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**Letter to the Zoning Commission Regarding 5220 Wisconsin Ave  
September 1, 2006**

**Ward 3 Vision supports the proposed Akridge project at 5220 Wisconsin Avenue (Case Number 06-31). Located adjacent to the Friendship Heights Metro the project is a great example of transit-oriented development. The quality of the development proposal, the amenities offered by the developer, the size and scale of the proposed building for this Metro location, and the neighborhood-friendly ground floor retail make this project an ideal Planned Unit Development (PUD). This is the right building type at the right size and scale, in the right place.**

**Many citizens in nearby neighborhoods are fed up with the anti-growth and anti-change message of a vocal minority that has come to dominate the discussion and the local ANCs. Ward 3 Vision was formed in response to this vocal minority and encourages new infill development that embodies the principles of smart growth and transit-oriented development, expansion of civic amenities, environmental responsibility, and more housing choices for all income levels. Ward 3 Vision has a growing membership of over 200 residents.**

**Ward 3 Vision urges the Zoning Commission to approve the PUD application for 5220 Wisconsin Ave for the following reasons.**

**Location/Density**

**We believe that matter-of-right development at this location would not take advantage of the tremendous investment that this city and the region have made in the Metrorail system. We believe that transit-oriented development is an important environmental measure, and that increases in density at Metrorail locations are appropriate. In this case, the difference in density between matter-of-right and the proposed PUD is approximately 35 units. A site adjacent to a Metro station and fronting on arterial bus lines is an ideal place to offer new housing opportunities while reducing traffic and parking demands. We urge the Zoning Commission to grant Akridge the greatest number of units that can be accommodated within the proposed building envelope.**

**Neighborhood Serving Retail**

**We strongly support the proposal for including retail space on the ground floor of 5220 Wisconsin Avenue. We believe this element of the proposal is fundamental to the project and a critical aspect of our support for it. We believe there should be at least two retail tenant spaces with separate and distinct entrances from the sidewalk. We would like to see office uses (including banks) prohibited from spaces with sidewalk frontage at the ground floor.**

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 06-31 FAX

EXHIBIT NO. 16

The neighborhood would like (and needs) neighborhood-serving retail on the ground floor of 5220 Wisconsin Ave. Ideally we would see a locally-owned and operated coffee shop and a gift shop. We would appreciate any assurance from the Zoning Commission that the ground floor be set aside for locally-serving, non-national chain retail. Attached you will find language from the Montgomery County Zoning Code, Chevy Chase neighborhood retail preservation overlay zone, that may be helpful as the Zoning Commission considers this PUD application. We particularly like the list of types of retailers and the 5,000 square foot limit on the size of the retail spaces.

### **Streetscape Improvements**

Akridge proposes to provide streetscape improvements in front of 5220 Wisconsin and the adjacent Pepco substation. These improvements include: benches, flower beds, trees, and upgraded sidewalks (pavers). At the adjacent Pepco substation, existing front windows have been concreted over. Akridge proposes to "open" the windows by replacing concrete with glass fronted display cases and using the window space to display children's artwork and community announcements.

We welcome these proposals and believe they will improve a particularly drab stretch of streetscape. We are concerned, however, about long-term maintenance and appearance of the streetscape improvements as well as the Pepco substation improvements. Who will replace the new glass if it breaks? We would like to require that the project enter into a long-term agreement to maintain these improvements to ensure that they remain an amenity to the neighborhood.

Another streetscape improvement worth mentioning is the removal of curb cuts. This action significantly improves the Wisconsin Avenue Streetscape and the pedestrian approach to the Jenifer Street Metro entrance.

### **Transportation and Parking**

Akridge is providing bicycle parking for residents and employees of the ground floor retail; showers and changing rooms for employees; and, 2 car-share spaces for building residents and neighbors. These measures are all consistent with good practices for transit-oriented development and we applaud them.

We believe that the developer could further encourage transit ridership by giving Smartrip cards to all residents. We also believe the 1.2 parking ratio is a bit high and should be brought down to code minimum. Another way to encourage transit ridership is to unbundle the parking costs for housing by offering a discount on units not interested in a parking space. Although we hope that guests of residents of 5220 Wisconsin Ave will take the Metro, we are concerned that there is not enough guest parking.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

As a transit-oriented development, the project will reduce vehicle miles traveled (thus improving air quality) but the Developer has committed to achieving other environmental benefits, as well. We support Akridge's commitment to seek LEED certification. It is our understanding that this will be among the first residential building in DC to do so. Environmentally friendly features such as a green roof reduce the City's heat island effect and storm sewer overflow. The white high reflective roof will further reduce the building's environmental impact.

