
RE: Support for Alley Lot Text Amendments, Case No. 25-06

From Mark Teschauer <markteschauer@gmail.com>

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To DCOZ - ZC Submissions (DCOZ) <DCOZ-ZCSubmissions@dc.gov>

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Good evening Chairperson Hood and Commissioners,

I have lived in Near Northeast for the last 5 or so years, and previously lived in DC from 2013 to 2017, during which I was also a resident of Near Northeast for most of that time. From 2015 to 2016, I rented a room in an alley home on the 1300 block of Linden Court NE behind the Atlas Performing Arts Center, and bring my experiences as a former alley home resident in my public comment here. I think DC should be providing more opportunities for quality alley home production such as the place I lived in nearly 10 years ago. As a result, I write in support of the proposal, but feel it can go further to make greater use of DC's assets and building stock to encourage more opportunities for housing production.

I feel that my experience as an alley home resident provides me with a unique perspective in stating that alley homes can provide quality housing for prospective homeowners and renters alike. I rented a room in the Linden Court NE alley home from someone in my friend network, who purchased the property as a first-time homeowner a couple years' prior and had a spare bedroom. I was his third tenant. While I can't speak for the other two tenants, I found that the accommodations were great, especially at my income, which I could not have had access to at a comparable monthly rent living elsewhere in the District. I believe his property was an adaptive reuse that he converted to a residential use and largely made improvements to himself (with the help of his father, a contractor) to make it livable. Through this, the homeowner not only created new housing in the District for himself and his partner, but for me and the other two tenants who preceded me as well. Renting the room from him not only provided him with additional income to help cover his mortgage and other home improvement expenses, but provided me a great place where I could stay and afford on my income.

Similarly, I would love to become a first-time homebuyer in the District, but housing costs are very high and are delaying my ability to pursue homeownership in the District. We need to do more to encourage more housing production in the District in order to increase supply and keep housing costs in check. Many DC alleys contain lots that can technically be built on, but my understanding is that the process is so cumbersome that very few ever become homes. Alley lots are underutilized spaces that could supply starter homes and small apartments to help alleviate DC's housing shortage.

As someone who lived in an alley home, I would welcome more of these in the District. The proposed changes align with the city's goals to support equitable and inclusive growth and provide diverse housing options. Alley homes, like the ones on Linden Court NE where I lived, help address affordability, increase neighborhood safety through active use, and enhance community character. Alley homes can also use existing buildings and provide opportunities for adaptive reuse, such as the one I lived in on Linden Court, that can further boost opportunities for housing production in ways that can create more vibrant communities through small-scale infill development.

As a supporter of the proposal and former alley home resident, I feel it can go further to provide more opportunities for alley home production. These include:

- **Eliminate expensive parking mandates for alley homes.** Parking mandates force homebuilders to add parking even when it's not necessary and drive up costs.
- **Align unit limits with the limits of their zones.** About half of alley lots are in rowhome zones, which typically allow 2 units per building. But the proposal would allow more units than the zones allow.
- **Align the height limits of alley homes with their zones.** OP's current proposal limits most lots to 22 feet, or 30 feet in some of the larger mixed use zones, which is often shorter than the zone height limits.

I urge you to approve this proposed rezoning with the above changes. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
Mark Teschauer