



April 11, 2017

**Committee on Housing & Neighborhood Revitalization – Department of Housing and Community Development and the Housing Production Trust Fund.**

**Budget Hearing, April 11, 2017. Good Faith Communities Coalition submits the following written testimony for the record.**

Good Faith, an organization of District faith communities, commends the Mayor for the continued investment in the Housing Production Trust Fund and for the additional investment of \$10 million in preservation. These investments are critical as the District struggles to address the overwhelming challenge of providing affordable housing for the city's most vulnerable.

Like many other affordable housing advocates, we have concerns:

- **Housing for families in the 0 – 30% AMI income bracket.** The 40% target for investment in housing in this category has not been met again this year. There has been improvement, but nowhere near what is needed. It appears that developers can't build or sustain housing for families at this level without some annual rental assistance for each family. Does this mean a substantial number of new project housing vouchers are needed for families who can afford only \$200 per month for rent? Voucher turnover is never going to provide enough vouchers. Or perhaps more public housing? The answer to both these questions is generally "NO" – too long term, costs too much. **Then what is the answer?** Continuing to try to meet the target, but failing, is not a long-term strategy. Families, often spending well over 50% of their income on rent, are housing burdened and vulnerable in most aspects of their life. They need help today. Again, we ask: **what is the answer?**
- **Oversight.** From our recent work in Ward 3, we can say that there is community support for investment in affordable housing. However, it is unlikely to continue if developers, landlords and tenants scam the system and appear to get away with it. Though it is much easier to focus on getting money out the door than to make sure the current inventory is on the right course, such an approach is short-sighted. The public notices and their tolerance for such scamming is very limited. The additional housing inspectors should make a difference, but to do so, their work must be carefully directed.
- **Lifetime building affordability.** This approach as tested in Boston has benefits for the city, the developer and most importantly, the residents. Not only is the housing stock preserved, building maintenance can be ongoing, a definite benefit for the residents. This approach should be implemented as broadly as possible.

For the past 10 months, Good Faith has been working with congregations in Ward 3 on the proposed short term family housing. Most congregations supported the housing realizing that it was emergency housing and intended to be short term. The oft-asked next question was: "Then what?" For the faith community, housing the most vulnerable is a moral mandate we must respond to, meeting targets with creativity and with urgency. We look forward to the 40% investment goal being met – and even surpassed!

As faith communities, we honor embrace all people in our community as children of God. We are hopeful people and we continue to pray: Let not the needy, O Lord, be forgotten. Nor the hope of the poor be taken away."

Thank you for your continued commitment to our poor and vulnerable neighbors.



**John Hisle, Executive Director,  
Good Faith Communities Coalition**