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COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PUBLIC HEARING

COMMITTEE ON LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

- - -

Room 696, City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Tuesday, November 19, 2002
10:15 a.m.

- - -

RESOLUTION 020625 - Resolution authorizing the City Council Committee on Licenses and Inspections to conduct hearings on the feasibility in the construction of new multi-family dwellings according to the principles of VisitAbility.

- - -

PRESENT:

COUNCILMAN RICHARD MARIANO, Chair
COUNCILWOMAN JANNIE BLACKWELL
COUNCILMAN DARRELL CLARKE
COUNCILMAN FRANK DICICCO
COUNCILWOMAN JOAN KRAJEWSKI
COUNCILWOMAN BLONDELL REYNOLDS BROWN
COUNCILMAN FRANK RIZZO

- - -

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2 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: This is the public
3 hearing of the Committee on License and Inspections.
4 Bill No. 020634 is being held at the request of
5 Councilman Clarke.

6 Mr. Allen, the Clerk, will read the
7 title of Resolution 020625.

8 THE CLERK: Resolution 020625, a
9 Resolution authorizing the City Council Committee on
10 Licenses and Inspections to conduct hearings on the
11 feasibility in the construction of new multi-family
12 dwellings according to the principles of
13 VisitAbility.

14 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: We do have a
15 quorum. I want to note that Councilman Mariano,
16 that's myself, Councilman Clarke, Councilwoman
17 Krajewski, Councilman Nutter, Councilman Rizzo,
18 Councilwoman Blackwell, and I think Councilwoman
19 Blondell Reynolds Brown is in the hallway working
20 her way up.

21 Councilwoman Blackwell would like to
22 make a statement.

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Good morning.
24 Let me thank the Chair, Members of the Committee,
25 and all who are here for this public hearing.

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2 According to recent statistics published in the Year
3 28 Consolidated Plan, there are approximately
4 264,000 disabled people in the City; and of those,
5 an estimated housing need of 65,300 people.

6 We all recognize there's a need to
7 address the significant gap in our housing supply
8 and we want to do this in a way that certainly
9 supports VisitAbility guidelines and certainly
10 supports the need for housing production and
11 continues to inspire developers to invest and to
12 build in our City.

13 Our goal here, in my opinion, today is
14 to identify a balanced approach that incorporates
15 VisitAbility principles and the creation of new and
16 renovated affordable housing while still enabling
17 housing developers to continue their investment in
18 our City in a practical and cost-efficient manner.
19 In the end, we hope that this process will have
20 educated all of us on the needs of our diverse
21 population, allowing developers to think of ways to
22 tap untouched homeownership markets through meeting
23 social demands and certainly protecting and
24 supporting all who live and work and visit our City
25 so that everybody feels they have a right and an

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2 opportunity to have decent, safe, affordable
3 housing.

4 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: We have received
6 testimony from the Housing Consortium for Disabled
7 Individuals which will be entered into the public
8 record.

9 The Chair recognizes Dainette Mintz of
10 OHCD and Wendy Elliot Vandivier of the Mayor's
11 Commission of People with Disabilities for their
12 testimony.

13 MS. MINTZ: Good morning. My name is
14 Dainette Mintz, Director of Special Needs Housing
15 for the Office of Housing and Community Development.
16 OHCD welcomes the opportunity to testify regarding
17 the feasibility of VisitAbility in the new
18 construction of multi-family dwellings.

19 OCHD's affordable housing program
20 activities are administered in compliance with the
21 Federal Fair Housing Act and Section 504 program.
22 In summary, these program require nondiscrimination
23 in the sale, rental, and financing of residential
24 dwellings and that a minimum of 5 percent of the
25 total dwelling units in a project or at least one

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2 unit, whichever is greater, shall be made accessible
3 for persons with mobility disabilities. In
4 addition, 2 percent of the units in the project but
5 not less than one unit must be accessible for
6 persons with hearing or visual disabilities. The
7 estimated population of persons with disabilities in
8 the City of Philadelphia is 264,000. The estimated
9 affordable housing need is 65,300.

10 The concept of VisitAbility recognizes
11 for many seniors and individuals with disabilities,
12 structural barriers such as stepped entrances and
13 narrow door and entryways can severely limit or even
14 prevent socialization and visiting the homes of
15 friends, family, relatives and neighbors.
16 VisitAbility is a design criterion that would allow
17 individuals with disabilities basic access to
18 residential buildings. There are three basic
19 elements of VisitAbility, a zero-step entry, doors
20 as wide and possible and an accessible bathroom on
21 the first floor. These standards are broader than
22 those presently required under the ADA or the
23 National Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Section 504.
24 Notably, however, they can potentially make housing
25 more attractive for all of Philadelphia's residents

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2 because the crisis related to accidents, aging, or
3 illness that all of us face can be minimized or
4 avoided completely.

5 New construction cost issues related to
6 VisitAbility is often related to the zero-step
7 entrance and an accessible first floor bathroom. In
8 new construction, the exterior solutions to a
9 zero-step entrance involve simply a sidewalk sloping
10 gently upward to replace a step, a garage floor
11 poured level to one entrance or a short ramp
12 replacing steps at the entrance most feasible for
13 access.

14 Design issues related to VisitAbility
15 are the challenge of addressing the perception that
16 people don't like the look of access, that access is
17 unaesthetic and unattractive. While it can be
18 argued whether this perception and/or belief may or
19 may not be true, it is also recognized that people
20 with no mobility impairments are becoming more and
21 more accustomed to the look and usefulness of
22 universal access as they roll their bicycles down
23 curb cuts, choose to walk up the ramp rather than
24 the steps to a movie theater, and take for granted
25 the access features in new restaurants, schools,

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offices, churches, et cetera. Often when picturing unattractive exterior access, people are picturing the traditional long and awkward ramps that often must be added to existing houses that were built without an accessible entrance. If focussed solely on new construction, innovations in form and design can greatly improve the aesthetic of access and allow it to blend into the surroundings with ease.

It is important not to minimize the challenges of instituting VisitAbility principles. Costs of designing and installing a bathroom or powder room on the first floor can increase even new construction costs significantly. This can place a heavy burden on a developer who may be looking to develop housing for low and moderate-income individuals and may be working within a tight budget. Further, the simple space requirements needed under the VisitAbility principles especially with regard to turning space and required maneuvering space can create a serious challenge to the design and layout of a new home. However, these challenges should be incorporated into a larger investigation of the principles of VisitAbility.

