

# ZC #25-06

# Alley Lots Zoning Regulations Text Amendment

**Zoning Commission Public Hearing**

January 12, 2026

DC Office of Planning

Matthew Jesick, Development Review Specialist



# Principal Amendments

- Subdivision
  - Special Exception process
- Uses
  - Residential in low density zones
  - Second unit based on lot size
  - Home occupations
- Development Standards
  - Reduce maximum lot occupancy in R-1 and R-2
  - Larger yards in R-1 and R-2
  - Special Exception for additional height



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BZA #20902

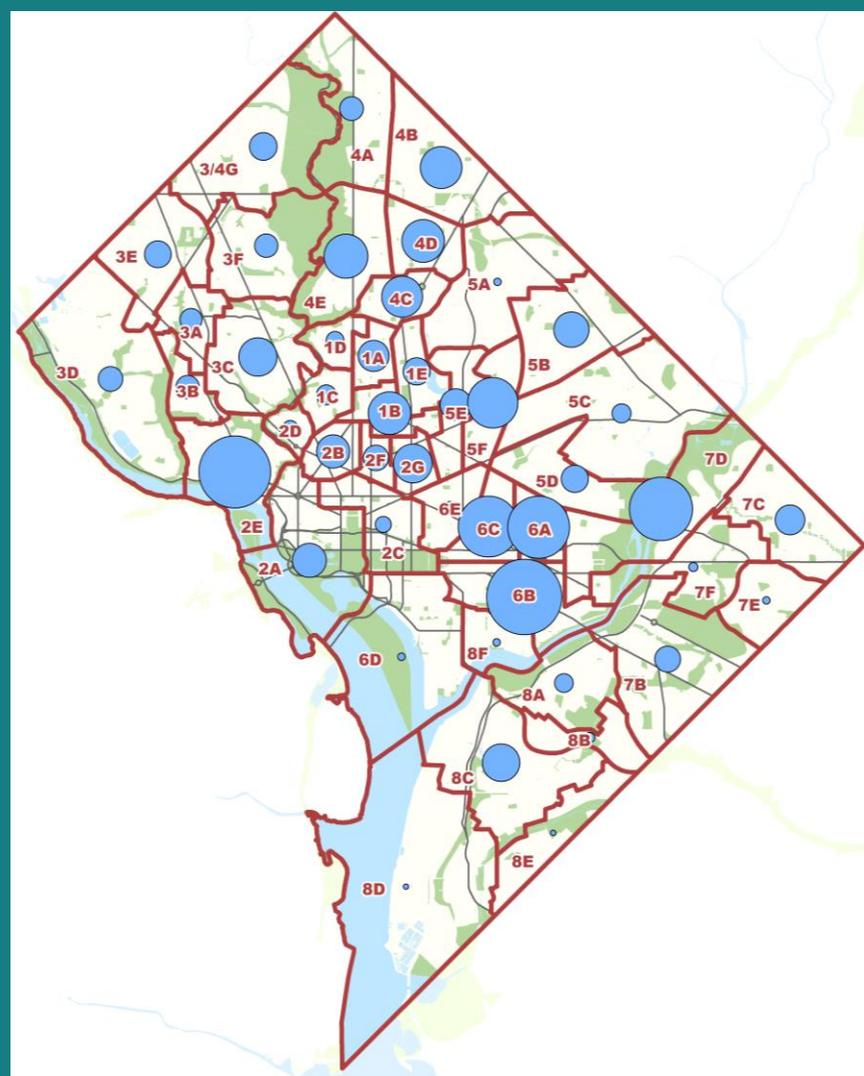
# Zoning Commission, BZA, and Comp Plan Direction

- Previous alley lots text amendment – ZC #19-13
- Zoning Commission asked OP to further study alley lots
- BZA, property owner, and agency feedback
  - Development costs unique to alley lots
  - Residential uses in low density zones
  - DC Water – safer to have more than 1 unit on a line
- Comprehensive Plan Consistency

# Background Information

- Total alley lots: 1,897
- Capitol Hill, Georgetown
- Most: ANC 6B – 198, ANC 2E – 180
- Fewest: ANC 8D – 1, ANC 8E – 1

Use	Total Number	Lots < 450 sq.ft. in area	Lots => 450 sq.ft. in area
Residential	319	19	300
Residential Parking Garage	454	222	232
Commercial, Institutional, Government	92	3	89
Surface Parking	80	16	64
Vacant	890	379	511
Recreational	3	0	3
Unknown	59	22	37
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1,897</b>	<b>661</b>	<b>1,236</b>



# Zoning Commission's Racial Equity Tool

- Comprehensive Plan Policy Guidance
  - Infill development
  - Efficient land utilization
  - Innovative approaches for housing
  - Consistency with neighborhood character
- Community Outreach
  - ANC and Owner Meetings
- Zoning Commission Evaluation Factors
  - No displacement is anticipated
  - Some additional housing
  - Physical improvements to alleys
  - Would not impact access to opportunity
  - Engagement informed the proposal

