantial renter community. Ward 3 proposed intensification appears concentrated largely along commercial corridors with extensive residential interiors retaining small-scale designations. By contrast, portions of Crestwood and 16th Street Heights residential interiors face redesignation to moderate-scale residential under DC 2050. Change area 4.3 projects 3,350 additional housing units, the largest total among Ward 4's proposed change areas. Why this different treatment?

The racial equity tool asks about indirect displacement, but does not expressly require the Office of Planning or applicants to investigate its mechanisms. Could redevelopment expectations increase land values, property assessments, and pressure on homeowners to sell? Could tenants face harassment pressure to vacate or higher utility costs? Could increased impervious services raise stormwater charges? What are the cumulative impacts on Black homeowners, seniors, and low-income renters?

At a May ANC meeting, Commissioner Hal Gordon and the Office of Planning Project Manager, Nick Kushner asserted that homeowners would not be forced to sell. That misses the critical distinction between the legal freedom to remain and the financial ability to remain.

I recommend five changes to the tool -- the racial equity tool. First, require a standardized public form identifying answered and unanswered questions; second, establish minimum enforceable community engagement standards; third, require neighborhood-specific data, a housing gap analysis, and the Comprehensive Plan's anti-displacement strategy; fourth, require compliance with tenant protections and meaningful relocation and return plans; fifth, require concrete, enforceable racial equity measures responsive to effective neighborhoods; above all, require independent examination of homeowner and renter displacement, environmental impacts, infrastructure, and

cumulative costs before adopting FLUM redesignations, not just when subsequent zoning applications arrive. Racial equity must be capable of changing a planning decision, not merely rationalizing it afterwards. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. Margaret Dwyer.

MS. DWYER: Good afternoon. I'm Margaret Dwyer testifying on behalf of Ward 3 Housing Justice. We're a grassroots affiliate of Empower DC dedicated to creating more low-income housing in Ward 3, and our request is really simple. We want to see a strengthened equity -- racial equity lens to view development and density applications as leverage to enhance the opportunities of Black and Brown households to remain in or to access every neighborhood in the city.

We think that the racial equity tool should guide the Zoning Commission to consider the full range of racial disparities that exist in DC, and then use your authority to lessen those inequities. And we think you know, respond -- we know that you know that responding to inequities is not a one-size-fits-all; rather, we want to see you require all the data that you need, all the robust racial equity data, that it be provided by the Office of Planning or by perhaps a more reliable partner to inform the type and level of inequities that exist and tailor effective responses to each context, because, as has become really clear in this hearing, one size doesn't fit all in the -- in the needs in the various neighborhoods in the city.

In addition to racial equity data, minimum standards for community engagement should be set and enforced, and in Ward 3, for example, and other neighborhoods like ours where historic displacement has occurred, where there has been historic intentional displacement and expulsion, and then ongoing exclusion, meaningful engagement with members of the displaced community need to occur. Even though they're not there currently, there have to be ways to hear voices of people who have lost generational wealth by prior -- because of prior actions. And, if these standards aren't met, then the Commission should refuse to hear the project until they are met.

Then buttressed by adequate data, meaningful community engagement, and an effective racial equity tool, you have the power to require every applicant to encourage measures into their project that further racial equity, prevent displacement, and repair past harms. And, as others have mentioned, these could include and we want them in Ward 3 to include family-sized units, deeper affordability, affirmative marketing to voucher holders, and community benefits that support community-identified racial equity enhancing initiatives.

Finally, as has also been previously mentioned, we recently went through these massive corridor rezonings, and we want to see these kinds of rezonings, first of all, placed in the proper order, not the cart before the horse, as was done in this case; and that we want them to go beyond aligning the Comp

Plan and zoning regulations. They provide leverage to prevent displacement and repair past harms and to require -- to allow the Zoning Commission to require meaningful plans for affordability. We urge you to seize these opportunities. We recently participated in Cases 25-09 and 25-13, which provided these major up-zonings and wealth-building opportunities on Wisconsin and Connecticut Avenues, but failed to include any provision for households living below 50 percent of the MFI, which is the majority of the Black community. This was more than a missed opportunity. It was a reinforcement of the inequitable status quo. It's our belief that a meaningful racial equity tool could have prevented this failure, and it's our hope that it will do so in the future. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. I think we have gotten everyone on this panel. Are there any questions? I will say -- let me just start off, Ms. MacWood, thank you for the examples. I will examine that a little more in your testimony. And, Ms. Marsh, did you say you were a Howard U grad or you're still at Howard?

MS. MARSH: Oh, I'm a Howard grad, but I am at the library right now.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Oh, okay. Good.

MS. MARSH: Yes.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Now, let me ask you this. Does Howard -- does Howard have a racial equity class where students

are in?

MS. MARSH: I'm not sure. I know, like, we have health policy and different, like, courses that talk about racial equity and things like that, but I'm not sure if we have a specific racial equity class.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: I know --

MS. MARCH: At least in my scheme, I didn't have one.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. All right. I know some universities might have one and if they want to come down and look at it and give us some insight and give us some help, we're looking for some free help. So, anyway, if you run across that, please notify the Office of Zoning.

MS. MARSH: I will definitely. Yes, I'll keep that in mind.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. I don't have any questions for anyone else. Let me see if my colleagues have any. I'm looking. Commissioner Wright.