In conclusion, the Administration is

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2 prepared to participate with City Council in the
3 creation of a task force or commission on
4 VisitAbility to ascertain and learn about the
5 specific implementation issues related to
6 VisitAbility to ascertain and learn about the
7 specific implementation issues related to
8 VisitAbility and our City.

9 Thank you for the opportunity to appear
10 and testify on this measure. I would be glad to
11 answer any questions you may have.

12 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Any questions for
13 this witness from the Committee?

14 (No response.)

15 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Seeing none, sir,
16 state your name into the microphone and spell it for
17 the stenographer.

18 MR. MARGULIES: Good morning. My name
19 is Roger Margulies, M-A-R-G-U-L-I-E-S. And I'm
20 Assistant Deputy Mayor for the Mayor's Commission on
21 People with Disabilities.

22 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you. You can
23 give your testimony.

24 MR. MARGULIES: I want to thank City
25 Council Committee on Licensing and Inspections for

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2 an opportunity to express my views on Resolution
3 020625. On behalf of the 264,000 citizens with
4 disabilities in Philadelphia, I want to thank the
5 sponsors of this VisitAbility resolution for their
6 foresight and insight. Passage of a bill to support
7 VisitAbility is a major first step. I want to
8 remind the Committee that VisitAbility is not total
9 accessibility. For citizens with disabilities, that
10 is our ultimate goal.

11 Let me take a moment to explain the
12 difference between accessibility VisitAbility.
13 Accessibility is defined in the Fair Housing Act,
14 multi-family housing building with four or more
15 units built and occupied after March 13, 1991, must
16 be designed with accessibility features in all units
17 in buildings with elevators and ground floor units
18 only in non-elevator buildings, including
19 specifications regarding width of doorways, height
20 of cabinets, light switches, and so forth.
21 Following are the major features: Exterior entrance
22 of minimum 32-inch clear space, minimum clear
23 openings in interior doorways of at least 32 inches,
24 path/corridor minimum 36-inch width, turning radius
25 of 5 foot within kitchen and bathrooms, bathroom

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2 fixtures with grab bars around the tub or shower.

3 In contrast, VisitAbility only means
4 having the following: One entrance with zero steps,
5 a 32-inch clear passage through all interior doors
6 including bathrooms, at least one usable bathroom on
7 the main floor. A visitable home is not accessible
8 throughout the entire dwelling and does not include
9 accessibility of the kitchen, other bathrooms, or
10 the bedrooms on the second floor.

11 Why passage of this resolution is a
12 major first step. The housing stock in Philadelphia
13 is almost totally inaccessible for citizens with all
14 kinds of disabilities. Steps, second floor
15 bathrooms, and narrow doorways are often
16 insurmountable barriers hinder mobility in and out
17 and within homes. VisitAbility will allow citizens
18 with disabilities access to their neighbor's home in
19 and a fuller participation in the communities in
20 which they live. It promotes mainstreaming and
21 inclusion to a population that has too long been
22 excluded due to physical and attitudinal barriers.
23 VisitAbility can lead to a better quality of life
24 for citizens with disabilities and everyone else.
25 Persons with disabilities are taxpayers and

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2 full-fledged citizens.

3 As a majority of the population ages,
4 the accessibility features that VisitAbility offers
5 can benefit everyone. Curb cuts are our prime
6 example. Although initially installed to make
7 communities more accessible for those with mobility
8 impairments, they are widely used by everybody,
9 including mothers with baby carriages and delivery
10 people.

11 In conclusion, I believe that the
12 opposition to VisitAbility has more to do with
13 changing the status quo. VisitAbility is an idea
14 whose time has come. Changing door widths, removing
15 steps, and having a usable first floor bathroom seem
16 like good common sense. These alterations can make
17 positive changes in people's lives. I urge support
18 for Resolution 020625.

19 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you.

20 Any questions from the Committee for
21 this witness?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Seeing none, anyone
24 here from the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans
25 Association?

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2 Dainette, Darrell has a question for
3 you. I'm sorry.

4 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Good morning. Can
5 you talk to me -- are you familiar with the recent
6 Housing Authority agreement with respect to
7 disability housing?

8 MS. MINTZ: No, unfortunately, I'm not.

9 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: You're not familiar
10 with that at all?

11 MS. MINTZ: No.

12 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I thought you may
13 have had some. I know there was a lawsuit, and as a
14 result of that the Housing Authority was entered
15 into an agreement that they were required to build a
16 substantial amount of the new units that they are
17 building to be accessible.

18 MS. MINTZ: I am aware that there is an
19 agreement, but I don't know any of the details.

20 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: All right. Thanks.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Ms. Mintz.

23 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Councilwoman

24 Blackwell has a question.

25 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Can you give us

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2 any idea on what the estimate would be on an overall
3 project cost to enact this resolution per
4 VisitAbility standards?

5 MS. MINTZ: We do not have any specific
6 cost. Much of the work that has been done basically
7 indicates that the cost could be limited, certainly
8 for the City of Philadelphia. The concern we have
9 is that we don't have specifics locally. One of the
10 things that we were hoping would be the outcome of
11 this hearing would be the opportunity to really do
12 some analysis locally to look at what the impact
13 would be on new construction in the future.

14 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.
15 That's our goal, too. We realize that we have some
16 old antiquated apartments where people don't have
17 access on first floor to bathrooms or powder rooms
18 or handicap ramps, et cetera. But we also
19 understand that if we don't handle it properly, we
20 close down because some owners are unable to or
21 unwilling to invest and then people have no place to
22 go, and we don't exacerbate the situation.

23 MS. MINTZ: Correct.

24 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Our
25 understanding is that it may be more feasible in

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2 multi-family dwellings to certainly adhere or make
3 sure VisitAbility standards are adhered to but that
4 it may be more difficult in smaller units.

5 MS. MINTZ: That's correct. And
6 certainly it is easier if we're looking solely at
7 new construction.

8 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Especially for
9 new units, new multi-family dwellings being erected.

10 MS. MINTZ: Yes.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

12 MS. MINTZ: You're welcome.

13 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Eastern
14 Pennsylvania Paralyzed Veterans.

15 State your name and spell it for the
16 stenographer.

17 MS SCHWANGER: My name is Laura
18 Schwanger, my S-C-H-W-A-N-G-E-R, and I have Jennifer
19 DePaul, EPVA Senior Regional Advocate. DePaul, D-E
20 capital P-A-U-L.

