

Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning

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Coalition Demands City Use New Re-zonings to Address Affordable Housing Crisis

May 19, 2004 – Just months before the Bloomberg Administration plans to re-zone hundreds of City blocks to spur the development of tens-of-thousands of new apartments, a diverse coalition of City Council members, faith leaders, housing groups, development corporations, and community organizations joined together Wednesday to demand that the City guarantee that a portion of new homes built in those re-zoned communities will be affordable to middle- and low-income New Yorkers.

Council members in support of the proposal to create new affordable housing introduced a resolution that advises the Mayor to implement mandatory Inclusionary Zoning. Inclusionary Zoning would require developers to include some affordable housing if they build residential units on property that has been re-zoned to allow additional housing density. Inclusionary Zoning has been adopted by hundreds of cities across the country, including Boston, Chicago, San Diego, and San Francisco where it has been utilized to build thousands of units of affordable housing.

“Without a guarantee that some of these new homes will be affordable homes, New York’s working class is certain to be pushed even farther out of the neighborhoods that it helped build,” Council Member David Yassky (D-Brooklyn) said. “If we give away valuable development rights on some of the last available land in the City without the promise of anything in return, the teachers, nurses and firefighters who can’t afford new, luxury apartments built there will be even worse off than if the City hadn’t acted at all.”

(more)

“Under the current zoning rules, developers get a windfall from building market-rate and luxury apartments and condos; the few who can afford it get a pricey home in a gentrified neighborhood; and lower-income New Yorkers get thrown out to the curb.”

"The city's lack of affordable housing is the social, economic and moral crisis of our time," said Roland Lewis, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity NYC, a founding member of the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning. "Right now, we have a unique opportunity to shape what our city will look like and who will live here in the 21st century through an inclusive approach to the zoning code. Inclusionary Zoning will improve and strengthen New York's neighborhoods, making the city a better place to live and work for everyone."

An unprecedented number of re-zonings and development projects are slated to begin this year. Proposals for new residential buildings in neighborhoods throughout the City, including in Downtown Brooklyn, on the West Side of Manhattan, on the Greenpoint-Williamsburg, Brooklyn waterfront, and in western Queens will create 40,000-75,000 new apartments—so far, with no guarantee of affordability. These public re-zoning actions are estimated to increase privately owned land values by tens of billions of dollars. Evidence shows that Inclusionary Zoning does not slow development—and in some cases even leads to increased development.

The Citywide coalition of more than 50 groups – called the Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning – asks that the City guarantee affordable housing by requiring developers, in exchange for the increased value they derive from re-zoning for higher density residential purposes, to include homes affordable to middle- and low-income New Yorkers.

Community members from neighborhoods facing major re-development joined the coalition in demanding that affordability and community stability be factored in to any re-zoning proposals that will allow developers to build valuable, high-density residential properties.

“The current luxury housing planned for Williamsburg and Greenpoint practically tosses out its hardworking people. It is our duty to ensure they are not priced out of the neighborhoods they helped to build,” said Cirilo Gutierrez, a resident of Williamsburg and volunteer leader with Churches United for Fair Housing. “That’s why the City must guarantee affordable housing through Inclusionary Zoning.”

More than 500,000 New York families – 25% of renters – pay more than half of their income to rent. Over the past decade, New York City added 456,000 more people to its population, but produced only 85,000 more units of housing.