COMMISSIONER WRIGHT: Thank you. I think we're going to hear from more people, but sort of wanted to point out that a couple of the themes that I'm hearing from all the folks who've been speaking are, first of all, a dissatisfaction with the current IZ Program, feeling that the current IZ Program is not providing a sufficient number of affordable units at the correct income levels. I do understand that concern. I do understand what a difficult analysis that is. I also understand that there

is a project that the Office of Planning is undertaking to go back and study the Inclusionary Zoning Program that we currently have to see how to change it and how to improve it.

I know that there are many times that, in a particular development review case, we are asked, "Can't we go beyond the current IZ Program? Can't we create Inclusionary Zoning requirements that are more stringent than the existing IZ Program?" And I think that is -- that is a challenge. You know, if we have a program and it's not working, whether that's true or not, I think the idea is that we need to look at how that program can be improved, because there are many, many aspects to it, including economic aspects that we don't have a handle on when we're looking at specific development cases.

The other thing that I hear a general concern about is the move towards by-right zoning, and that is a concern, but I also understand that it is something that our -- that our Council has contemplated and that, in updating the Comprehensive Plan, they've been very specific about what kinds of land use changes they see happening especially along corridors, but in a variety of different places, and that we, as the Zoning Commission, after the Comprehensive Plan has been changed and the Future Land Use Map has been changed, I don't want to say our hands are tied, but we are sort of given pretty strong rules about making decisions on individual cases that implement the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map.

So I particularly was interested in a comment that Ms. Robinson, I think, made, which was, you know, maybe we should be -- rather than focusing on the racial equity tool at the time of development, maybe we should be focusing on a racial equity tool both during the Comp Plan, but at the time the Future Land Use Map is adopted by the Council as well, because those are the instruments that essentially guide us in land use decisions. I mean, I've only been on the Zoning Commission for two years, and it's -- it is different than how things are handled in other jurisdictions. I mean, what we do here is different.

I know in other jurisdictions, like Alexandria, Virginia, for example, there are individual property-by-property rezonings, but, as part of that rezoning, you actually can negotiate a whole series of community benefits. They're called Coordinated Development Districts, CDDs. In Montgomery County, where I worked for many years, there is, you know, an optional method of development, where you, again, get additional zoning and density in exchange for providing certain community benefits.

I understood, when I came on the Commission a couple of years ago, that, in many occasions, Planned Unit Developments, PUDs -- I never liked calling them PUDs, but PUDs were the tool that was in common use to negotiate community benefits. And then, because some projects, through appeal, were held up for years and even, I think, in one or two cases, more than a decade, people were concerned that these kinds of processes were not

allowing us to get the housing we need. You know, there's a great song from the, I think, 70's, you know, you get nothing from nothing -- nothing from nothing equals nothing, and I think that the reality is that, you know, when these projects were being held up for many, many, many years, no housing was being built, including any inclusionary units or any affordable units or anything. And so there was this whole move towards the idea of doing by-right zoning and to do a lot of the work about where that zoning should happen as part of the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map.

So, you know, when we're talking about the racial equity tool, I guess what I'm just sort of saying is a lot of what we're talking about to try to improve that one thing is actually -- what I'm hearing are concerns about the bigger picture of how the city approaches Inclusionary Zoning, how the city approaches by-right zoning, you know, the Council's actions on the Comp Plan and the Future Land Use amendment, which then end up -- I don't want to say tying our hands, but giving us some pretty strong strictures that guide what we do as the Zoning Commission.

All of this is to say, not -- basically, I'm just sort of saying I'm taking this all in; I'm hearing all of this testimony. I think it's really important, but a lot of what I'm hearing about, I don't think the racial equity tool is going to address some of these bigger just process issues. But I did

appreciate Ms. Robinson's comment about, you know, maybe using the racial equity tool earlier, especially during the Future Land Use Map amendment approval. So no questions, but just some comments about everything I've been hearing.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Commissioner Wright. That was a very good point, and that's a point we need to keep in the parking lot. Anyone else?

MS. MARSH: Mr. Hood, I was wondering -- I have a quick question.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Ms. Marsh, I was -- I'll come back to you. Commissioner Bruins.

COMMISSIONER BRUINS: Yes. So we're hearing a repeated theme, especially among these witnesses, about having a minimum engagement standard, and this was brought up by Ms. Robinson, Ms. Marsh, and others. And I'm wondering if you all could share with us what you view as some of those minimum engagement standards that should be, I guess, rolled out by the applicant prior to a hearing and what you would expect that to be. As we're considering firmer guidance on those engagement standards, do you have best practices you'd like to see?

And then I had a specific question for Ms. Dwyer, who recommended reaching out to members of communities who have already been displaced, and just a question of, you know, if there's any best practices for how an applicant would reach members of a community that have already moved out of that

neighborhood, as part of a hearing process? So, I guess, it's -- for the first question, just the mandatory minimum community engagement practices the witnesses would like to see for us, for our future guidance. And then, specifically, to Miss Dwyer, how we'd reach people who have moved out of their neighborhoods of a project that is coming forward. Thank you.