21 My name is Laura Schwanger and I'm
22 speaking on behalf of the Eastern Paralyzed Veterans
23 Association, a non-profit private organization
24 dedicated to enhancing lives of veterans with spinal
25 cord injury or disease by assuring quality

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2 healthcare, promoting research, and advocating for
3 civil rights and independence. Thank you for the
4 opportunity to present comments on the proposal to
5 incorporate the principles of VisitAbility into the
6 construction of new single family homes and
7 multi-family dwellings built with financial
8 assistance from the City of Philadelphia.

9 EPVA supports the concept of
10 VisitAbility because we believe that homes built
11 with visitable features will help our members and
12 all people with disabilities lead more independent
13 and productive lives.

14 For more than 50 years, EPVA has been an
15 effective advocate for all persons with disabilities
16 throughout the Delaware Valley. Over the years,
17 EPVA has played a significant role in ensuring that
18 local governments meet the mandated requirements for
19 the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. Here
20 in Philadelphia, EPVA has been active in both the
21 Mayor's Commission on People with Disabilities and
22 the SEPTA Advisory Committee for accessible
23 transportation. We have offered technical
24 assistance to City Council in the past when issues
25 were raised that affect our membership. Today, we

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2 are here to discuss another issue that directly
3 impacts our members: Accessible housing. EPVA
4 would like to offer following remarks:

5 Many people with disabilities are unable
6 to visit families and friends because their homes
7 are inaccessible. While EPVA recognizes that
8 certain existing residential homes will always be
9 inaccessible, homes that are built today can often
10 at little cost, incorporate features that will allow
11 someone with a disability to visit an individual
12 that resides in a new home. VisitAbility is a new
13 and evolving concept that policymakers throughout
14 the nation are considering. In EPVA's view,
15 VisitAbility is just a simple common sense approach
16 to incorporating some physical accessibility
17 features into the new construction of single-family
18 homes built with public financial assistance.

19 The VisitAbility principles that EPVA
20 supports are as follows: Providing at least one
21 accessible entrance, providing accessible interior
22 doorways to the entry level floor, and providing an
23 accessible route throughout the entry level floor
24 which includes access to a convenient facility on
25 the accessible level. Additionally, EPVA supports

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2 providing reinforcements blocking in the walls of
3 the entry level rest room at the time of
4 construction.

5 Housing advocates work on a daily basis
6 to help people with disabilities locate accessible
7 affordable housing. This is not an easy task.
8 However, enabling someone with a disability to gain
9 entry into a home, navigate through the first floor
10 and enter the bathroom are small design elements
11 that can simply be addressed prior to construction.
12 This is the goal of VisitAbility. These design
13 features afford homeowners, whether disabled or able
14 bodied, the ability to entertain, socialize, and
15 interact with all members of the community. These
16 are vital parts of belonging to a neighborhood,
17 particularly in a City of Philadelphia which, as we
18 know, is a city of neighborhoods. The numbers are
19 large when one considers all the children,
20 middle-aged and elderly people who use wheelchairs,
21 walkers, crutches, canes or are mobility impaired
22 such as having heart conditions or balance problems.
23 Also heavily impacted are the family members of
24 these persons because one individual's lack of
25 access limits the housing options and visiting

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opportunities of the whole family. These individuals need access to their own homes and they also have a need for other homes to be visitable. Otherwise, they are limited with contact with friends and extended family members.

Having just recently purchased a new home, I would like to point out that a house is occupied not only by the original persons who buy it, but also by the series of future persons who buy, rent, or visit that home for many decades.

As a wheelchair user, I have accessibility improvements to my home that were necessary for me to reside there. However, those items that I have improved, such as widening doorways, building a ramp, are items that a new construction can be avoided with a little foresight and preparation. In new construction, total added costs to incorporate visitable features is far less than the cost encountered once a home is built. While the architectural features covered by VisitAbility are inexpensive during the building process, the organization concrete change reports that removing barriers after they are constructed can be extremely expensive. Widening one interior

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door can easily cost \$1500, and adding a ramp to an existing home can be quite costly. It was much more \$1500.

EPVA supports the concept of VisitAbility that has recently been brought up in Philadelphia. Numerous other cities such as Atlanta, Georgia; Austin, Texas; Urbana, Illinois, Pima County, Arizona; and Naperville, Illinois have passed ordinances that address this issue. Additionally, Texas, Georgia, Florida, and Vermont have passed similar pieces of legislation that have allowed numerous homes to be designed and built as visitable. Clearly, additional cities and states must introduce legislation in order to successfully affect the status quo. Once the changes are required, they will become routine for builders to carry out because of their simplicity and inexpensiveness. The access features will not be a detriment to any resident or visitor. In fact, they will be a great help to many.

In closing, EPVA would like to stress that we have a history of supporting legislation that enables individuals with disabilities to become active participants in society. Since the passage

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2 of the ADA 12 years ago people with disabilities
3 have proven that with slight accommodations,
4 equality can be readily achieved and can also
5 benefit all individuals at the same time.

6 VisitAbility is a concept that true reply afford
7 improved access to all people, not just those with
8 disabilities. EPVA would like to offer our support
9 as the Committee on Licenses and Inspections and the
10 entire City Council further examines this issue.
11 Our advocacy, architecture and building codes and
12 standards programs are all available to help in any
13 way necessary to make this concept become a reality
14 in Philadelphia. Thank you for this opportunity to
15 present the views and comments of the Eastern
16 Paralyzed Veterans Association.

17 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Ms. DePaul, do you
18 have testimony.

19 MS. DEPAUL: No. I'm here to answer
20 question.

21 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Any questions for
22 these two witnesses from the panel?

23 (No response.)

24 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Seeing none, Nancy
25 Salandra and Eric VonSchmitterling.

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2 Councilwoman Blackwell wants to know if
3 you two would want to serve on the task force if and
4 when there is one.

5 MS. DEPAUL: Be more than happy to.

6 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: If anyone else
7 does, let us know before this is over.

