Government of the District of Columbia
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 6C

November 13, 2025

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

Re: ZC 25-12 (OP omnibus text amendments)

Dear Chairman Hood:

ANC 6C writes to offer its views on the proposed omnibus text amendments.[1] In brief, we support some proposals; oppose others; and recommend revisions to a third group of amendments. Our comments are organized according to the multi-session hearing schedule.

Day 1 (Oct. 30, 2025)

Elimination of 1:1 setback requirement for light poles at District recreation facilities – OP proposes to amend the regulations to allow light poles up to 90' high, with no lot-line setback, at District recreation facilities. As stated in our live testimony and presentation slides (Exh. 79), ANC 6C strongly opposes this amendment.

First, OP places unwarranted faith in DPR's guidelines for the design and placement of light poles. Those guidelines are not, as far as we can determine, available for public inspection, and in any event they are nowhere mandated by District statute or regulation. Even if the substance of those guidelines could be shown to be beneficial, they are purely optional and thus afford District residents no reassurances. Notwithstanding OP's claims, light spillage – especially in dense rowhouse neighborhoods – is a serious possibility.

Second, OP's analysis overlooks a second, even more important adverse impact: noise. Light poles at athletic fields and other outdoor facilities exist solely to support events in the evening

[1] On October 8, 2025, at a duly noticed and regularly scheduled monthly meeting, with a quorum of six out of seven 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 and to authorize Vice-Chair Mark Eckenwiler (6C04) to represent the ANC in this matter.

and at night. These are not silent affairs; rather, they bring with them noise from spectators and participants. While DPR might have rules restricting such hours of use – and here, too, the record is silent – neither DPR nor anyone else can prevent this noise from affecting a much wider area than light spillage would impact.

In our testimony, we cited the example of the playing field at Stuart-Hobson Middle School, 410 E St. NE, surrounded on all sides by a rowhouse neighborhood. Through collaboration between DCPS and the community (including ANC 6C), that field replaced an asphalt-paved area used variously for outdoor recreation and staff parking. That field does generate substantial daytime noise, which comes as no surprise to nearby residents given the school's presence at this location since 1926. Daytime noise comes with the territory. But nearby residents have peaceful enjoyment of their homes after hours, an expectation that evening and night games would unduly threaten.

We therefore urge the Commission to reject making such light poles, and their potential for imposing substantial adverse impacts on nearby residents, a matter of right.

Day 2 (Nov. 3, 2025)

Exclusion of inset balconies from gross floor area – OP proposes to exclude inset balconies, up to a maximum depth of 8', from gross floor area. *See* Prehearing Notice (PHN) at 8-9, amending § B-304.8. We believe this change appropriately encourages the construction of usable outdoor space without creating the potential for adverse impacts on nearby properties.

Excluding exterior balconies up to 8' deep from building area – ANC 6C recommends that the Commission exclude RF zones from this change. In rowhouse neighborhoods, with relatively narrow lots (~18') the norm, rear projections almost always pose privacy issues. Because floor levels are often aligned, rear projections often afford point-blank views into adjacent properties' windows. And as OP's amended hearing report illustrates, this amendment would permit balconies on multiple floors of a row dwelling. *See* Exh. 82 p. 21.

Excluding elevated decks (>4' above grade) up to 200sf from building area – ANC 6C supports the general idea behind this amendment. Outdoor living space is often at a premium for District residents and a "safety valve" exception for decks would increase the opportunities to create this kind of space.

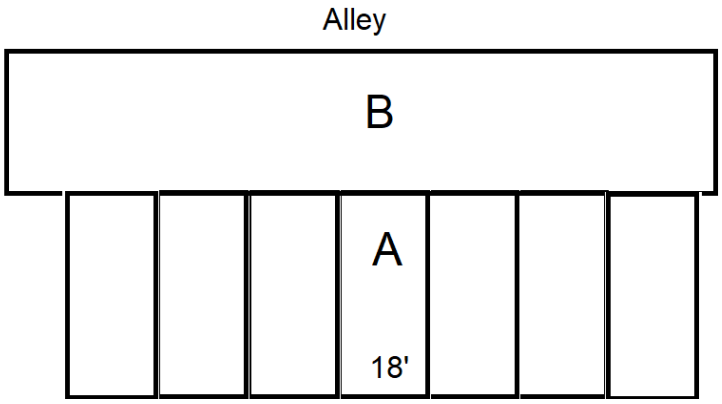
At the same time, 200sf is an inappropriately large area. A deck of that size is functionally a party deck for two dozen or more people. A deck of 100sf is adequate to accommodate a dinner table for a family or a couple entertaining a few friends, plus other deck furniture. We therefore recommend scaling back this proposal to allow the smaller of a) 150sf or b) a lot-width deck extending no more than 8' past the rear façade.[2]

We recommend two additional conditions. First, because § B-312.4(e) excludes "landings" (undefined) from building area, we have seen numerous applicants attempt to smuggle sizable decks into plans as excluded "landings." Owing to this potential loophole, we believe that an applicant should not be able to use both the deck exclusion and the landing exclusion for the same structure.