### **Preservation of the Existing Residential Neighborhood**

We strongly believe that accommodating more housing and shops near Metro and on Wisconsin Avenue strengthens adjacent single-family residential neighborhoods and creates good urban communities. We want to be able to walk from our quiet side streets to a rich mix of restaurants, stores and community gathering places on a vibrant Wisconsin Avenue. This development proposal preserves and enhances the integrity of our neighborhoods.

### **Affordable Housing**

The neighborhood surrounding the Friendship Heights metro is in danger of becoming completely unaffordable to not only to the working class, but to virtually everyone! We appreciate Akridge's commitment to providing affordable housing on-site and off-site. Akridge is proposing 6 or 7 units at 80% AMI, a level higher than the proposed Inclusionary Zoning requirements.

The PUD proposal is unclear as to how long the units will remain affordable. We believe that 99 years is appropriate and consistent with the pending Inclusionary Zoning program.

### **Public Involvement**

Akridge's outreach to the community has been outstanding. We appreciate their solicitation of proposals for amenities and their willingness to meet with neighbors. It is also worth noting that the local ANC's process for discussing 5220 Wisconsin Ave has been less inclusive and lacking concern for community input. Without notice (it was not advertised in the *NW Current* or included in the on-line agenda), the ANC voted on an extensive resolution opposing this project. Although the ANC may have the right to modify the agenda at their will, an unannounced discussion and vote on a multi-page resolution that was shared among the Commissioners in advance was clearly a strategy to prevent some neighbors from participating in this decision.

### **Support for 5220 Wisconsin Ave**

In sum, Ward 3 Vision strongly supports the Akridge Development proposal for 5220 Wisconsin Ave.

Please feel free to contact Jessica Cogan Millman, Ward 3 Vision Steering Committee, at 202.363.4428 or [jessicacogan@yahoo.com](mailto:jessicacogan@yahoo.com) if you have any questions.

### **Ward 3 Vision Steering Committee**

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**Sec. 59-C-18.17. Chevy Chase neighborhood retail preservation overlay zone. [Notes]**

**59-C-18.171. Purpose.**

It is the purpose of this overlay zone to:

- (a) Retain the existing mix of neighborhood-oriented retail and service uses while allowing a reasonable expansion and modernization of retail space;
- (b) Ensure that the retail and service uses are accessible to pedestrians; and
- (c) Encourage pedestrian-oriented retail and reinforce a sense of community.

**59-C-18.172. Regulations.**

(a) **Land uses.** The uses allowed in the underlying zone are allowed in the overlay zone. However, only the following uses are permitted at the ground floor level, including entrance lobbies and common areas:

(1) **Commercial:**

Antique shops, handiwork, or art sale.

Book store.

Drug store.

Eating and drinking establishment.

Florist.

Food and beverage store.

Gift shop.

Grocery store.

Hardware store.

Newsstand.

Pet shop.

Photographic studio.

Photographic and art supply store.

Specialty shops, such as jewelry store.

Variety and dry goods store, including wearing apparel.

**(2) Services:**

**Appliance repair shop.**

**Banks and financial institutions.**

**Barber and beauty shop.**

**Business Office. [1]**

**Child day care facility.**

**Dry cleaning and laundry pickup station.**

**Duplicating service.**

**Shoe repair shop.**

**Tailoring or dressmaking shop.**

**(3) Cultural and recreational:**

**Libraries and museum.**

**Park and playground.**

**(b) Development Standards.** The standards of development must comply with the standards of the underlying zone except as follows:

**(1)** A grocery store is limited to a maximum floor area of 25,000 square feet and any restaurant operating on May 4, 1998 is limited to a maximum floor area of 8,500 square feet.

**(2)** In order to promote a mix of uses, any use, other than a grocery store and a restaurant operating on May 4, 1998, permitted at ground floor level is limited to a maximum floor area of 5,000 square feet. However, the Planning Board may grant a waiver to increase the maximum floor area limit for any use permitted at the ground floor level during project plan or site plan review, if the Planning Board finds that an increased floor area is consistent with the commercial and development objectives for the area as established in the sector plan. The waiver must be reapproved by an amendment to the project plan or site plan if the use changes; however, a replacement tenant for the same use or a similar use may be approved by the Planning Board without formal project plan or site plan amendment. The 5,000 square foot area limit on uses permitted at ground level, does not apply to any use that occupied more than 5,000 square feet of floor area on May 4, 1998.

**59-C-18.173. Procedure for application and approval.**

A site plan for any development in the Chevy Chase neighborhood retail preservation overlay zone must be approved under the provisions of Division 59-D-3. If applicable, a project approved under the provisions of Division 59-D-2 must conform to the requirements of this overlay zone. Development includes the following:

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To: Zoning Commission

From: Ward 3 Vision

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Questions: contact Jessica Millman  
202 363 4428