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## **Zoning Commission Takes Important Step To Expand Affordable Housing in the District**

(Washington, DC) The DC Zoning Commission took an important step Wednesday night to expand affordable housing in the District, with a vote to strengthen the city's Inclusionary Zoning program. The Commission's action largely adopts the recommendations of the DC Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning, a group of affordable housing advocates and supporters.

Inclusionary Zoning (IZ) harnesses the District's hot real estate market to create affordable housing throughout the city. IZ requires almost every new residential development to reserve a specified share of the new homes at below-market rents or sales prices, in return for allowing greater density than normally permitted by zoning rules. Importantly, IZ can produce affordable housing wherever development is occurring – including in neighborhoods with access to public transportation, good schools, retail amenities, and job opportunities – without requiring tax dollars.

IZ will soon help more low-income families struggling to pay the rent amidst the city's rising housing costs. On Wednesday, July 20, the Zoning Commission voted to require new IZ rental units be set aside as affordable to families with incomes below 60 percent of Area Median Income (AMI), or \$52,000 for a family of two. That amounts to \$1,100 for a one-bedroom rental. Currently, the vast majority of IZ units are only required to be affordable at 80 percent AMI – or \$1,600 for a one-bedroom rental – close to market rate in most DC neighborhoods.

As a result of the Commission's action, IZ will generate over 2,600 apartments affordable to low-income families over the next five to ten years, based on the pace of new development which has climbed to a 25-year high. "The Zoning Commission's decision comes at an opportune time to ensure IZ does the most it can for families severely squeezed by DC's high rents and closed out of many neighborhoods," said Claire Zippel of the DC Fiscal Policy Institute.

"We are gratified that the Commission is sharpening the tool we knew could do more to address our city's affordable housing crisis. The economics show that this change strikes the right balance between encouraging market-rate housing production and incorporating greater affordability for those left out of the market," said Cheryl Cort of the Coalition for Smarter Growth.

The Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning petitioned the Zoning Commission in January, 2015 to consider revisions to IZ, after it became apparent that the homes created were largely out of reach of the city's low-income residents – and too expensive for three-fourths of families on the IZ waiting list, whose incomes fall at or below 60 percent AMI. Paying the majority of income for rent is not uncommon for families near 60 percent AMI, whereas households at 80 percent AMI are already largely accommodated by existing housing in the private market.

“By strengthening this affordable housing policy, the Zoning Commission helps ensure working people can still call DC home. We thank the Commission for listening to the voices of those who are being priced out,” said Carlos Jimenez, Executive Director of the Washington Labor Council AFL-CIO.

“The Commission’s decision is good news for District residents at lower incomes who will benefit from IZ through increased access to opportunity – amenities and infrastructure in higher-cost neighborhoods, including schools, transportation choices, jobs and health care options,” said David Bowers, Vice President and Mid-Atlantic Market Leader at Enterprise Community Partners.

After a 30-day public review period, the Zoning Commission’s decision is expected to become final.

*The **Campaign for Inclusionary Zoning** is led by the Coalition for Smarter Growth and the DC Fiscal Policy Institute. It is supported by Enterprise Community Partners, the Metropolitan Washington Labor Council AFL-CIO, PolicyLink, and Jews United for Justice.*

*The **Coalition for Smarter Growth** is the leading organization in the Washington DC region dedicated to making the case for smart growth. Its mission is to promote walkable, inclusive, and transit-oriented communities, and the land use and transportation policies and investments needed to make those communities flourish. Learn more at [smartergrowth.net](http://smartergrowth.net).*

*The **DC Fiscal Policy Institute** conducts research and public education on budget and tax issues in the District of Columbia, with a particular emphasis on issues that affect low- and moderate-income residents. By preparing timely analyses that are used by policy makers, the media, and the public, DCFPI seeks to inform public debates on budget and tax issues and to ensure that the needs of lower-income residents are considered in those debates. Learn more at [dcfpi.org](http://dcfpi.org).*

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