

12

September 8, 2014

Dear Cambridge City Council members,

I want to register my strong support for Policy Order #10 regarding an increase in the affordable housing percentage in the Inclusionary Zoning Ordinance. I also want to thank Mayor Maher, Vice-Mayor Benzan and Councillor McGovern for submitting this order.

Given the information submitted by the Community Development Department at a Housing Committee meeting in July to discuss affordable housing, it is clear that the both the need for affordable housing and the challenges for families seeking it are daunting.

At that point, there were over 9,000 families on the Cambridge Housing Authority's waiting list and hundreds on the waiting list for rental and homeowner affordable units in the city. At the same time, rents and sale prices continue to skyrocket. The report noted that, at that point, median rent for a two-bedroom condo was \$3,000 and the median sales price for a two bedroom condo was \$539,500.

Inclusionary zoning is one of the best tools available to create new affordable housing units. This is particularly true at times when the demand for housing is great and prices high. It is particularly difficult for nonprofits to compete in this kind of market to be able to purchase properties to produce new units so inclusionary zoning becomes an invaluable tool in producing new affordable units.

I urge the Council to approve this policy order and hope that the City Manager will be able to report back as soon as possible as this is such a pressing issue. I also urge the Council to take action to increase zoning in select areas, particularly in areas where there is public transportation, as suggested by the C2 and K2 Committees. This would not only make it more likely that developers would create buildings that are large enough to meet the inclusionary zoning requirements, but it would also result in a greater number of affordable housing units.

I am so grateful to live in Cambridge because of our track record of working to meet the needs of our less fortunate neighbors and our commitment to working to preserve as much diversity as possible. To continue to be the kind of city I love, it is imperative that we make every effort to increase our stock of affordable housing. This policy order is an important step in working toward that goal.

Esther Hanig

136 Pine St., #2  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
e.hanig@comcast.net