

Testimony of Anne Large
on behalf of Advocates for Wisconsin Avenue Renewal (AWARE)
in favor of the Stop & Shop/Giant Planned Unit Development Application
before the District of Columbia Zoning Commission
April 6, 2009

Chairman Hood, Commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to speak in favor of the Application for this Planned Unit Development. My name is Anne Large. I grew up in Cleveland Park and have lived there for a total of 33 years. I now live at 3509 Macomb Street, just 1.5 blocks from the proposed development.

There has been a lot of change in the neighborhood during my lifetime, much of it positive. I believe this project is another example of positive change.

Ours is a very spirited and involved neighborhood, and our neighbors care very deeply about the changes that occur here. I am grateful for the time and attention that those opposing this PUD have invested in evaluating this proposal. I know that, like me, they want what is best for the neighborhood. But I believe they are wrong in this case.

This proposal is exactly what the neighborhood—and, indeed, the city—needs: not only a great new grocery store, but also parking and moderately priced housing along a major transportation corridor supporting new, neighborhood-serving retail.

I believe that the proposal is a good one and that the development will provide terrific benefits for the neighborhood. What has been particularly frustrating to me through this process is that some of my neighbors feel compelled to criticize every part of the proposal, rather than focusing on the small number of things that I believe are of legitimate concern to the entire neighborhood.

Every project in our neighborhood becomes contentious and faces vociferous opposition from many of the same people who are here today testifying in opposition. I've been involved in the debates about several of these projects—the National Cathedral School gym, the renovation of the National Child Research Center, and now the Giant.

Every time, we hear cries that the project will have a devastating impact on the neighborhood. In the cases that I've been involved in, those fears have proven to be unfounded. These have been good projects, critical to bringing old neighborhood institutions up to date to work for the present and the future, while preserving the unique character of the neighborhood. I believe the same is true of this proposal.

Giant has made significant changes to its proposal to reflect community input. DDoT has made important recommendations on how best to manage the traffic, loading, and parking associated with the development. The ANC has noted areas of concern to the neighborhood.

I have faith in DDoT's expertise and in Giant's desire to do the right thing to mitigate any traffic and parking impacts. I urge the Zoning Commission to use its expertise to guide those efforts—to make sure the project and associated traffic and parking management plans work well and serve the interests of the neighborhood as a whole.

I believe the great, normally silent majority of our neighbors support this project—and the very existence of AWARE is proof of that. As Councilmember Cheh said in her testimony, the vast majority of this community—both close-in and throughout Ward 3—support this kind of smart development.

At our last hearing, a Commissioner raised the question of whether people really would walk to this development. I can assure you that I and many of my neighbors are truly eager to walk to shop and eat out, instead of driving out of the neighborhood. I will walk, my sons will walk, and many of my neighbors—both current and future—will walk.

This neighborhood needs and deserves a development on this site—to serve the people living in Cleveland Park now, and those, like me, who will be here for the next 50 years.