



Outlook

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## Re: [16thStNA] 10 Foot Rule Potential Change

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**From** JANE BUSH <stellanova@verizon.net>

**Date** Sun 10/26/2025 7:28 PM

**To** 16thStNA@googlegroups.com <16thstna@googlegroups.com>; Patricia Lute <lutepj@gmail.com>; Greg Phillips <clipp Phillips@yahoo.com>

**Cc** Rosenfeld Benjamin (Council) <brosenfeld@dccouncil.gov>; Janeese Lewis-George <jlewisgeorge@dccouncil.us>; McAdams, Camsie (SMD 4E05) <4E05@anc.dc.gov>; DCOZ - BZA Submissions (DCOZ) <DCOZ-BZASubmissions@dc.gov>; Schellin, Sharon (DCOZ) <sharon.schellin@dc.gov>

1 attachment (608 KB)

Exhibit2.pdf;

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For the interest of all, I am attaching the argument for the proposed amendment to the bump back rule, from 10 to 16 feet, which the Zoning Commission is considering as a "matter of right". Please note that the private residence adjoining 1521 Varnum was heavily damaged during construction, and the back yard is now more of a prison yard.

Purportedly, this new ruling would favor those with disabilities, and those seniors who would like to "age in place". How disingenuous of those presenting this amendment. How horrible for those of us who live in row houses with no protections - from extreme property damage, light restriction, to noise levels and the lack of privacy.

In this proposal, not only is the back yard gone, but there is a vague mention that, in addition to being bumped back, the property may also be bumped up. No mention of what the builder cannot do with regard to the privacy for the adjoining properties: windows, balconies, external lighting, noise from alarms, ramps. Essentially, what was originally built as a private residence, in a zoned residential neighborhood, would become an apartment building.

Please speak out against this proposed amendment. We need to preserve the neighborhood as it was built, and the community we have tried very hard to build.

Jane Bush

On Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 05:46:40 PM EDT, 'Greg Phillips' via 16th Street Neighborhood Association <16thstna@googlegroups.com> wrote:

Thanks, Pat, for alerting us. As you say, this is (or should be) important to those of us who live in rowhomes.

As some may recall, it was through strong and relentless neighborhood advocacy against the developer at 1424 Buchanan Street, NW, (and others) back in 2015 that ultimately resulted in the 10' rule. Developers ran amok (and frequently still do) in the city and there was little oversight by DCRA (now DOB). At that time, zoning also restricted developers from shoving three units into these single-family home properties and now only allow two units as a matter of right. Here's a photo of 1424 Buchanan Street (known as the "Nightmare on Buchanan Street") from back then that will help illustrate the problem for adjacent neighbors. If you think this doesn't matter, imagine living next door to something like this where these monstrosities block air floor, eliminate sightlines, and create heat 'canyons' for adjacent neighbors.

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

For an even more extreme example of a pop-back, walk by 1521 Varnum Street (or Google it) and look at that property. That was a single-family rowhome that a developer bought and then created seven (!!) units. It takes up the entire length of the property. Imagine your backyard if you lived at 1519 Varnum. It isn't clear how that was allowed, even after the lawsuits.

This proposed change seems to me to be a stealth move to fly under the radar and avoid pushback from residents. Why haven't we heard about this until now? Who is proposing and supporting this zoning change and why? I can't imagine that this is coming from homeowners. But I imagine developers love it. These developers care nothing about our neighborhoods or the residents...they aren't living here. They flip, sell, and move on. It's solely about maximizing profit.

Lastly, you may think 16' feet isn't bad. But the homes on either side can then go an additional 16' feet past that...and so on until they reach the 60/40 rule. For those neighbors with substantial backyards, it's worrisome to think that someone could come in and essentially destroy your enjoyment of your own property.

I hope to see many of you tomorrow at 4 pm to speak up.

Greg

## Stop The Pop DC's Post

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Stop The Pop DC

January 22, 2015 ·

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A neighbor sent this photo of the rear view of 1424 Buchanan Street NW. This really gives a sense of the scale of the project. Notice the placement of the existing home's chimney, which is shorter than the pop-up, creating a fire hazard. The developer wants the neighbor to have her chimney extended; DCRA says she does not have to.



On Sunday, October 26, 2025 at 01:24:32 PM EDT, Patricia Lute <lutepj@gmail.com> wrote:

The following is from a Facebook post for Greater Petworth, but is 100% applicable to 16th Street Heights. If you live in a row house, this should be on your radar.

If you live in a DC rowhouse, you should know about the 10-Foot Rule. The 10-Foot Rule is one of the few protections that helps keep our historic blocks from turning into walls of oversized pop-backs. You should also know that the Zoning Commission is considering changing it to the 16-Foot Rule.

10-Foot Rule: Under current DC zoning law, if your neighbor builds an addition off the back of their rowhouse, they can only extend 10 feet beyond the rear wall of the next-door house by right. Anything beyond that requires a zoning variance — a process that gives neighbors and the community a chance to weigh in.

Now there's talk of changing that to a 16-Foot Rule. That means developers could start building even bigger rear additions without community review, not to mention these additions can already go up three stories — casting long shadows, blocking light and air, and permanently changing the character (and value) of our rowhouse neighborhoods. The 10-Foot Rule was designed to keep DC's residential blocks livable and fair, balancing development, home improvement and respect for neighbors.

This really hits home for neighborhoods like ours. If you care about sunlight, privacy, and not waking up one day to find a three-story wall built to your property line, now's the time to speak up.

The Zoning Commission is meeting about this on Monday, October 27 at 4:00 pm. Contact your ANC commissioner, your Council Member and Mayor Bowser's office. Ask them to protect the 10-Foot Rule and keep neighborhood voices in the zoning process.

Links to the meeting.

WebEx: <https://dcoz.dc.gov/ZC25-11> (to participate & watch)

Telephone: 1-650-479-3208 Access code: 2317 442 0501 (audio participation & listen)

Patricia Lute  
[Lutepj@gmail.com](mailto:Lutepj@gmail.com)  
202-236-1518

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