8 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: My name is Eric
9 VonSchmitterling and I am here as Chairman of the
10 Board of Liberty Resources which is Philadelphia's
11 Center for Independent Living. And I just want to
12 say when a creator or an innovator or engineer or
13 someone like that comes up with a design or an idea
14 on a product, any product, the more people that
15 could use that product makes it a better design.
16 That's good business sense. And VisitAbility is
17 kind of offered in that same light. It allows new
18 housing to be used by as many people as possible.
19 Right now, for instance, I've been coming to City
20 Council for way over a year and I've seen a lot of
21 you, talked to many of you, had meetings, et cetera,
22 and, say, I were to become one of your friends, you
23 know, I'm a nice guy. And if you wanted to invite
24 me into your home for a cup coffee or a little extra
25 libation or whatever, it can't happen because

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2 chances are your house is not accessible.

3 And we can't make all housing totally
4 accessibility. I mean, my little fantasy, maybe,
5 yeah, it would be great, but it's not feasible. It
6 would be a lot to demand of homeowners just to
7 accommodate me, somebody they don't even know.

8 So what VisitAbility does, it takes
9 common sense points, things that are of very little
10 cost and, you know, when an architect draws up a
11 design for a house, a lot of cost is eliminated. So
12 when you plan ahead, a ramp becomes a very easy
13 item. In fact, there's been insurance studies that
14 show that like places of business that have ramps or
15 accessibility features, these are lower in terms of
16 liability. And many insurance companies offer lower
17 premiums to companies that incorporate elements of
18 universal design which would be more in terms of
19 total access. But ramps are better. They're harder
20 to fall on. They're safer for kids, for older
21 people. Say, you're out skiing somewhere and you
22 break your leg, you know, they're much better.
23 People do prefer them.

24 So VisitAbility means one zero-step
25 entrance, in other words, a flat entrance. And

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2 ideally it should be the main one. But that always
3 is not possible, so it can be the side or the back
4 or even through the garage. 36-inch wide inch
5 doorways and a bathroom on the first floor. And if
6 a full bath is not possible, then certainly a sink
7 and a toilet like as in a powder room.

8 And by doing this change, what would
9 this promote? It promotes what we call aging in
10 place. I mean, how many times have we all heard
11 stories or maybe even experienced, your grandmother
12 lives at home and suddenly she falls and maybe
13 breaks a hip. And she has to go to a nursing home
14 because there's no other solution because she can't
15 go up the stairs anymore to get to her bathroom. I
16 mean, families have been torn apart by similar
17 stories of not that exact one. So a visitable home
18 would allow an older person -- and as us baby
19 boomers get older, we do have to think about this.
20 I mean, our population is aging. And there's going
21 more people that will not be able do steps or
22 thresholds on steps and that type of thing. It's
23 safer for kids, as I said. Whenever you move
24 furniture into your house, a ramp and wider doorways
25 and halls are a Godsend. I mean, how many people in

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2 this room have struggled to get a couch around a
3 corner? And VisitAbility would go a long way to cut
4 down problems like that.

5 And kind of what this all incorporates
6 is called a cultural change. Steps are status quo.
7 We've always done it. I mean, back in the 1500s,
8 whenever steps were invented, you know, they did it
9 and they've been doing it ever since. To get people
10 to change is hard. A good analogy, if you will,
11 would be the curb cuts. Back in 1990 right after
12 the Americans with Disabilities Act was passed,
13 people and people in city government and especially
14 our mayor at the time was dead set against curb
15 cuts. We had meetings with him. We wrote letters.
16 We tried and tried to say that these are a good
17 thing. No, they're too expensive. We had to sue
18 the mayor in court twice. We had many, many
19 protests and there was a lot of anger generated at
20 those -- the mayor went on national television, said
21 he would go to jail before he would allow a curb cut
22 to be built. And in fact, we went to jail. But
23 now, 13, 14 years later, there's curb cuts all over
24 the place. And who does use those curb cuts? Not
25 only me. I have been cut off trying to use it. But

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2 it's everybody. Older people, young people,
3 skateboarders, mom's with their kids in strollers,
4 businessmen with their luggage carting computers,
5 UPS guys, I mean, you name it, and that person has
6 probably at one point or another used a curb cut.

7 And we used VisitAbility as the same.

8 Say, we enact this ordinance, which both personally
9 and professionally I sincerely hope we do. Twenty
10 years from now, 30 years from now, people won't
11 think of it, like, oh, here's the ramp and here's
12 this and here's that, because it will be so natural
13 and people will find good reasons. Oh, I'm glad
14 this is the way it is. If somebody were to say, you
15 know, "Do you remember 20 years ago they designed
16 houses that had steps on every entrance? "Oh, My
17 God, how did we live like that? Kind of like before
18 cell phones and all this other modern innovations.

19 So as you deliberate and consider the
20 feasibility of doing this, think of the cost of
21 putting someone in a nursing home. I mean, that's
22 about \$50,000, \$100,000 -- a lot of it depends on
23 which nursing home and the private insurance
24 involved. But most people who enter nursing homes
25 end up on Medicaid which means the government

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2 ultimately pays for all that. And so when you look
3 at costs of anything, you have to do the comparison.
4 It's not just a dollar figure. It's what you're
5 saving and what you're getting. Kind of like what I
6 call the investment strategy. So Please consider
7 all this. This is not just like the right thing to
8 do; it certainly is that. But back when they struck
9 down Jim Crow in the south, there was a lot of
10 business owners that had built like separate waiting
11 rooms to accommodate the white customers and the
12 black customers. And they complained. They said,
13 oh, man, I've got tear down one of these waiting
14 rooms or do this and construction costs and that and
15 that." But again, it's been, what, over 40 years
16 since that's happened and all of those business
17 owners benefited by doing just that, by spending
18 that cost, making their waiting rooms bigger,
19 combining two into one, whatever it was, and they
20 got better business. Society benefits from
21 integration. Culturally, sociologically, as well as
22 financially. And that's what VisitAbility is.

23 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you Eric.

24 Nancy.

25 MS. SALANDRA: My name is Nancy Slandra.

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2 I'm representing Disabled in Action, a grass roots
3 advocacy organization. And just to kind of
4 piggyback on what Eric said, you already understand
5 the concept of VisitAbility. In the 2000 Census,
6 there are 354,409 disabled people living in the City
7 of Philadelphia now and 151,250 have physical
8 disabilities.

