



NRCA, P.O. Box 3242, Alexandria, VA 22302

September 8, 2021

Planning Commission  
c/o Department of Planning & Zoning  
P.O. Box 178  
Alexandria, VA 22314

Delivered Via Email: [PlanComm@alexandriava.gov](mailto:PlanComm@alexandriava.gov)

**Re: Zoning Docket Amendment #2021-00003, Zoning Practical Updates #4**

Dear Chairman Macek and Planning Commission Members:

North Ridge Citizens' Association (NRCA) respectfully submits these comments on the above-referenced docket item.

NRCA objects to the proposed zoning text amendments relating to setbacks. The changes are described in the Staff Report as consolidations of repeat references, but that description is misleading. The changes are in fact substantive amendments to the ordinance that require full and fair disclosure to the public with an adequate opportunity for comment before they can be considered by the Planning Commission. Further, there is no explanation or justification in the Staff Report as to why the ordinance should be substantively changed for setbacks.

The setbacks for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) were adopted after contentious public debate and Council deliberation. The proposal would substantially change these—with no explanation or justification—by reducing the window or doorway sill height trigger for a 5-foot setback from **20** feet in current 7-203(C)(3)(ii) to **only six** feet in new 7-103(E). Other changes to setbacks are similarly flawed because they are substantive amendments requiring public notice and comment, and are not mere consolidations of repeat references into new 7-103(E): sheds (from the current sill height trigger of **8** feet to a new **6** feet); and garages (from **13.5** feet to **only 6** feet).

We also request that the Commission make clear that the amendments to the zoning code do not apply retroactively, i.e. that the City is not moving the goal posts in the middle of the game.

Sincerely,

John Fehrenbach  
President