MS. COLEMAN: I'm sorry could I just say one thing? you wanted to know how could you reach neighbors who've already been displaced or are also being displaced. I'm actually involved in Civic Tech. I create technology to try to help civic matters. So I would love if I could get some information and maybe reach out to you on maybe how I could do that, because there's one community that I'm thinking about, Saratoga; there are some people who have been displaced there, so -- and I also think taking data or information that you do not have, that you would like to have, that will give you a better understanding on what you should do. I think data is very important in that aspect.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Ms. Coleman, you can contact the office and ask for Ms. Sharon Schellin or Sara Bardin, the Director, and make sure that we have -- we're able to do that -- get that, because I'm interested. Now, since you mentioned Saratoga, now I'm interested in what Commissioner Bruins -- even though I was interested anyway, I want to see what you have on Saratoga, if you could help us with that. All right. Commissioner Bruins, did you want to direct that first question to anybody else?

Anybody else that wants to answer that?

MS. MARSH: I could say, like, as simple as community, like, hearings, going into churches, knocking on doors, and letting them know what the possible implications of the new zoning or the new building that's being built that's going to happen in their area, so that they know and they're prepared for it; and then making sure that you hear them back, too, and say "Well this isn't going to work for me", or "this is going to cause this to be more expensive for me", or whatever it is," But just going out and speaking with the people, so hosting the hearings that need to be held, and sending out information so that people can attend them, and making it accessible for everyone.

And then, also, I did have a question about how I could connect you, because I did think of a professor that would be helpful for racial equity.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Do me a favor. Call the Office of Zoning --

MS. MARSH: Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: -- and just leave that information with the Director. She's aware of it. Just tell her I asked for the -- Anthony Hood asked for that information.

MS. MARSH: Okay. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you. Anybody else who wants to answer the first question? Because, Ms. Dwyer, I'm coming to you, because Commissioner Bruins had another question.

MS. ROBINSON: Can I say something?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Of course.

COMMISSIONER BRUINS: Yes, please.

MS. ROBINSON: Binta Robinson. I think that the applicant should respond -- will allow the community to give their concerns about the project, and then the applicant should respond to these concerns, whether they adopted the concerns -- they addressed the concerns, or they rejected the concerns, or the concerns are going to remain unresolved. That should be written down. And they should also demonstrate how engagement with the -- with the community over the proposal change the proposal or whatnot, and also document reasons for declining alternatives presented by the community.

And then there should also be allowance for independent review, so that the applicants do not become the sole interpreters of whether their engagement was meaningful. I guess the concern is that, at this stage, it's just like it's the applicant and the Office of Planning that's in the room. The community is not really in the room, and you have -- you have two entities that are interested in upzoning, so, I mean, they have an incentive to upzone. Are they -- is that a conflict of interest? Where's the community going to really be considered, in terms of their input? Their input's not really being considered at the FLUM stage, so --

COMMISSIONER BRUINS: Thank you. I appreciate that

response.

MS. ROBINSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Ms. Dwyer, I think Commissioner Bruins had a question directly for you.

MS. DWYER: Yes, thank you, and thank you for your interest in this. As I said in the beginning of my testimony, we're a grassroots organization and not experts. I think that that CORE, or perhaps this professor from Howard University, or other data experts, as the previous speaker had said, are more able than we are to suggest how to, for example, find the descendants of the folks from Reno who were forcibly displaced from Ward 3 decades ago. I think other people who didn't -- who were -- who were excluded, because of covenants and redlining and racist marketing, would be much harder to identify.

Something that we've talked about in our organization is making sure that community outreach includes what we call the "should be community"; not just the community that's there now, but the workers, folks who are interested in living in Ward 3, but who have felt excluded, just this wider net of folks from Black and Brown communities, in particular, longtime DC residents, in particular. They might not want to live in Ward 3, but there might be some who do want to live there and who could talk to the project planners about what obstacles they encounter and what they need to get around and over those obstacles.

And I want to speak also there to William Jordan's point, about the fact that getting here, getting to that community may only be the first step of a process in building a successful life, because of other costs and things, so I want to echo that extra consideration of affordability in high-cost neighborhoods. So I think it's really complex, but I think it's so worth doing. This is an opportunity for all of us to really change the trajectory of our city. Thank you.

COMMISSIONER BRUINS: Thank you for that response.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Any further questions or comments, colleagues? Okay. Vice Chair Miller.

VICE CHAIR MILLER: Well, I would just -- no questions, but I thank -- as part of my traditional role, thank each of the witnesses for their participation and testimony on behalf of my colleagues, thanking you for that, and thank Commissioner Wright for some of the points she brought up about the bigger picture that we don't have control over in our zoning bailiwick, and I'm glad she brought up the "Nothing but Nothing" song, because I was going to bring that up, if she -- if she hadn't, as she was the first one to bring that up at a zoning -- in the context of a zoning hearing.