# Public Outreach

- ANC open houses
- Individual ANC meetings
- Alley lot owners group meetings
- Meetings with advocacy groups
- Individual meetings with owners and representatives
- Informal communications with owners and other members of the public
- Dedicated project [website](#) and [email \(alleylots@dc.gov\)](mailto:alleylots@dc.gov)

# Public Outreach

- Changes as a result of engagement
  - Increase in yard requirements for R-1 and R-2 alley lots where they abut the rear yards of street-facing lots;
  - Limiting new alley lot residential uses in R-1 and R-2 to existing alley lots, or lots created from existing alley lots;
  - Allow height relief by special exception;
  - Refine language of the proposed purpose statements;
  - Adding DOEE as a referral agency for special exceptions involving alley lots, and DOEE's recommendation pervious surface; and
  - Establishing Home Occupations as a permitted use on alley lots.

# Changes since setdown

Type	Description of Change
<b>Subdivision and Use – Alley Width</b>	<p>Setdown proposal – Reduce alley width requirement to 15 feet for subdivision and for residential use; Special exception for subdivision</p> <p>Current proposal – Maintain existing width requirements*; – Special exception for subdivision; – Maintain existing special exception for use.</p> <p>(* 24 ft. for subdivision; 24 ft. or 15 ft. for residential use);</p>
<b>Subdivision – Lot Area</b>	<p>Setdown proposal – Maintain existing language: "Meet the lot area standards applicable for non-Alley Lots in the same zone"</p> <p>Current proposal – Specify that in any R-2, R-3 and RF zones, the minimum area shall be the minimum required, regardless of building type.</p>

# Changes since setdown

Type	Description of Change
<b>Development Standards – Height Relief</b>	<p>Setdown proposal – Change height maximum from 20 feet to 22 feet.</p> <p>Current proposal – 22 feet MOR; Special exception up to 35' and 3 stories in residential zones, 40' and 4 stories in commercial zones</p>
<b>Development Standards – Pervious Surface</b>	<p>Setdown proposal – Kept pervious surface requirements as-is.</p> <p>Current proposal – Increase pervious surface requirements from 10% to 25%.</p>

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# Appendix 1 – Primary Proposed Text Amendments

Type	Section	Amendment
Subdivision	C § 306.5	Establish a special exception mechanism to review applications for subdivision that do not meet MOR requirements.
Use	U §§ 600 and 601	Permit residential use on alley lots in the R-1 and R-2 zones, but only on existing alley lots, lots subdivided from existing alley lots, or existing alley lots that are expanded in area.
Use	U § 600.1(f)(3), (4) and (5)	Permit a second residential unit on an alley lot, which could be an accessory unit or a second principal unit depending on the zone, and could be matter of right or by special exception, depending on the zone and lot area.
Use	U § 600.1(h)	Add home occupations as a permitted use in an alley lot dwelling
Development Standards – Lot Occupancy	D § 5100.2(c)	Establish lot occupancy standards for the R-1 and R-2 zones, separate from the standards for the R-3 zone
Development Standards – Yards	D § 5100.2(e) and (g)	Establish increased yard requirements for alley buildings in the R-1 and R-2 zones.
Development Standards – Height Relief	D, E and F § 5201; G § 5200; I § 210	Add height to the list of development standards for alley lots for which the Board can grant special exception relief.

# Appendix 2 – Subdivision Regulations

	Existing	Proposed
<b>New Alley Record Lots</b>		
Alley Width Min.	24 ft.	No change
Lot Area Min.	Same as street facing lots, or 1,800 sq. ft. if there is no standard	No change, but clarified that the minimum is the minimum in the zone regardless of building type
Alley Frontage Min.	14 ft.	No change
<b>Existing Alley Record Lots</b>	Record Lots may be combined without meeting above standards	No change
<b>Existing Alley Tax Lots</b>	Can be converted to Record Lots as a MOR or by Special Exception	No change
<b>Special Exception</b>	N/A	The BZA can grant relief to the above standards

# Appendix 2 – Use Permissions – Residential Zones

	Current	Proposed
<b>R-1 and R-2 Zones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No residential permitted</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One unit per lot (R-1 and R-2 – Existing Lots)</li> <li>Accessory unit MOR if the lot meets the area minimum</li> <li>Accessory unit by Spec. Ex. if less than area minimum</li> </ul>
<b>R-3 Zones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One unit per lot</li> </ul>	
<b>RF Zones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One unit per lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two units MOR if lot &gt; 1,800 sq.ft.</li> <li>Two units by Spec. Ex. if &lt;1,800 sq.ft.</li> </ul>
<b>RA Zones</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One unit per lot</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Two units per lot</li> </ul>
<b>Residential Use – Alley Width</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MOR – 24 ft.-wide alley OR 15 ft.-wide alley within 300 feet of a street</li> <li>Spec. Ex. – No minimum alley width</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No change</li> </ul>
<b>All Residential Zones – Other Uses</b>	Agriculture, Artist Studio, Camping, Community Solar Facility, Vehicle Parking, Short term rental as an accessory use, Storage (special exception)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Add home occupations</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2 – Use Permissions – Commercial Zones

