

Inclusionary Housing Testimony to the Planning & Sustainability Commission
Madeline Kovacs, Portland for Everyone
10.25.16

Hello Commissioners, thank you for your time this afternoon.

My name is Madeline Kovacs, and I am the Coordinator of the Portland for Everyone coalition. We are over 35 formally endorsing organizations, all supporting the provision of abundant, diverse & affordable housing options for all Portlanders.

I want to testify today in support of the inclusionary housing proposal before you in its current form.

Increasing the supply of housing to address Portland's housing crisis is important – but we need to be equally concerned with who we are building this housing for, and where it's located. I am here today to speak to two of Portland for Everyone's five goals for the city of Portland that are just as important:

- Prioritizing housing for historically and currently under-served populations, and
- Creating and maintaining economically diverse neighborhoods.

In a city experiencing rapid growth, and increasing pressures on access to affordable housing, we need to leverage this energy for the benefit of average Portlanders, not only for those whose pockets are deep enough. We must do this now: If we don't, it will only get harder as 1,000 new residents move to Portland each month.

Furthermore, Portland's zoning has roots in racial and class exclusion, which has harmed communities and resulted in some of the intractable issues that policymakers must struggle with today. The policy proposal before you now is the best option that we currently have, to not only slow the widening gaps in wellbeing and opportunity that have arisen from these practices, but to intentionally and actively reverse them.

I would like to live in a city where everyone that I meet is given an equal opportunity to thrive. I would also like to live in a city where a person's potential is no longer determined predominantly by their zip code.

The City of Portland engaged in an intensive, rigorous process over the past six months, with input from developers, advocates, and experts. It solicited analysis from independent technical advisors and an intra-bureau technical team, and held community-wide discussions, all to arrive at the policy proposal now before you.

The current Inclusionary Housing policy also contains the full suite of tools that can be employed to achieve successful development regimes, including direct subsidies, density bonuses, tax abatements, and, hopefully, further reduced parking requirements.

While I only worked as a developer for a year and change, I did learn a very important lesson: With courage, intelligence, and creativity, many long-held assumptions that drive our business models can fall away, and more effective and collaborative solutions can emerge. I am excited to watch the development and business community here in Portland dedicate itself to those endeavors, tackling projects which will bring added benefit and much-needed housing to our city and our communities.