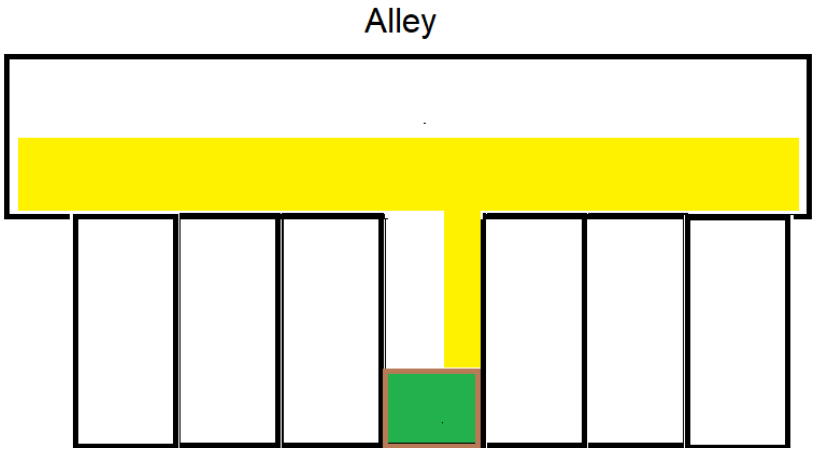
Second, there should be an explicit proviso prohibiting these excluded decks from being constructed on the primary elevation of a building.

Eliminating 30' lot frontage minimum for new apartment-building record lots – ANC 6C urges the Commission to reject this amendment, which would have significant undesirable (and apparently unforeseen) consequences. It would permit creation of a wide variety of irregular "flag" lots as long as a) a structure of any kind, no matter how small, exists <u>on either existing lot</u> and b) the resulting new lot has 900sf per dwelling unit.

[2] At the hearing, members of the Commission remarked on the getting-to-know-one's-neighbor benefits of rear decks. ANC 6C agrees but respectfully suggests that a modestly smaller deck serves this community-building purpose just as well as a larger one.



"Before" Condition



Barred by Existing Rule, Allowed by OP Proposal
(green = existing structure, yellow = bulk of new apartment building)

The OP proposal guts the existing rule, which applies across all zones, by

- restricting it to only RF and RA zones
- creating numerous exceptions, including the one illustrated above, that almost completely swallow what is left of the rule, and
- changing the standard for relief from an area variance to a special exception with no enumerated criteria

As we emphasized in our live testimony, the current rule imposes **no** restrictions on irregularly shaped lots that already exist. It serves only to prevent the creation of **new** record lots lacking the street frontage appropriate to apartment buildings.

ANC 6C recommends that the Commission reject this amendment.

Day 5 (Nov. 10, 2025)

Increased maximum area for accessory buildings in RF zones – The current regulation (§ E-5003.1) limits accessory buildings in RF zones to the greater of a) 30% of the required rear yard or b) 450 square feet. The proposal (PHN at 22) would increase the latter figure to 550sf. On a typical row house lot 18' wide, that would allow for a building slightly deeper than 30', which we believe would better promote the construction of an additional dwelling unit. ANC 6C supports this change.

Easing restrictions on construction and use of accessory buildings in RF zones as dwelling units – The current RF zone use permissions impose numerous restrictions on the use of accessory buildings as principal dwelling units. *See generally* § U-301.1. For example, accessory buildings constructed after 2012 may not be used as dwellings for the five-year period beginning with permit approval. Older accessory buildings may be put to such use, but zoning relief is required for any addition/expansion and if the site does not meet stringent standards for access to a public street via an easement or alley system.

OP's amendment would largely eliminate these unduly restrictive rules. At the same time, it would also relax the minimum width of the required alley access to a public street from 24' to 15'. This change aligns with the changes proposed elsewhere in the regulations in ZC 25-06, a proposal ANC 6C also supports. Moreover, the eased rule here in ZC 25-12 precisely embodies the kind of future pro-housing amendment that ANC 6C anticipated not long ago in a May 2024 BZA filing. *See* BZA 21112 Exh. 30 p. 4.[3]

We wholeheartedly endorse this OP proposal.

* * *

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

Sincerely,

Karen J. Wirt

Karen Wirt
Chair, ANC 6C

[3] "We recognize that the applicant has made used of the[se large vacant lots] as parking for some time and do not expect that use to cease immediately. At the same time, given the District's critical need for new housing and the [potential] for future pro-housing amendments to the zoning regulations, we cannot support the applicant's request to make the relief here [to use the land for parking] permanent. Ten years ago, we did not fully anticipate the extent of the alley-lot rule relaxation that has taken place. We recommend that the applicant return to the Board in ten years so that the relief may be examined anew under whatever rules exist then." https://app.dcoz.dc.gov/CaseReport/ViewExhibit.aspx?exhibitId=343975