Yes, we have map amendments that increased the density, consistent with what the Council basically asked us to do in the Comprehensive Plan. That's our charge -- to be our main charge is to be not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. So, yes,

we have leverage -- a certain amount of leverage, but it's -- we don't have any subsidies. Ot's just the market. It's the market, and that's going to either subsidize it and make it work or not. And, currently, we're in the middle of a -- of a recession here in the District, both in the commercial sector and residential sector, and nothing is happening, so there's nothing that -- nothing market rate is happening really, so we just have -- there is a bigger picture that we're a part of and we're an important part of, and we'll try to do what we can. And there have been some important points that have been raised that we can do to strengthen our racial equity tool, but it's going to take a lot of effort on every sector to achieve the goals that some of the witnesses are -- and that we are talking about and we share.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: I just want to add to what Vice Chair Miller has said. I think, for me, my goal -- my goal for all this is to make sure we've done all we can exhaustively do on our part. Now, I know we can't fix it all, but as long as we can examine and go into discovery and do everything we can that was in our power, then I think we have done the residents of this city due diligence, so that's why. And I just want to make sure we've done all we can do. And I think Commissioner Wright has used that song before. If not, she's used a song similar to that, "Nothing from Nothing". You might have used -- that might have been the second time you've used that, so I'm always --

VICE CHAIR MILLER: She didn't sing it as well the

other time, but she sang it well tonight.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Okay. Yes. All right. So next time, we want the full version, but, anyway, just a side note. All right. So no further questions of this panel. Thank this panel, as Vice Chair Miller has already mentioned, and my colleagues as well. We want to thank you all for taking the time and want to follow up on some of the things and examine some of the things that you said you would bring back to us. Call our office and leave that information there as well. So we appreciate it. Director Bardin will be available or somebody on the staff -- Ms. Sharon Schellin or somebody.

Ms. Schellin, let's bring up the next five.

MS. SCHELLIN: Yes, sir. We have Deidre Brown, Laura Richards, Mustafa Abdul-Salaam, Christina Carroll, Sarah Shoenfeld, and there's only one more. May I go ahead and call the last one?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Sure. Sure.

MS. SCHELLIN: Sebrena Rhodes, also with Empower DC.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Oh, if I had known you were calling --

MS. SCHELLIN: And that's the end of the list.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: -- if I had known you were calling Sebrena Rhodes, I would have said "No, wait". No, I'm just kidding.

MS. SCHELLIN: No, I kind of thought that. That's why I didn't call her name first.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right.

MS. SCHELLIN: I know you like to give her a hard time.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: No, I'm just playing. All right. Let's go with Deirdre Brown first. Ms. Deirdre Brown. There you go.

MS. BROWN: There we go. I'm trying to unmute. Okay. Perfect. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Deirdre Brown. I am a Ward 3 resident, small business owner, and housing advocate. I'm testifying today in my capacity as the Vice Chair of the Northwest Opportunity Partners, CDC.

Our mission is to expand affordable housing and economic opportunities in Rock Creek West. In September of 2022, in Case Number 22-RT1, I testified before this same body that the draft racial equity tool would not lead to meaningful change. We asked the Commission to, one, measure disparities against the incomes of Black and Brown families; two, assess who benefits and who is burdened, including displacement risks in surrounding areas; three, set a baseline and track whether interventions worked; and, four, to codify the tool and apply it to every zoning decision.

The tool that was implemented made progress and now asks for median income by race and home ownership by race, and the Commission reports that outreach has improved, but the Commission's own notice for this roundtable states three things: one, it has not consistently found a clear link between the data and the zoning actions under review; its ability to assess racial

equity impacts is limited, because future outcomes are uncertain; and even a likely negative racial equity impact is not a basis to deny a zoning action. Put plainly, the -- put plainly, the tool gathers data the Commission cannot tie to its decisions, no one measures what happens after approval, and a negative finding cannot change the outcome.

As designed, the tool can describe inequity, but it cannot reduce it. Each of these three problems traces back to the 2022 recommendations that was not adopted. The Mayor's Office of Racial Equity tracks housing gaps on its racial equities dashboard. The gaps have not closed. Black home ownership has fallen from 38 percent in 2008 to 32 percent in 2023. Black households are about 41 percent of District households, but 53 percent of cost-burdened households. Black residents or 82 percent of the people experienced homelessness, and that number has risen from 364 in 2022 to 463 (sic) -- 4,633 just in 2024.

The Comprehensive Plan's own housing element reports that the median Black family in the District earns less than 50 percent of the MFI, but most Inclusionary Zoning rental units are set at 60 percent of the MFI. The affordable units zoning produces are priced above the typical Black family in the city. This is the link between the data and the decision that the tool is missing.

We recommend that every racial equity analysis should state whether the action will reduce, maintain, or widen housing

disparities by race, not only whether it is not inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Framework Element the tool sites defines equity as targeted action that meets residents where they are, not equal treatment.

We also recommend that part three that now reports population income and age, which the Commission says it cannot connect to a decision, that we require it to, one, show housing cost-burden by race for renters and owners separately; show the displacement risk indicators, as proposed in our 2022 testimony, which is race, income, educational attainment, share of renters, and cost burden; and measure that for -- by the surrounding neighborhood, not just the planning area; also include the income levels of the affordable units the action would produce, compared with median household income by race in the area. This is the direct link between the data and the decision.

We're asking you to replace the expired 2025 affordable housing goals with the current targets, including the District goal of 20,000 new Black homeowners by 2030, and to add the Office of Racial Equities' Racial Equity Dashboard, which already tracks these housing measures by race to the tool's approved data source.