9 What we're trying to do in the City of
10 Philadelphia, again, is a cultural change. And
11 we've done different ones over the years.
12 Unfortunately, the City went into it kicking and
13 screaming. We hope that doesn't happen this time.
14 At the same time we're doing our ordinance,
15 Pittsburgh is also their VisitAbility ordinance, and
16 we would like beat Pittsburgh. We don't want them
17 to get ahead of us. What we've talked about as far
18 as a cultural change is that people just don't
19 understand, well, you have to have steps. Like it's
20 just part of the way that life has been. When you
21 don't have steps, you don't fall, you don't trip.
22 What we're talking about is the baby boomers. We're
23 going to be the largest elderly population ever to
24 age in place. We don't want somebody here breaking
25 their hip and you can't move back into your home.

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2 This occurs every day to people that become injured.
3 They go to Magee and Moss Hospital and then cannot
4 go back home because their house is not accessible.
5 So we're not asking for accessibility. We're asking
6 for the opportunity for people that are not disabled
7 to live in a place so that as they age they can
8 continue to move back into their home, not end
9 warehoused in a nursing home.

10 We understand that this is just so
11 different for people to grasp this concept and it
12 just seems so strange to them. The same way curb
13 cuts were strange, the same way low floor buses
14 which we just got in the last year were strange to
15 the public. They just couldn't understand, well, if
16 there isn't steps, what's going to happen? It is a
17 different concept but it's one that will help
18 everybody. It's not just for the disabled
19 population, it is for everybody so that you don't
20 one day have to leave your home because something
21 happened to you and now you can't get back in.

22 Thank you very much for the opportunity
23 to speak.

24 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thanks, Nancy.

25 Any questions for these witnesses?

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2 Councilman Clarke.

3 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you, Mr.

4 Chair.

5 Good morning. I want to ask a couple
6 questions -- I don't know if you can answer them but
7 I'm just going to throw them out there. I'm a kind
8 of Councilman that always believes in trying to come
9 up with solutions to issues, as I'm sure all of my
10 colleagues are.

11 I'm assuming that at some point people
12 looked at the possibility of having portable ramps
13 for accessibility for disabled individuals on
14 stairways, particularly in the front stairways
15 because they're traditionally not as high as the
16 internal stairways. Do we have something like that.

17 MS. SALANDRA: I've seen it one time.
18 And there's an apartment building down there on
19 walnut and it's an interesting concept. The only
20 thing is, when the weather comes, metal is just
21 ungodly slippery. So I think the traction for
22 somebody in a chair or somebody walking up, it's
23 going to be a huge problem.

24 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: I'd also like to
25 answer that on a personal note because I have a

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2 doctor who's in an office kind of like on Ninth
3 Street which some of those buildings are kind of
4 older, and he has a portable ramp. Again, you know
5 me. I go to the office. There's no door bell, and
6 I have to ask someone to go inside there -- like say
7 you were passing by, you're on your way to an
8 important meeting. "Excuse me, sir, can you go in
9 and let the secretaries know that I'm here?"

10 "Oh, I don't have time for that."

11 Well, after about five or six people, I
12 finally get some kind-hearted soul that will do
13 that. Because I'm deaf, I can't call ahead and say,
14 "I'm coming, I'll be there in an about 10 minutes."

15 So, I mean, all of us are different. A
16 portable ramp could work for maybe some, but then
17 like Ms. Salandra just said, you know, the traction
18 thing. A lot of us -- I mean, it's not so easy to
19 get new tires when you need it. I mean, take a look
20 at my tires when I come around; they're bald. It
21 can create a real dangerous situation.

22 So again, this VisitAbility ordinance
23 only addresses new construction. So sometimes when
24 you retrofit, that's different because you have to
25 deal with what you got and the money you have, et

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2 cetera, so you look -- I mean, nobody better than
3 us, I think, looks for like low-cost solutions
4 because that's the story of our life. Our people
5 live in poverty.

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: The reason I asked
7 that question -- and hopefully Mr. King who is very
8 well versed in construction, if we can look at the
9 possibility of construction that would allow or
10 accommodate a portable ramping system --

11 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: That's not the
12 best answer. I mean, if you build the entrance
13 level, you don't need a portable ramp. And what if,
14 say, I'm coming to visit you at your home. Say, you
15 suddenly pull your back out. You can't lift up that
16 portable ramp. And some chairs are heavier than
17 others because people come in different sizes and
18 shapes. You know, some are skinny; some are not so
19 skinny. And a portable ramp that might that might
20 accommodate someone that's real little might not
21 accommodate someone who's big like me or bigger, you
22 know. So with a level entrance, none of that -- you
23 know, it don't matter.

24 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I understand. I
25 understand the best case scenario that would be to

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2 have a level entrance. And I'm assuming that
3 somewhere down the line there are going to be some
4 reports that talk about the cost of construction,
5 the difficulty --

6 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: But the cost to
7 make something that isn't there is always cheaper
8 than the cost to make something. Steps are more
9 expensive than ramps.

10 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I understand. I'm
11 just trying to looking at other options because I
12 believe that during the debate you're going to have
13 to be able to throw different options out on the
14 table, not understanding the issue, obviously, as
15 well as you do. I'm always thinking about ways to
16 come up with solutions for issues.

17 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: I know some
18 people will say, "Oh, it's going to be tremendously
19 expensive," because they always say that. They said
20 that about the curb cuts. They said that about
21 lifts on buses. I mean, you name any of the issues
22 in our fight, and they always say it's more
23 expensive to do it the way you want. And in
24 reality, just about everything we've suggested --
25 and this is not just us. I mean, these are other

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2 groups across the country. You know, I'm not that
3 smart. But it's been proven time and again it's
4 cheaper to keep people at home than in an
5 institution. The accessible buses really are no
6 more expensive than any other bus. And the low
7 floor buses are far cheaper than the other kind.
8 Curb cuts, you know -- I mean, I forget the original
9 price.

10 MR. SALANDRA: Just to say, Councilman
11 Clarke, that if it's new construction, a level
12 entrance isn't going to cost you anything. But a
13 portable ramp is.

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Right. But the
15 understanding to a small degree, having been
16 involved in a lot of new construction in my district
17 fortunately, it seems for some reason -- I think
18 this is probably a Philadelphia phenomenon, that
19 most people want porches. Whenever we talk about
20 developing new houses, the preference is to have a
21 porch. We're a porch kind of town.

22 MS. SALANDRA: And you can still
23 absolutely of have that. I mean, we could talk
24 about Diamond Street, some of the places there and
25 absolutely, there happens to be an two-inch step,

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2 but there's no reason for that. So you could keep
3 the porch and get rid of the two-inch step and they
4 would have all been visitable from the front.
5 They're visitable from the back so...

