DC Zoning Commission
Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, NW, Suite 200-S
Washington, DC 20001

October 23, 2026

Re: Testimony Regarding Proposed Urban Atlantic Text Amendment – ZC Case No. 26-09
Former Boys Town Property – 4801 Sargent Road NE, Square 3977, Lot 134

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Zoning Commission:

We are writing as concerned residents of ANC 5A to express our reservations regarding Urban Atlantic's proposed Text Amendment associated with redevelopment of the former Boys Town property at 4801 Sargent Road NE, where 166 townhomes are planned.

Our community recognizes the importance of thoughtful growth and increased housing availability in the District of Columbia. However, we have significant concerns regarding the development's potential impact on traffic, stormwater management, landscaping, tree preservation, and alley access to existing residential driveways.

Urban Atlantic is seeking community support for the proposed Text Amendment despite failing to adequately address concerns raised through more than a year of community meetings and written correspondence.

Background: Community Engagement and Previous Correspondence

The Boys Town Community Task Force, formed with the assistance of ANC 5A Commissioner Timothy Thomas, met with Urban Atlantic representatives beginning in 2025. At a July 31, 2025 site walk along the Delafield Place NE alley, residents identified specific problems and subsequently submitted written requests. Urban Atlantic responded in writing, including commitments to share plans and consult residents. We are attaching that correspondence so the Commission can distinguish commitments made from issues still outstanding.

At the October 8, 2026 meeting, Urban Atlantic sought community support for the Text Amendment. Yet residents still had not received key studies and plans promised or discussed more than a year earlier. Our objection is not that every request must be granted; it is that residents are being asked to endorse zoning changes without the information needed to assess the effects on their homes. The Community Task Force's participation in meetings and email exchanges was intended to raise concerns and seek solutions—not to endorse the project or the proposed Text Amendment. We are concerned that this correspondence and the Task Force's willingness to engage are being misconstrued or presented as evidence of community support. No such support should be inferred from our participation, particularly while the documented commitments remain unfulfilled.

1. Stormwater Management, Bioretention, and Rodent Concerns

Several Delafield Place residents have experienced basement flooding during heavy rain. Adding 166 townhomes, streets, and other hard surfaces makes it essential to show precisely where stormwater will flow and how existing properties will be protected. In its 2025 written response, Urban Atlantic said its engineers would prepare a stormwater management and utility plan and share it with the community. Residents have not received the detailed grading, drainage, or civil engineering plans needed to assess those assurances.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 26-09
EXHIBIT NO. 11

At the October 8 meeting, Urban Atlantic described bioretention facilities along the alley behind a six-foot wooden fence located approximately one foot from the alley. Residents are concerned that this narrow, largely hidden strip could become overgrown, collect debris, and attract rodents or insects, particularly near existing trash storage areas. We need to know who will inspect, clean, replant, and maintain these facilities, how often, and what happens if standing water or pests become a problem. Simply labeling an area "bioretention" does not answer those questions.

Residents also raised an existing V-shaped drainage ditch near Michigan Park Recreation Center that Boys Town had historically maintained. At the October meeting, Urban Atlantic could not clearly explain who would assume that responsibility. We request the drainage plans, a maintenance map identifying each responsible party, and a clear process for addressing flooding or pest complaints.

2. Protected Trees, Arborist Report, and Loss of the Green Buffer

The mature trees between Boys Town and Delafield Place provide privacy, shade, screening, and stormwater absorption. Residents were alarmed when revised plans appeared to remove more trees along the alley than initially anticipated. An arborist survey has been conducted, and residents understand that several trees were identified as protected, including trees reportedly measuring at least 32 inches in circumference. Despite repeated requests, Urban Atlantic has not shared the completed arborist report. Without it, residents cannot assess which trees are proposed for removal, why removal is necessary, or whether protected trees can be retained.

