

Washington, D. C.
April 23, 2009

Anthony Hood, Chairman
D.C. Office of Zoning
441 Fourth St., N.W.
Suite # 2108
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Hood,

I would like to register my support for P.U.D. Case # 08-15 (Friendship/Macomb SC, Inc. Giant). I encourage you to grant the P.U.D. This is my second letter in support of this project. I originally submitted written testimony on January 30, 2009.

Originally I was opposed to the plan submitted by the Giant; it was ugly. There were no doors into the store from the street and only fake windows to break up the surface. If you wanted to go into the store you had to enter from the massive four level parking garage. Their second offering was worse than the first. With each rejection by the community the Giant, by now the Park & Shop Giant, came back with a BIGGER project. We now have two blocks of development some of it five stories high, very nicely integrated with small shops and an occasional tree and a "water feature". It is still lacking a clock but I have taken that up with Streetworks. To my neighbors on Newark Street I say "Give up already while you're ahead!"

On this morning's Kojo Nnamdi Program on WAMU Mr. Roger Lewis (see the attached article) said that the residents West of Wisconsin Avenue want the store, the folks east of Wisconsin avenue don't. That is simply not true. In a unscientific poll taken by the Cleveland Park Listserv where we could, however, only vote once; 77% checked off "Build it Already" or build it with modifications. Most of those folks live East of the Avenue.

The Newark Street Coalition by their very name indicate the geographical limit of their interest. Since I live in the 3400 block of 34th Place, a one block long shortcut street between Newark & Ordway, I guess I would qualify for membership in this group. As I indicated, I once was supportive of their objections. There is now a Facebook Page that is adding supporters daily, Build It Already. It was just started but is filling up fast.

Please do not allow a small group of nay-sayers who object to almost every change in the fabric of the neighborhood be the tail that wags this dog here. They are vocal. They are well financed. They are well know citizens of the community but they do not represent the majority of residents in this neighborhood. They may use words like "the bucolic atmosphere of the community". Frankly the last time there was anything bucolic about Cleveland Park was when cows grazed at Rosedale. (cont.)

ELEANOR R. OLIVER • 3429 34TH PL., NW •
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ZONING COMMISSION
CASE No. 08-15
EXHIBIT No. 188

This group is not satisfied with removing half a city block from the city's tax rolls forever by creating the Rosedale Conservancy--a fine effort, by the way. They now want to maintain a 1950's era shopping district, that if developed, would add much to the commercial life of the community and to the income of the city. I don't believe they even speak for the majority of Newark Street residents. I know they don't. A few of these neighbors organize against almost everything. They have become "professional objectors". They know every wrinkle of every zoning code and building code and can twist them to their advantage. They have been around for ages. They know the history behind every neighborhood development. I will bet they know the members of the zoning board on a first name basis.

I wish I could find a short article that was originally published in the late 50s either in the Washington Post, The Star or the Uptown Citizen. In this article the writer objected to the "new Giant Grocery Store " being planned for the corner of Newark and Wisconsin. It was entirely too large for the needs of the community, leveled too much terrain for parking, would clog the neighborhood streets with horrendous traffic, would be an eyesore and probably never fully patronized by the residential community surrounding it. That Giant, at one time, did more business per square foot than any other store in the grocery chain. Is it any wonder that the company wants to stay there? That they have put up with 10 years of dithering by the folks on Newark Street. That they keep coming back with bigger and better plans? I say; Build it, Already!

Sincerely,


Eleanor Oliver

SHAPING THE CITY

Roger K. Lewis

Standing in the Way of Smart Urban Development

Some residents of the District cling to a suburban mentality. This mentality, coupled with government mismanagement, can obstruct desirable redevelopment. For the city to evolve, residents' attitudes and government performance must change.

Project opponents typically voice anxiety about increased density, shifting uses and populations, worsening traffic, and the prospect that new buildings won't be in harmony with the existing context. Some mistrust government and believe that only the interests of developers are being served. Others simply fear change. Despite compelling evidence of the merits of a redevelopment project, opponents rarely change their minds.

They may represent a minority of people affected by redevelopment, but that minority can be organized and outspoken while redevelopment supporters remain silent. Hearing little from the majority and pressured by the minority, the city can make bad decisions.

Two controversial D.C. projects, both on Wisconsin Avenue NW, illustrate redevelopment challenges: the Giant shopping-center site at Newark Street, adjacent to Cleveland Park, and the Tenleytown branch library site at Albemarle Street, adjacent to the Janney elementary school and across the street from the Tenleytown Metro station.

The owner of the Giant site



BY ROGER K. LEWIS FOR THE WASHINGTON POST

proposes more uses, including apartments, and more density than underlying zoning allows. The D.C. Office of Planning and the District Department of Transportation, as well as Council member Mary M. Cheh (D-Ward 3), support the proposal.

Zoning Commission hearings have been contentious and legalistic. But the real source of contention is not legalistic. Rather, it is the long-standing preference and nostalgic desire of some nearby residents for the Giant site to remain what it's always been: low-density

commercial.

The property has been fallow long enough. In the interest of "smart growth," the Zoning Commission should approve the rezoning and enable overdue redevelopment.

With demolition of the old Tenleytown library, intense redevelopment of this prominent D.C. property next to a Metro station made sense. Accordingly, the District envisioned a dense, mixed-use complex encompassing a new library and multi-family, mid-rise housing. Changes would include the adjacent school and playgrounds.

Pursuing a private-public strategy, the city invited developers to submit proposals, with residents as well as public officials participating in the planning and evaluation.

Unfortunately, controversy ensued. Disagreements arose about the quality and feasibility of the proposals, functional and aesthetic compromises, and even the private-public-partnership concept. The process fell apart.

After fumbling the ball, the city punted. Defaulting to the suburban strategy, it now intends to build only a free-standing, two-story branch library. Gone is the chance to do the right thing — transit-oriented development — on this unique, publicly owned site.

The missed Tenleytown opportunity shows that developer competitions are not always the right approach for complicated civic projects. And it shows once again that the city needs a competent, proactive agency that can independently finance and implement redevelopment of public property.

Much suburban fabric is relatively static. Much urban fabric is relatively dynamic, changing as circumstances change. Living in cities means accepting and even embracing change. Living in America's capital city should be no exception.

Roger K. Lewis is a practicing architect and a professor emeritus of architecture at the University of Maryland.