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: The issue -- and
7 again, having a little knowledge about construction
8 is that when we talk for sale housing, the design
9 takes on a new life as opposed to -- it's
10 unfortunate, but the reality is as opposed to rental
11 development, people traditionally require additional
12 things as a result the design, the facade treatment,
13 you know, the amenities associated with different
14 types of building when it's for sale housing as
15 opposed rental development. Rental development,
16 there's just not as much input because there is no
17 client early on in the process. It's simply a
18 building, a developer and funder, which is normally
19 the government, and they build the houses and the
20 people will come. If it's for sale housing, you
21 have to have a strong marketing strategy and you
22 kind of have a ready-built client. And in the City
23 of Philadelphia, I'm just telling you this and you
24 can get anyone from the Office of Housing that can
25 attest to that, that the preference is to have a

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2 porch for whatever reason. And I'm just trying to
3 come up with some solutions.

4 MS. SALANDRA: Well, then the entrance
5 can be in the back for the VisitAbility.

6 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: One other thing.
7 Eric, this is somewhat unrelated to today's
8 discussion, but in a meeting that I had with you all
9 earlier a month or so ago, Eric, you had made some
10 recommendations of some things that we can possibly
11 do locally to improve the situation with disabled
12 individuals. I just want to do it for the record
13 since we're in a public forum. Can recall those
14 couple of things that you had asked me to entertain.

15 MS. VONSCHMITTERLING: Well, I don't
16 have those notes with me. I mean, we did talk about
17 VisitAbility because we don't know the status of
18 this ordinance yet. We're hoping the hearing will
19 favor it and recommend it and that it will pass on
20 the Council floor. But we're always looking beyond
21 that, you know, or what if it doesn't. We talked
22 about increasing accessibility percentages because
23 various entities, including the Philadelphia Housing
24 Authority, but others as well, have been known not
25 to be in compliance with the accessibility laws, for

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2 example, Section 504 in the Fair Housing laws. And
3 under 504 they talk about 5 percent of all new
4 construction built with public money should be 5
5 percent accessible with people with physical
6 disabilities and 2 percent accessible to those with
7 sensory disabilities. And, you know, we've proved
8 in court that they did not comply with that. And as
9 a result, we have very, very little housing
10 available for our people. That meeting for you, I
11 mean, we chose your district because a lot of our
12 people live in your district. Also, Councilman
13 Mariano, same thing, we've had meetings with him on
14 these very same things. And we talked about some
15 other specifics, but I'd really have to have my
16 notes in front of me. Adaptive Mod is another one.
17 The current program receives only \$2 million and the
18 waiting list is five to seven years and that needs
19 to be drastically increased, along with Basic Home
20 Repair and such.

21 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: That's funded out of
22 the Community Development Block Grant.

23 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: Well, that and
24 however we can get it, you know. But that's the
25 traditional source.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Okay. Thank you.

3 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

4 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Councilwoman

5 Blackwell.

6 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

7 Would you be willing to serve on the
8 task force that we'll be forming?

9 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: Yes.

10 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: You know this isn't
11 a bill yet. This is a resolution to work towards a
12 bill. That's why the Councilwoman is talking about
13 a task force. This will probably be recommended and
14 then we will work on the task force work on the
15 bill. That way it will save a lot of time and lot
16 of argument in Council. We want to do this, but we
17 want to do this right.

18 On a personal not, a person that spent
19 20 years in construction, they can change
20 everything. It's all architects, what they're being
21 paid to design. Atlanta VisitAbility ordinance,
22 looks like it's been around for 10 years.

23 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: I've seen some of
24 those homes. They're gorgeous.

25 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: They can do

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2 porches. They can do back entrances in ramps too.

3 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: Architecture is
4 an art. They can --

5 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: If you can think
6 it, they can envision it and draw it and make it
7 happen. We want to do this hearing and get task
8 force gather as much information as we can. You're
9 expert in this field.

10 I have a disabled child that shares the
11 steps in my house in Juliana Park. Very, very
12 young. He can't be more than 4 years old. He has
13 to come through the garage. His father can't have
14 his car in the garage. He's 4 or 5 years old. If
15 he wasn't his size, how could he get up the steps.
16 We understand.

17 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: Even beyond some
18 of the physical things, there's a whole
19 psychological question. What message are we sending
20 to our disabled kids? You can't visit your friends
21 like after school. Or, say, the school, they're
22 doing a play and the kids go to each other houses
23 after school to rehearse and do whatever, or a
24 Halloween party Friday night sleep out. All this
25 stuff we did as kids, a very common part of our

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2 cultural growing up, and disabled kids, you know,
3 just are not allowed to be a part of that. Not
4 because anybody said, "No, you can't do it," but
5 those steps.

6 I mean, years ago where another hearing
7 at City Council about curb curbs. I compare curb
8 cuts to the signs to the south. I mean, there's a
9 lot of analogies between the civil rights movement
10 and what we're trying to achieve today. And back
11 then, I mean, when they were doing the Brown versus
12 Department of Education suit, the NAACP commissioned
13 a study that showed the psychological effect on the
14 little white kids and on the little black kids. And
15 separate but equal was a seriously screwed up
16 thought. I mean, it was not true. And we learned
17 that lesson well. I mean, we see our kids going to
18 separate schools, can't visit buddies. Disabled
19 coworkers can't come over and have an office
20 pinochle party or whatever. And, you know, what
21 price is that? I mean, I think one thing about our
22 nation is that we have shown that you cannot throw
23 anybody away. We need all of the cultures and
24 diversity that has made our nation great and that
25 includes people with disabilities, as includes all

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2 the others. I mean, I am very grateful and indebted
3 to the fight of people like within the NAACP and Dr.
4 King and all of other great people involved in that
5 struggle. And we use those examples as lessons that
6 we are trying to achieve the same struggle and
7 dream, if you will, because we want to live free
8 too, like all Americans.

9 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you.

10 Councilwoman Brown has questions.

11 COUNCILWOMAN BROWN: Thank you, Mr.
12 Chairman.

13 I want to underscore Mr. Chairman's
14 remarks regarding the value of being very
15 deliberative through organizing a task force. And
16 the time is ripe, R-I-P-E, given the Mayor's
17 Neighborhood Transformation Initiative and the
18 prospect of vacant land and getting with,
19 collaborating with developers on the front end of
20 how they will ultimately use this land to include
21 all of the issues you're raising by way of your
22 resolution. So as you move to deliberate, remember
23 that NTI and what that means and how expectations
24 need to be put in the development that will
25 accommodate the type of issues that you're raising

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2 during this hearing. Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you,
4 Councilwoman.

