



Government of the District of Columbia  
**Advisory Neighborhood  
Commission 6C**

July 13, 2020

Anthony J. Hood  
Chair  
Zoning Commission  
of the District of Columbia  
441 4th Street, NW  
Suite 210-S  
Washington, DC 20001

Re: ZC 19-13 (Text Amendment, Alley Lots)

Dear Chairman Hood:

We write to state our views<sup>1</sup> on the proposal put forward by the Office of Planning. As set forth below, we generally support the proposed text and believe it would benefit from a few key revisions.

ANC 6C supports the overall goal of easing the restrictions on conversions of alley tax lots to record lots. As a general matter, we believe it serves the public interest, and especially the District's need for increased housing, to promote improvements on such lots, many of which cannot currently be developed.

At the same time, we believe the proposed changes need revision on two key areas. First, ANC 6C sees no reason to have different alley centerline setback requirements for garages on street-facing lots vs. alley lots. Without taking a position on whether the minimum setback should be 12' (the current minimum across all lots) or 7.5' (OP's proposal for alley lots only), we believe the need for a setback is the same for either lot type. (We also mentioned to OP on July 1, at our zoning committee meeting, that OP's proposed setback reduction was inconsistent with 11-C DCMR § 711.7. OP has resolved that potential inconsistency in its pre-hearing report.)

Our second area of concern goes to the criteria in subtitle U for residential use of alley record lots. Section 600.1(f), as revised, would establish the minimum criteria for by-right residential development. For lots not meeting those standards, section 601.1(f)—found at page 19 of the hearing notice (Case Exhibit 4)—would provide criteria for granting special-exception relief.

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<sup>1</sup> On July 8, 2020, at a duly noticed and regularly scheduled monthly meeting, with a quorum of six out of six commissioners and the public present via videoconference, this matter came before ANC 6C. The commissioners voted 6-0 to adopt the position set out in this letter. As part of that vote, ANC 6C authorized Commissioner Mark Eckenwiler (6C04) to present testimony on its behalf.

Our concern here is that the proposed text of this provision eliminates the specific factors to be considered—such as “[t]raffic and parking,” listed in current section 601.1(f)(4)(D)—and instead directs BZA to refer cases to various agencies. We believe the regulations should expressly set out the factors to be considered, contemplating input not only from the agencies themselves but also from ANCs and other commenters.

ANC 6C’s concerns here are hardly academic. In Square 810—bounded by F, G, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 5<sup>th</sup> Streets NE—sit two alley tax lots surrounded by a horse-and-buggy-era zigzag alley only 10’ wide:



Although lot 812 (456sf in size) would meet the minimum area for conversion to a record lot, the surrounding alley system does not provide the 15’ minimum width for residential use. Nearby residents have expressed substantial concern about the potential adverse impacts such development might have on navigability of the alley. ANC 6C believes the regulations governing such special-exception use should require BZA to take account of those concerns, regardless of whether they come from the ANC or residents themselves. As drafted, however, OP’s new text make unclear BZA’s obligation to weigh public input on this and other potential adverse impacts.

Thank you for giving great weight to the views of ANC 6C.

Sincerely,

Karen Wirt  
Chair, ANC 6C