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## ZC 25-11 Comments in Opposition

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From Emma Lavoie <etlavoie@gmail.com>

Date Thu 10/23/2025 1:28 PM

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

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I write asking you to **oppose the proposal in case ZC 25-11.**

Here I present the perspective of owners of row houses with narrow back yards such as in the neighborhood of Bloomingdale.

It should be a matter of right to protect the sunlight and privacy of our land, our precious urban back yards, where we take solace in relaxation, and play with our children and our pets, entertain our friends and family. It should NOT be a matter of right for developers to crush our lived experience with giant walls that shadow our once bright living spaces. The proposed increase from 10 to 16 feet is excessive and does not consider row house neighborhoods with narrower lots that will suffer from an even greater blockage of light and air. The proposed increase does not consider the greater disparate negative impact on lots of shorter depth. For example, for a 60' rear yard lot, the pushback obstruction is 25% for 10' but would nearly double to 40% for 16'.

Middle class Washingtonians like myself chose to put large portions of our incomes into Bloomingdale historic row houses because they include private outside spaces, friendly neighbors and strong community culture, not far from our places of work. We did not choose to be shadowed by giant 16 and 20 foot long, 30 to 40 foot high walls that steal our sunlight, reduce our solar energy capacity, increase soil erosion, kill our lawns, and devalue our unique and valued back yards. That is the impact of these amendments, radical reduction of the intrinsic natural value of our living spaces which were a large reason we bought our properties. See 42 W Street NW, 40 W Street NW and 67 V Street NW as examples of row houses pushed back 10-20 feet that caused radical devaluation of the neighbors' lived experience.

Although the Board of Zoning Adjustment has approved all special exception requests for 16 feet pushbacks, changing the rule may simply move the goalposts, enabling routine BZA approvals of special exception cases that exceed even a new 16' limit. I certainly won't want to age in place in my home if my backyard was overshadowed by 16 foot deep, 37 foot high windowless walls and negligible sunshine. That sounds more like a way to get seniors to move out than to stay.

I urge you to vigorously oppose these proposals and vote no on these amendments.

Sincerely,

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia  
CASE NO. 25-11  
EXHIBIT NO. 13

Emma Lavoie  
44 W Street NW

When we bought our house in 2011, this wall did not exist, instead the space was filled with morning sunshine, vegetation and breezes. Now the summer humidity stifles enjoyment until late morning because no breeze can move through, and the run-off in heavy rains erodes our top soil and increases risk of flooding for which we have to buy flood insurance.