5 Any other questions?

6 (No response.)

7 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Seeing none, does
8 anyone else want to testify on this?

9 State your name and spell it for the
10 record, sir.

11 MR. EARLE: Good morning. My name is
12 Thomas Earle, it's E-A-R-L-E. Good morning,
13 Council. I am a staff attorney with the
14 Disabilities Law Project in Philadelphia which is
15 largely funded by Pennsylvania Protection and
16 Advocacy which is the Governor-appointed
17 organization in this Commonwealth that advocates on
18 behalf of children and adults with physical or
19 mental disabilities.

20 For the past 10 years as an attorney, I
21 have worked on numerous cases involving the
22 Americans with Disabilities Act, the Fair Housing
23 Act, the Rehabilitation Act, and places of business
24 in the City of Philadelphia and throughout the
25 Commonwealth. And one reality that I have seen is

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2 the cost and disadvantage of litigation versus
3 compliant up front on the front end. And that is
4 largely exhibited in cases involving new
5 construction where the economic opportunity to
6 cheaply design and build into new construction the
7 accessibility that benefits so many different
8 people, including people with disabilities, is
9 either unintentionally overseen or deliberately
10 overseen. And the economic opportunity to do it --
11 I know Council has raised a couple questions about
12 cost. And cost is clearly a very important factor
13 that must be deliberated that the task force must
14 address. One thing is certain with cost, and that
15 is that it's much cheaper to design and build it new
16 than it is to go back and retrofit.

17 In the early 1990s, I participated on
18 the Mayor's Committee for People with Disabilities
19 with the then Deputy Mayor Oliver Jordan. There was
20 a task force set up then that addressed the housing
21 crisis in Philadelphia for people with disabilities.
22 Oliver Jordan passed away over the past year. He
23 was a great man, and he realized the importance of
24 housing for people with disabilities. And the then
25 Mayor of the City of Philadelphia, unfortunately,

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1
2 resisted progress towards access in the City of
3 Philadelphia, which I think blew a lot of economic
4 opportunities for the City. And not only was it
5 resisted, but it was fought all the way to the
6 Supreme Court. And all of that mental energy and
7 legal resources that the City engaged in then in the
8 early '90s, fighting the ADA and fighting the
9 installation of curb cuts was a terrible waste of
10 mental energy and money.

11 I think what we have here today is the
12 opportunity to pass a resolution that will give the
13 City the opportunity to take affirmative steps
14 forward in an integrated way, in a deliberative way
15 to integrate people with disabilities into the
16 housing opportunities in the City of Philadelphia.

17 Mr. VonSchmitterling raised a very good
18 point regarding the City's home modification plan
19 which, as many of you know, is set up in the
20 Philadelphia County to provide homeowners and
21 tenants with funding to make their homes or
22 apartments accessible that are not accessible. The
23 waiting list for that funding is very long. It
24 takes a couple years, if not three or four years to
25 get on there and receive a small amount of money to

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2 make a ramp or to make an accessible bathroom. If
3 the City begins building and convincing builders to
4 build housing that accessible, it's a huge step
5 towards that progress that I think will benefit all
6 City residents.

7 The other issue I wanted to raise was,
8 Councilman, I believe you raised a question about
9 the use of portable ramps. Portable ramps is a
10 great idea as an affordable solution when there is a
11 barrier, an architecture barrier in an existing
12 building. We are seeing the use of portable ramps
13 as a very economic solution in the voter access case
14 that is currently pending in Federal Court against
15 the City of Philadelphia over the inaccessibility of
16 polling places. And in that case, the use of
17 portable ramps is going to be used to vastly
18 increase the number of accessible polling places
19 that have one or two small step barriers. But the
20 point of this is that that's for existing polling
21 places. Again, the opportunity to seize, really, is
22 to when designing and building new home construction
23 in Philadelphia that these requirements be put into
24 place. And as everybody has testified here today,
25 the requirements are really very straightforward.

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2 They're very simple. At least one accessible
3 entrance, accessible doorways and a ground floor or
4 first floor accessible bathroom.

5 In closing, I just want to say that the
6 Disabilities Law Project and Pennsylvania Protection
7 and Advocacy and the many consumers that we
8 represent throughout the Commonwealth and
9 Philadelphia County strongly encourage City Council
10 to immediately pass a resolution appointing a task
11 force, and that many of the people who testified
12 here are very qualified, very talented, have the
13 insight that would serve Council well in serving on
14 that task force to move forward with an ordinance
15 that will include or require VisitAbility as we now
16 see it in the City of Atlanta and other cities
17 throughout Texas and Illinois. It's time for
18 Philadelphia to forge forward with this initiative.
19 Thank you very much.

20 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you.

21 Councilwoman Blackwell, you have a
22 question for this witness?

23 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. Would you
24 be willing to serve on the task force.

25 MR. EARLE: Yes. The Disabilities Law

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2 Project would be more than willing to provide
3 technical assistance.

4 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: It's a non-paying
5 job, you know.

6 MR. EARLE: I'm used to that.

7 COUNCILWOMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

8 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thanks.

9 Any other witnesses? Anybody else want
10 to testify?

11 (No response.)

12 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Councilman Clarke
13 has a question.

14 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you, Mr.
15 Chairman.

16 Dainette, I wanted to ask you a
17 question. With respect to your being involved with
18 OH for a while and traditionally there are different
19 issues, you know, in terms of funding for various
20 programs that come about. When we had this
21 unfortunate onset of HIV and AIDS, we got additional
22 funding. I guess I shouldn't say additional
23 funding, there was a funding category made available
24 to support housing initiatives for those. When we
25 go to HUD and we get support for these initiatives,

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2 do they tend to give you the same baseline dollars
3 and they just allow you to carve that existing piece
4 of the pie, or do we get an incremental increase in
5 our support from the Federal Government to support
6 these different initiatives?

7 As example, if we felt that we wanted to
8 aggressively seek opportunities to deal with this
9 VisitAbility issue and we went to HUD we said, "We
10 really want to be able to build in all our new
11 construction build these units to have the
12 VisitAbility issues addressed but it will some
13 increments in cost per unit," would they simply ask
14 us to just redirect some of the current funding or
15 do they traditionally give you a bump up in your
16 total budget?