Condition approvals where disparity would persist. When the analysis shows an action will maintain or widen disparities, the answer need not be denial; it should be conditions: affordability below 60 percent of MFI; family-sized units of three or more bedrooms; and affordable home ownership.

New density should be leveraged for deeply affordable housing.

Before the hearings, applicants should be demonstrate compliance with tenant protection laws, including TOPA. Orders should receive relocation at comparable -- I'm sorry -- orders should require relocation at comparable rents or guaranteed right to return at affordable rents and track every displaced household. Outreach should be documented that we contacted the renters and cost-burdened households in the affected area, and not just contacted ANCs and Civic Associations. The outcomes are uncertain only when no one measures them, so we need to require annual reporting on approved actions: affordable units delivered by income level, bedroom count, and tenure; who occupies them, by race; and where displaced households went. Use the results to revise the tool. And, lastly, we need to codify the tool and apply it to all zoning actions. Adopt it through a zoning text amendment, and require the analysis for map amendments whose future matter-of-right buildings will never return to the Commission.

In 2022, we asked for a tool that would measure progress towards closing racial gaps in housing. Four years later, the District's own data shows these gaps have not closed. We ask the Commission to make this tool a way to reduce disparities, not only describe them. Thank you for your time.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Ms. Brown, and if you could hold tight, we have a few questions for you. Ms. Laura Richards.

Ms. Richards, you're on mute.

MS. RICHARDS: Yeah. Good afternoon, Chair Hood and Commissioners. I am Laura Richards appearing on behalf of the Committee of 100. We are glad the Commission is revisiting the -- its racial equity tool, and we recognize that some reforms require cooperation of DMPED and the Office of Planning.

We focus on your third question, "What measures can applicants undertake to further mitigate direct displacement impacts associated with zoning actions?". We urge you to take a broader view of displacement. Little will be accomplished if you fail to look beyond the four corners of the project site. There is a surrounding zone of indirect displacement risk, and that must be part of your evaluation.

The zone of displacement risk should be defined, and mitigation steps, including rehousing commitments, should be included in the final zoning order. While not yet a zoning case, the impact of the RFK development on Kingman Park and other communities is a case in point. The Office of Planning admits that some families living in those neighborhoods will be displaced, but they offer very little in the way of redress, saying only that the District has multiple existing policies and programs that aim to offset displacement. They are talking mostly about renters. They say nothing about the Black community of homeowners that have been there for decades.

The District is very quick to address the history of

displacement, especially Southwest, but it is curiously blind to the current displacement going on across the city. You can stop this shameful history or, at least, slow it down. Homeowners and businesses in the zone of displacement risk should receive tax relief against rising property values. Businesses that lease rather than own their spaces should have a right to return at reasonable rents. And, again, this is nothing you can do on your own; you either have to have cooperation with the developers, and, of course, they have no obligation to negotiate with people if they have matter-of-right zoning, or you have to, like, take this to the Council, and you would get a lot of support for this.

One aspect of the equity tool that dumps its ineffectiveness is the fact -- if the policy that says a finding of racial inequity -- a negative finding is not a reason to reject a project. We say, "Why not?". We recognize that when a case comes before you, it has been fully planned and it can be difficult to upset settled expectations and send the parties back. Nevertheless, if you were to signal in one or two cases that you take racial equity seriously, like, by saying "No", the expectation of developers and OP will kind of, like, signal that they cannot expect rubber-stamp treatment, and you will start to see better offers of racial equity mitigation come before you.

Inclusionary Zoning, and we've heard a lot about that today, and you know the problems, but I'm going to repeat the key thing for the Committee of 100. The maximum income levels

are so high for the IZ units, that these units end up not going to low-income racial minorities. As we have said and will continue saying, 60 percent of MFI, the predominant standard for IZ, is higher than the MFI for African-American households. Experience shows that IZ has functioned as a tool for displacement, rather than a housing opportunity, and you know this. The Commission should undertake a study of who have been the recipients of IZ units. You have the authority to revise the IZ rule. You also have the discretion to force developers to lower the income levels and individual zoning actions, even without revising the rule.

A couple of other recommendations. Look at what other jurisdictions are doing. We've described a couple of what's going on in New York, and one or two in Boston and one or two other places. Adopt a more rigorous, hard-edged equity tool grounded in statistical analysis, not merely statistical descriptions, which is what we have now. Contract with a neutral third-party agency or entity to conduct racial analyses, instead of the self-interested developer and OP. And we've discussed the barriers to that, but we think it is a goal worth pursuing.

The racial equity analysis is often criticized as performative. To site one example, in the McMillan Reservoir case, a major 25-acre development on an historic site, neither the Commission at its 2018 order, nor the applicant at its 2026 modification request identified any adverse racial impact beyond

traffic congestion during construction. That is the kind of conclusion you get when no one involved in the process takes it seriously. We hope the Commission will let applicants and OP know that the era of paying lip service to equity is over. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Ms. Richards. Hold tight. We may have some questions for you.

MS. RICHARDS: Certainly.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Ms. Shoenfeld I believe was next. There you go

MS. SHOENFELD: Hi. Thank you for bearing with me. Good afternoon, or good evening at this point. I'm Sarah Jane Shoenfeld. I'm a Ward 4 resident. I'm also from DC and a local historian. In 2014, I co-founded a project called "Mapping Segregation in Washington, DC", which received Mayor Muriel Bowser's Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation and has been cited in multiple reports produced by the Mayor and by the DC Office of Planning. Most recently, it's informed a new exhibit produced by the Mayor's Office of Racial Equity on DC's history of racial disparities in education and housing.