	Current	Proposed
<b>All non-residential zones (for example, MU zones)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same uses as the rest of the zone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change</li></ul>



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# Appendix 2 – Development Standards – R Zones

	Existing	Proposed
Lot Occupancy (based on lot area)	<p>All R Zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• &lt; 1,800 sq. ft. – No Maximum</li> <li>• 1,800 to 2,000 sq. ft. – 90%</li> <li>• &gt; 2,000 sq. ft. – 80%</li> </ul>	<p>R-1 and R-2 Zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• &lt; 3,000 sq. ft. – 80%</li> <li>• 3,000 – 5,000 sq. ft. – 60%</li> <li>• &gt;5,000 sq. ft. – 40%</li> </ul> <p>R-3 Zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change from existing</li> </ul>
Yards	<p>All R Zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 5 ft. from any non-alley lot</li> </ul>	<p>R-1 and R-2 Zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25 ft. and 20 ft., respectively, from adjacent rear lot line</li> <li>• 8 ft. from any adjacent lot</li> </ul> <p>R-3 Zones</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No change (clarification only)</li> </ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 20 ft.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 22 ft. (to align with accessory buildings)</li> </ul>
Pervious Surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 10%</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 25%</li> </ul>

# Appendix 2 – Development Standards – RF Zones

	Existing	Proposed
Lot Occupancy (based on lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• &lt; 1,800 sq. ft. – No Maximum</li><li>• 1,800 to 2,000 sq. ft. – 90%</li><li>• &gt; 2,000 sq. ft. – 80%</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change</li></ul>
Yards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5 ft. from any non-alley lot</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change (clarification only)</li></ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 ft.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 22 ft. (to align with accessory buildings)</li></ul>
Pervious Surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10%</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 25%</li></ul>

# Appendix 2 – Development Standards – RA Zones

	Existing	Proposed
Lot Occupancy (based on lot area)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None prescribed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• &lt; 1,800 sf – No Maximum</li><li>• 1,800 to 2,000 sf – 90%</li><li>• &gt; 2,000 sf – 80%</li></ul>
Yards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5 ft. from any non-alley lot</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change (clarification only)</li></ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 20 ft.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 22 ft. (to align with accessory buildings)</li></ul>
Pervious Surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 10%</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 25%</li></ul>

# Appendix 2 – Development Standards – All Residential Zones

	Existing	Proposed
Section 5201 – Catch-All Special Exception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relief available for:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Yards</li><li>• Alley centerline setback</li><li>• Pervious surface</li></ul></li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Relief also available for:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Height</li><li>• Lot Occupancy</li></ul></li></ul>

# Appendix 2 – Development Standards – MU Zones

	Existing	Proposed
Lot Occupancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• None prescribed</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change (clarification only)</li></ul>
Yards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 5 ft. from any non-alley lot</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change (clarification only)</li></ul>
Height	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• MU-6, 8, 9, 10 and 15 – 30 ft. and 3 stories</li><li>• All other MU zones – 20 ft. and 2 stories</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change</li><li>• 22 ft. and 2 stories</li></ul>
GAR	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• As required by the zone</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No change</li></ul>
Special Exception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Catch-all special exception, except for FAR, height and rooftop structures</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Also allow height relief by special exception</li></ul>

# Appendix 3 – Additional Background Data

## Lot Area Minimums – Existing

Zone	Minimum Lot Area (MOR)
R-1A	7,500 sq. ft.
R-1B	5,000 sq. ft.
R-2	3,000 sq. ft. (semi-detached)
R-3	2,000 sq. ft. (row)
RF	1,800 sq. ft. (row)

# Appendix 3 – Additional Background Data

## Number of Alley Lots by ANC

ANC	Estimated # of Alley Lots	ANC	Estimated # of Alley Lots	ANC	Estimated # of Alley Lots	ANC	Estimated # of Alley Lots
1A	34	3A	17	5A	2	7B	24
1B	64	3B	19	5B	44	7C	31
1C	14	3C	51	5C	13	7D	140
1D	11	3D	21	5D	26	7E	2
1E	26	3E	25	5E	35	7F	3
2A	41	3F	19	5F	88	8A	12
2B	39	3/4G	27	6A	134	8B	4
2C	9	4A	20	6B	198	8C	49
2D	8	4B	61	6C	129	8D	1
2E	180	4C	59	6D	2	8E	1
2F	23	4D	64	6E	4	8F	2
2G	53	4E	68				

# Appendix 3 – Additional Background Data

## Number of Alley Lots by Zone

ARTS Total	4
D Total	15
MU-12 Total	25
MU-4 Total	92
Other MU Total	28
NMU Total	14
PDR Total	13
R-1 Total	172
R-2 Total	182
R-3 Total	329
RA-1 Total	44
RA-2 Total	84
Other RA Total	8
RF-1 Total	887
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1897</b>