In its 2025 correspondence, Urban Atlantic agreed to share tree plans and removal permits, seek input on replacement plantings, and arrange a meeting with its landscape architect in fall 2025. That meeting did not occur, and residents still lack a meaningful planting plan showing species, sizes, spacing, and the privacy buffer that will exist when the project is built. A promise of more than 200 trees across the site is not a substitute for showing what will remain or be planted immediately behind existing homes.

We request the full arborist survey, tree preservation and removal plans and permits, and a meeting with the landscape architect before the community is asked to support the Text Amendment.

3. Alley Access, Fence Placement, and Existing Parking

The Delafield Place alley is approximately 17 feet 4 inches wide and is the only practical access to some residents' rear driveways. A six-foot fence only about one foot from the alley could make turning into and out of these spaces more difficult, particularly when snow piles up in winter. Residents previously discussed moving the fence toward the existing retaining wall and using the space between for drainage or landscaping, rather than constricting vehicle movements.

Urban Atlantic said it would endeavor to set the fence back to help turning movements and would evaluate whether some existing parking accommodations were feasible; it did not promise to preserve all informal parking. The concern now is that the proposed arrangement has been presented without a dimensioned plan or turning analysis showing that existing residents can safely access their own driveways. We request those drawings and a documented evaluation of the alternatives discussed.

4. Traffic and Construction Safety

With 166 proposed townhomes, residents anticipate a substantial increase in cars using Sargent Road NE and nearby intersections. The Delafield Place–Sargent Road intersection already has difficult sightlines and safety concerns. At the October 8 meeting, Urban Atlantic stated that a traffic study had been completed and suggested that impacts would be manageable, but residents were not given the study or its assumptions.

The 2025 correspondence also discussed routing construction traffic primarily along Sargent Road and major streets, except for work requiring alley access. We request the traffic impact study, construction traffic routing and safety plan, and an opportunity to review possible intersection improvements with DDOT. Residents cannot evaluate an assurance that traffic will be fine without seeing the underlying analysis.

5. Long-Term Maintenance and Accountability

Urban Atlantic has indicated that the future homeowners association would maintain certain landscaped areas. But the neighbors most exposed to potential overgrowth, rodents, blocked drainage, and fence deterioration will not belong to that HOA. Residents need a written plan identifying responsibility for each bioretention facility, the fence, landscaping, and the existing drainage ditch, including inspection schedules and a reliable contact for complaints. The arrangements must work after the developer has completed construction and left the site.

6. Request Regarding the Text Amendment

The attached correspondence demonstrates that residents have engaged constructively for more than a year. The unresolved issues are specific and verifiable: missing stormwater and traffic plans; an undisclosed completed arborist survey; the unheld landscape architect meeting; unanswered questions about rodents, bioretention maintenance, fence placement, turning clearance, and responsibility for the existing ditch.

We therefore respectfully request that the Zoning Commission defer action on Urban Atlantic's proposed Text Amendment, ZC Case No. 26-09, until Urban Atlantic provides these materials, meets with affected residents and relevant technical professionals, and responds in writing to the outstanding items in the attached correspondence. We also ask ANC 5A to withhold support until these steps occur. We request that the attached correspondence be made part of the case record.

The Community Task Force's participation in meetings and email correspondence was intended to identify problems and seek solutions—not to endorse the development or the proposed Text Amendment. We are concerned that this engagement is being misconstrued or characterized as community support. No endorsement should be inferred from our willingness to collaborate, particularly while commitments documented in the attached correspondence remain outstanding.

Our community is eager to collaborate with the Urban Atlantic and other stakeholders to find a balanced solution that supports growth while preserving quality of life. However, in collaborating with UA to be a team player it appears the Community Task Force was used to garner community support while agreements stated within email correspondences were forgotten.

Thank you for your attention to these matters and for your dedication to equitable and sustainable development in the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

Concerned Residents of ANC 5A

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Attachment: ANC 5A Boys Town Redevelopment – Community Benefits Requests, July 31, 2025, and Urban Atlantic's Written Responses, July–August 2025, Email Correspondence