Housing development advocates, such as Greater Greater Washington and the DC Policy Center, have also embraced the project for the evidence that it provides of the intentionality behind racial segregation and the role of both the real estate industry and public policy, like zoning, in controlling fair

access to housing. However, I do not agree with the solutions proposed by these entities, specifically, that upzoning parts of the city that have been historically restricted for single-family detached homes is a primary tool for making housing access more racially equitable. I've heard so many people argue that building more multi-unit housing is a tool for addressing the racial segregation of the past, while ignoring the fact that the vast majority of Black Washingtonians can't afford to live in almost any of these new developments. And, as others who are testifying today make clear, simply building more housing does little to make it accessible to those who most need it. It's imperative, therefore, that whenever such projects are considered, applicants to the Zoning Commission are required to incorporate specific measures that further racial and economic equity, such as larger units, deeper affordability, and, at a minimum, outreach to voucher holders.

I'm currently working on another project highlighting the racist impact of zoning in DC's Ward 5, which we all know is -- has the highest concentration of industrial facilities in the city. The project centers on Ivy City, which was developed as a residential subdivision in the early 1870's. As Ivy City grew into a stable working-class Black community in the early 20th century, instead of receiving basic amenities, like street paving, which wasn't completed until around 1960, it became a hub for industrial development.

In 1936, new zoning regulations then redesignated the blocks that surrounded this quiet neighborhood from residential to commercial and light manufacturing. Subsequent industrial development created large sections of Ivy City where no one lived, contributing to municipal neglect, while spewing dangerous pollutants into a neighborhood that was already filled with smoke from a nearby streetcar yard and was next door to a city trash incinerator. Residents' complaints also attested to oil leaking from trucks parked in the neighborhood, and, to this day, a company that has been emitting noxious chemicals since the 1940's remains located next door to people's homes.

While reparations to black homeowners whose property was devalued by industrial zoning is, obviously, beyond the Zoning Commission's purview, I think that recognizing this history is fundamental to advancing racial justice, as we've also heard from others on this -- on the last panel. The harms done to neighborhoods, such as Ivy City, must be accounted for in considering the impacts of zoning on Black Washingtonians, who have historically been denied or stripped of wealth through unjust housing policies. OP should be required to provide this information, along with a -- with a housing gap analysis that identifies the shortage of housing available to those impacted by this injustice, especially those who today earn less than 30 to 50 percent of MFI.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate, and I

look forward to hearing what your next steps will be toward increasing racial equity in zoning.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Great. Thank you. Let's go to Mustafa Abdul-Salaam. Mustafa Abdul-Salaam. Hopefully, I didn't mess your name up too bad. If you can unmute.

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. Well --

MR. ABDUL-SALAAM: Okay. Can you hear me?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yeah, I can hear you, yes.

MR. ABDUL-SALAAM: Yes. Thank you. Thank you. Good evening, everybody. Again, my name is Mustafa Abdul-Salaam, and I'm a resident of Ward 8, and for the last 10 years I've been involved in the development of what is called the Ward 8 Community Economic Development. It started off as a planning process and now has emerged into a think tank.

And a lot of what we discussed tonight, that has been very informative and very educational, is the core of what we are looking at in Ward 8, particularly for the population that's been most disenfranchised and has the greatest fear of displacement, so we're taking this conversation very seriously. And no question that the core of it is poverty. And for the last 60 years, Ward 8, east of the river, has really been the dumping ground for poverty, and so we're was dealing with the effects of that being the case.

And the limitations of the Zoning Commission is real,

and I appreciate your comments, Mr. -- Chair Hood, because there's limitations, but, at the same time, I think it's very important that a Commission like this really work with communities to help them with strategies, so that displacement is not what's in front of them. And it takes this kind of collaboration, I think, to really make the changes that need to happen in DC, to make it a place for everybody to live, no matter what your income.

So I sent information about the Ward 8 Community Economic Development think tank, and hopefully each Commissioner will get the information. I encourage you to read the one pager, as well as look at the website, and I'm looking to follow up, because, again, the efforts that we're trying to do with -- in Ward 8 need to be connected to the work that the Commission has done. I think that's what makes a healthy community in a city, and so I'm looking forward to you guys reading the material and us having an opportunity to talk about -- talk more about what we're doing in Ward 8. So thank you for this platform. I appreciate and looking forward to the follow-up.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. Thank you. And I think the last person we have is -- and if you can hold tight, Mr. Salaam, we may have some questions -- Ms. Sebrena -- Commissioner Sebrena Rhodes.

COMMISSIONER RHODES: Hello. Good evening, Chair Hood and Commissioners. Do I get three minutes or five minutes?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: I think you -- are you representing your ANC?

MS. RHODES: Yes.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: You get six minutes, but you can take five. Go right ahead.

COMMISSIONER RHODES: Thank you. My name is Sebrena Rhodes, and I live in Ivy City, founded in 1872. I'm native -- I'm a native to the District, I'm the ANC -- my SMD is 5DO2, and community organizer with Empower DC, and I'm speaking on behalf of my community.