17 MS. MINTZ: Unfortunately, they do not
18 provide us any additional funding. There is not a
19 set-aside for any particular housing activity that
20 you'd want to target to persons with disabilities.
21 So we traditionally have had to allocate funding out
22 of our baseline funding. And that's true throughout
23 all of the programs. There is no particular program
24 that provides a separate pot of funding to provide
25 any of the activities for the disabled community.

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2 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank you.

3 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Does anything come
4 from the State through that?

5 MS. MINTZ: There is a new program
6 called the Access Grant that the State instituted
7 last year. It's actually modeled on Philadelphia's
8 Adaptive Modification Program, and we have applied
9 to that program. This will be the second year and
10 we've applied for \$500,000 and received \$300,000.
11 So that is \$300,000 in addition to the \$2 million in
12 block grant funding that we make available for the
13 modification.

14 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you.

15 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: Thank, Mr. Chairman.
16 Thank you, Ms. Mintz.

17 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Any other questions
18 for anyone?

19 (No response.)

20 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Any other
21 witnesses?

22 (No response.)

23 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: I just want on a
24 personal -- Eric, and this is about you too. I've
25 met with Nancy and Eric and Disabled in Action

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2 before and I have to tell you, and I don't want to
3 speak for the other councilpeople but I'm sure
4 they'll agree with me. Being a person that's abled
5 and moving around and do everything and has no one
6 in his family that is disabled, we tend to take a
7 lot of things for granted. And I know the first
8 time I met with Eric and Nancy in a group, there
9 were a lot of things that I should have known, and
10 not being a bad person it's just that you don't
11 think about the stuff Eric talked about, getting in
12 a house. When he was saying that, Eric and I were
13 going to get tatoos together and I'm thinking if we
14 inked together can we get Eric in the first floor of
15 Tatoo Eddie's at K & A. Yes, we can.

16 (Laughter.)

17 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: But we couldn't do
18 it -- but if you came to my house, it would be a
19 problem. You would have to the go through the
20 garage, move my son's drums. It's just not doable.
21 And you don't think about that stuff. In all
22 seriousness, that's stuff that we don't think about.
23 So remind us constantly. You're not bothering us.
24 At certain times everyone bothers people, but that's
25 not a bother. Don't think because we don't know it

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2 right away -- and I'm sure you know that because
3 you've been dealing with politicians. You have
4 five, I know Councilman Goode's very interested,
5 Councilman Nutter was, and I'm sure the rest of
6 Council is. This is stuff we don't think about all
7 the time unless they deal with it every day.

8 I see the young man next to me go to his
9 bus. I hear the bus blow its horn every morning. I
10 see his mother, I see the nurse come. I see the
11 stuff getting dropped off every Friday. But before
12 I lived in that house, I had nothing to relate to,
13 having two children fully able that you don't think
14 about. You might go your whole life and never get
15 to that point. So please, let us know because this
16 is something I think if we do it right and do it
17 more cautiously and slowly so it doesn't bogged down
18 when we get to the point -- because what will
19 happen, it will come down to money at the end. So
20 we have to prove that the people that design houses
21 and build houses that at least in public housing on
22 housing that's funded through government funds that
23 we can do things like this and it makes sense
24 because it probably does make sense in long run
25 because when you talked about the baby boomers, I

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2 know everyone's around the same age up here. We're
3 going to be -- the Councilwoman just lost her mother
4 and I know the Councilwoman took care of her mother
5 for a long time at home carrying her mother up and
6 down stairs, putting her to bed. That's stuff you
7 don't think about until you do that. So, again,
8 thank you.

9 Eric, do you want to say something else?

10 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: I just wanted to
11 respond to Councilman Clarke, your question. I
12 didn't get all of it. But you were asking about if
13 there's set asides through HUD, and Ms. Mintz
14 answered correctly. But I would like to tell you
15 that HUD is on national record for supporting the
16 concept of VisitAbility. And perhaps -- I mean, a
17 result of the task force, we can figure out a way to
18 kind of pressure them or something to build
19 financial incentives, shall we say. I mean, we've
20 been meeting with people in Washington at HUD,
21 including the various secretaries through the years
22 right up to and including Mel Martinez. And we have
23 talked about like in the CDBG process as people
24 apply to receive those grants that there been like a
25 series of bonus points or something for people that

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2 build VisitAbility into their design projects or
3 whatever. And some of that advocacy resulted in the
4 access grants that Ms. Mintz was talking about. I
5 mean, again, it wasn't just the Philadelphia group,
6 we're talking a national level effort with people
7 like from Atlanta, Georgia; Denver, Colorado;
8 Austin, Texas; and many other places too. But we
9 can see what we can do, and the fact they're on
10 national record saying they support VisitAbility,
11 they did like a presentation, you know, with fancy
12 booklets and all that to a lot of project designers
13 about VisitAbility, so they've talked about it a
14 lot. It's about time to kind of put your money
15 where your mouth is.

16 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I agree. We may
17 even want to investigate something like a federal
18 tax credit for home purchasers who opt to have
19 VisitAbility-types of housing. So there are a
20 number of ways that I think we should investigate
21 the possibilities of making this available because,
22 as the chairman said, at some point it's going to
23 come down to the cost associated with the
24 development.

25 MR. VONSCHMITTERLING: The tax credit

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2 may already exist.

3 COUNCILMAN CLARKE: I think that this
4 particular Administration seems to be very high on
5 tax credits; unfortunately, not necessarily for
6 those of us that need them the most, but maybe we
7 can make a very strong lobby down in Washington and
8 see if we can get HUD to agree to something like
9 that. And we'll need your help on that. Thank you.

10 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: That will conclude
11 this public hearing. Anyone who wants to be on the
12 task force, contact Councilwoman Blackwell's office.

13 There's nobody else that wants to
14 testify, right?

15 (No response.)

16 COUNCILMAN MARIANO: Thank you. Thank
17 you for your help and all the information. We
18 really appreciate it.

19 (Council adjourned at 11:23 a.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T I O N

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing
proceedings of the Council of the City of
Philadelphia of November 18, 2002, were reported
fully and accurately by me, and that this is a
correct transcript of the same.

RE: COMMITTEE ON LICENSES AND INSPECTIONS

Lisa C. Bradley, RPR
and Notary Public