First, I just want to see if we can implement a set of questions the Commission should ask before a decision on projects that will come before the Commissioners -- before the Commission, not after. These are just a few suggestions that may be useful. First, like, who is effective (sic) -- who is affected? Are we considering the dynamics of a specific community, such as our historic Black community of 156 years, like Ivy City, and its environment.

What's the racial inequities, past and present, that shape this site and neighborhood? We should think of the redlining, restrictive covenants, urban renewal, and displacement or -- and/or grandfathering in polluting facilities or being overburdened by polluting industries, which is hardly taken into consideration.

Who benefits from the project development or PUD and

who bears the burdens, the rising costs, the loss of affordable housing, the traffic, loss of small business, or loss of community space, displaced low-income residents, and, again, the environment of the residents, specifically of Ward 5?

What would change with measurable commitments? So the answer is not "just trust us". To your question, Chairman Hood, no, it's not getting to the people in an equitable way. The people are dealing with the harm that is caused before, during, and after decisions are made.

And I am going to speak on this zoning case, because it kind of just -- it just razzled my nerves. In Zoning Case 24-11, we understood how a prominent developer has the upper hand versus the ANC, the community-based -- and the community-based organizations who are fighting on behalf of the residents. And we still don't know how this three-block-wide warehouse will impact the community, who is the tenant, and why was our community benefits agreement declined. Although the PUD will be located on New York Avenue as an industrial area, we shouldn't dismiss the neighboring communities that will be negatively impacted, such as Ivy City and Brentwood. Developers are gaining favor, knowing the zoning practices are insufficient and outdated.

The developer, Zoning, and OP should consider the impacts of a zoning commitment -- a zoning decision, whether positive or negative, especially when we're creating documents that would determine how and what our community will look like,

such as the Ivy City Small Area Plan, and what specific factors define the impacted community, including the characteristics of the residents who will be burdened or who would benefit.

Agencies should be trained now to use the racial equity tool, although it's been in place since 2023, and we're in 2026, going into 2027, but it must be understood holistically, so that their reports to this Commission do more than restate zoning compliance. Applicants must show their work, community data, the history of the site, and who they engaged -- who they engaged, and what changed because of that engagement. We should see the results of a successful tool, not just having it as a document not being implemented, but just knowing -- or but just knowing it's there.

And, also, the Office of Racial Equity has not had the capacity to assist you all, so we ask the question, "Who has been leading the racial equity in zoning?". The answer is communities, residents, tenant associations, ANCs, civic groups, faith congregations, and community-based grassroots organizations have been doing the analysis on their own time and without pay. We have been gathering displacement and affordability data, documenting these neighborhoods' history, and testifying here and at the Council hearings, advocating at the Wilson building often with fewer resources than any applicant, but we must make sure that the community voices are heard.

This is expertise and it should be treated as such,

although the burden still falls on the very communities most at risk of harm and have always been harmed. Low-income communities are largely disrespected and first to get displaced, bulldozed, and forgotten for the sake of new residents.

I respectfully ask the Commission to do the following, including the first things I said, but we ask that you require a completed racial equity tool analysis with agency and community input of any project and/or development. Take the section, "Community Priorities and Impact on Zoning Action" and the Zoning Commission evaluation seriously. Documentation should be Direct Displacement, Indirect Displacement, all levels of housing, including group homes and homes for returning citizens, Physical, and Access to Opportunity and Community. Ask the applicant to name specific, enforceable commitments on affordability, anti-displacement, and what kind of community benefit was negotiated. Give community analysis real weight along with the great weight of an ANC, which I found out isn't law, just a recommendation, in the Commission's findings. Support the funding and staffing that let ORE or a third-party entity assist this Commission.

And I want to thank you for your time, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Thank you, Commissioner Rhodes. Did I see your testimony in the record?

COMMISSIONER RHODES: No. I just signed up today, and so, no, I did not put it in the record. Is it too late?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: No. I would like for you to put that in the record as well.

COMMISSIONER RHODES: Okay.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: And anybody else who has not, who's testified today please, make sure that we have that in the record, and Ms. Schellin will come up with the dates. All right. Let's see if we have any questions or comments. Any -- colleagues -- I'm looking at my colleagues. Any questions or comments? Okay. I might have some, but Vice Chair Miller, I'll go last. Vice Chair Miller.

VICE CHAIR MILLER: Thank each of you for your testimony and participation here tonight, your advocacy on behalf of your communities and the larger District of Columbia community. We appreciate it, and we will consider everything carefully.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: I, too, want to thank everyone, but I want to ask -- go back and ask a couple of questions. I think Ms. Brown -- I think I'm attributing it to the right person who said this. If I'm not, forgive me, whoever said it, answer -- if you can help me with the answer. It was about reject the project on racial equity. That's a question I've been asking, and I don't think we can do that. Do you know of -- and not necessarily in this jurisdiction -- do you know of any jurisdictions where that has been done and the courts upheld it?

MS. BROWN: Actually, I said the opposite. I said don't reject. Laura said reject.

MS. RICHARD: I said reject it, yes.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: You said don't reject. Okay. I'm sorry. I'm sorry, Ms. Brown. Let me go to the person who said reject the project on racial equity, Ms. Richards.

MS. RICHARD: Yes, I think that -- I am not aware of any jurisdictions where a racial equity tool could be a basis for rejecting a project. I do not think you should be put off by that, because the whole racial equity analysis is based on consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, and if it's racially inequitable, then it is not consistent with the Plan, and you have a solid basis for rejecting it. And you'll only have to do it once or twice. They'll -- you'll get a response from the Council and they'll either say "Oh, we didn't mean that; we weren't serious about racial equity all along," and then we'll all know, or, you know, you'll get through -- it'll get through. Same thing happened with Colonel Brooks years ago. It only took a couple of kind of turndowns before the Council said "Oh, we don't really like this; we're going to sort of destroy the right to appeal", but we knew where we were.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. All right. Thank you, Ms. Richards.

MS. RICHARDS: May I say one thing? This is to another panelist. I thought Ms. Shoenfeld's study was, like, masterful, and I don't see how the city can, on the one hand, give awards for wrapping displacement, while it merrily proceeds to practice

displacement. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. All right. I'm not going to ask any more questions. I was going to ask about that. I do like the question about the recipients of the IZ units. I do plan on asking that. I don't have any further questions, unless my colleagues have any additional ones. I think it's time for us to close out. We've heard from everyone. What I plan on doing, I'm going to meet with staff, I'm going to talk to my -- with my colleagues and see how we feel, and then we're going to deliberate on it.

I'm saying this, and I'm sure that Ms. Lovick and others will tell me whether that's the right process or not, but I do appreciate Mr. Salaam's issue about follow-up. We plan on follow-up, and, for me, this is accelerated, because we've been doing this long -- we've been talking about and having a conversation long enough, so I'm going to talk to the staff, talk to my colleagues, and then we're going to try -- we're going to have a conversation -- a roundtable conversation, not about a case, in public, and I'm going to do that -- hopefully, do that sooner than later. That's the goal. Colleagues, you have any closing remarks, anything you want to add to it, anything I left out, anything you disagree with, at least not right now?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: All right. All right. So, Ms. Schellin, do we have anything else?

MS. SCHELLIN: So did you want to leave the record open for a specific amount of time, two weeks, if they get information?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Actually, I'd like to -- I want to meet with staff next week, so let's leave it open till maybe Monday.

MS. SCHELLIN: Until Monday?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Yes, until Monday.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. So then the record will be open until three o'clock p.m. on Monday, November 2nd. And should we just put this on, since it'll be a public discussion, for the December meeting -- I think that may be light -- or January?

CHAIRMAN HOOD: What day is -- what day is -- I'd rather do it this year. What day is the December meeting?

MS. SCHELLIN: Or would you rather schedule a special public meeting, because I think December -- yeah, December might be late. The December meeting is going to be December 17th -- Thursday, December 17th at four o'clock p.m.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Let's do Thursday, December the 17th.

MS. SCHELLIN: Okay. At four o'clock p.m. I will put that on our agenda.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: And there will be a closed meeting, Ms. Schellin. We need to have -- I need to have a closed meeting before then just with my colleagues after I meet with the staff.

MS. SCHELLIN: Yes, sir.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: We need it. Okay. All right. Colleagues, anything different; you want any different approach?

(No response.)

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. All right. So we're going to go ahead and move that. Ms. Schellin, when do we meet again. I don't have that open.

MS. SCHELLIN: We meet -- you guys meet again on -- the meeting -- just to announce for those who did not see, the meeting scheduled for this Thursday has been canceled, since there was only one item on the agenda. That item's been moved to the November meeting. So the Commission will meet again on Thursday, November 5th, for Case Number 22-08B, as in boy.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. So, with that --

MS. LOVICK: No there's a -- there's a -- there's a hearing on Monday, November 2nd.

MS. SCHELLIN: Oh, did I miss that one?

MS. LOVICK: I think it's 26-06.

MS. SCHELLIN: Oh, yes. I didn't put that on my calendar. 26-06, so that's Monday, November 2nd, 26-06 at four o'clock p.m.

CHAIRMAN HOOD: Okay. So thank you, Ms. Lovick, for reminding us, because there would have been nobody here but you and -- probably you, because I wouldn't have come on the 2nd. So I want to thank everyone for their participation.

Again, the Zoning Commission will meet again on November the 2nd. And I want to thank all those who are trying to help us really nail down and do all we can do with this --

with the racial equity part of it and also taking into context and consideration of what Commissioner Wright mentioned, as well, about a bigger picture. So we're going to look at all that and do the best we can within our powers to try to make sure the rubber meets the road.

So, with that, I want to thank everyone for their participation appreciate your time and effort into this. And, with that, this roundtable is adjourned. Thank you, everyone for their participation and appreciate your time and effort into this. And with that, this roundtable is adjourned. Thank you, everyone.

(Whereupon, the above-entitled public roundtable was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.)

C E R T I F I C A T I O N

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript

In the matter of: Public Roundtable on Racial Equity Tool

Before: DC Zoning Commission

Date: 10-26-26

Place: Webex Videoconference

was duly recorded and accurately transcribed under my direction; further, that said transcript is a true and accurate record of the proceedings.

Deborah B. Gauthier

Deborah B. Gauthier