

TESTIMONY OF ELLEN McCARTHY  
IN SUPPORT OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT  
ZC CASE #08-15

Good evening, Chairman Hood and members of the Commission,

My name is Ellen McCarthy, and I live in Upper Northwest. I was formerly the Deputy Director of the Office of Planning for Development Review, Historic Preservation and Neighborhood Planning, and was the Director during the preparation and unanimous adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

Prior to moving to my current address, the Giant in question was my Giant. It was so cramped and unpleasant, that, frankly, I am amazed that anyone could oppose a comprehensive make-over. I can only conclude that the opponents must all shop at the Social Safeway or Whole Foods.

Tonight, I'd like to focus on why this project is totally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, because I understand that several of the opponents plan to dwell on why they think it is not.

The proposal is consistent with the 2006 Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Maps. The Future Land Use Map designates the North and South Parcels as low density commercial. The proposed zoning, C-2-A, and the proposed development are not inconsistent with this designation. In fact, the Zoning Regulations state:

720.2 The C-2-A District is designed to provide facilities for shopping and business needs, housing and mixed uses for large segments of the District of Columbia outside of the central core.

720.3 The C-2-A Districts **shall be located in low and medium density residential areas** with access to main highways and rapid transit stops and shall include office employment centers, shopping centers and medium-bulk mixed-use centers.

720.4 The C-2-A District **shall permit development to medium proportions.**

In addition to the guidance provided by the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map, the North and South Parcels are identified as a Neighborhood Commercial Center on the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, Generalized Policy Map. A Neighborhood Commercial Center is described as meeting the "*. . . day-to-day needs of residents and workers in adjacent neighborhoods. Their service area is usually less than one mile. Typical uses include convenience stores, sundries, small food markets, supermarkets, branch banks, restaurants, and basic services such as dry cleaners, hair cutting, and child care. Office space for small businesses, such as local real estate and insurance offices, doctors and dentists, and similar uses, also may be found in such locations. New development and redevelopment within Neighborhood Commercial Areas and must be managed to conserve the economic viability of these areas while allowing additional development that complements existing uses.*" The proposal for a supermarket and other neighborhood serving retail, along with housing, is consistent with this designation, and consistent with the character of the neighboring areas.

The proposed development also meets or furthers many of the policies of the Comprehensive Plan as the Office of Planning report has laid out very thoroughly. I would like to highlight just a few.

**ZONING COMMISSION**  
District of Columbia  
CASE No. 08-15  
EXHIBIT No. 203

## **Chapter 3 - Land Use Element**

### ***Policy LU-2.1.3: Conserving, Enhancing, and Revitalizing Neighborhoods***

*Recognize the importance of balancing goals to increase the housing supply and expand neighborhood commerce with parallel goals to protect neighborhood character, preserve historic resources, and restore the environment. The overarching goal to “create successful neighborhoods” in all parts of the city requires an emphasis on conservation in some neighborhoods and revitalization in others.*

The proposed development replaces a functionally obsolete shopping center, and includes medium-scale housing and attractively landscaped public space, fully consistent with the notion of creating a successful neighborhood.

## **Chapter 23 – Rock Creek West Area Element**

### ***Policy RCW-1.1.3: Conserving Neighborhood Commercial Centers***

*Support and sustain local retail uses and small businesses in the area’s neighborhood commercial centers. These centers should be protected from encroachment by large office buildings and other non-neighborhood serving uses. **Compatible new uses such as multi-family housing** or limited low-cost neighborhood-serving office space (above local-serving ground-floor retail uses ) should be considered within the area’s commercial centers to meet affordable housing needs, sustain new neighborhood-serving retail and small businesses, and bring families back to the District.*

### ***Policy RCW-1.1.4: Infill Development***

*Recognize the opportunity for infill development within the areas designated for commercial land use on the Future Land Use Map. When such development is proposed, work with ANC’s, residents, and community organizations to **encourage projects that combine housing and commercial uses rather than projects that contain single uses. Heights and densities for such development should be appropriate to the scale and character of adjoining communities.** Buffers should be adequate to protect existing residential area from noise, odors, shadows and other impacts.*

### ***Policy RCW-2.2.1: Housing Opportunities***

*Recognize the opportunity for additional housing with some retail and limited office . . . and on underutilized commercially zoned sites on Wisconsin Avenue. Any development in these areas should be compatible with the existing residential neighborhoods.*

### ***Policy RCW-2.2.1: Housing Opportunities***

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## **Other relevant sections of the Comprehensive Plan**

### **Chapter 5 - Housing Element**

#### ***Policy H-1.1.4: Mixed Use Development***

*Promote mixed use development, including housing, on commercially zoned land, particularly in neighborhood commercial centers, along Main Street mixed use corridors, and around appropriate Metrorail stations.*

#### ***Policy LU-2.4.1: Promotion of Commercial Centers***

*Promote the vitality of the District's commercial centers and provide for the continued growth of commercial land uses to meet the needs of District residents, expand employment opportunities for District residents, and sustain the city's role as the center of the metropolitan area. Commercial centers should be inviting and attractive places, and should support social interaction and ease of access for nearby residents.*

#### ***Policy LU-2.3.3: Buffering Requirements***

*Ensure that new commercial development adjacent to lower density residential areas provides effective physical buffers to avoid adverse effects. Buffers may include larger setbacks, landscaping, fencing, screening, height step downs, and other architectural and site planning measures that avoid potential conflicts.*

#### ***Policy LU-2.4.5: Encouraging Nodal Development***

*Discourage auto-oriented commercial "strip" development and instead encourage pedestrian-oriented "nodes" of commercial development at key locations along major corridors. Zoning and design standards should ensure that the height, mass, and scale of development within nodes respects the integrity and character of surrounding residential areas and does not unreasonably impact them.*

#### ***Policy LU-2.4.6: Scale and Design of New Commercial Uses***

*Ensure that new uses within commercial districts are developed at a height, mass, scale and design that is appropriate and compatible with surrounding areas.*

#### ***Policy H-1.2.3: Mixed Income Housing***

*Focus investment strategies and affordable housing programs to distribute mixed income housing more equitably across the entire city, taking steps to avoid further concentration of poverty within areas of the city that already have substantial affordable housing.*

### **Chapter 6 - Economic Development Element**

#### ***Policy ED-2.1.6: Local-Serving Office Space***

*Encourage the development of small local-serving offices within neighborhood commercial districts throughout the city to provide relatively affordable locations for small businesses and local services (such as real estate and insurance offices, accountants, consultants, and medical offices).*

#### ***Policy ED-2.2.3: Neighborhood Shopping***

*Create additional shopping opportunities in Washington's neighborhood commercial districts to better meet the demand for basic goods and services. Reuse of vacant buildings in these districts should be encouraged, along with appropriately-scaled retail infill development on vacant and underutilized sites. Promote the creation of locally-owned, non-chain establishments because of their role in creating unique shopping experiences.*

***Policy ED-2.2.6: Grocery Stores and Supermarkets***

*Promote the development of new grocery stores and supermarkets, particularly in neighborhoods where residents currently travel long distances for food and other shopping services. Because such uses inherently require greater depth and lot area than is present in many commercial districts, adjustments to current zoning standards to accommodate these uses should be considered.*

**Chapter 9 - Urban Design Element**

***Policy UD-1.4.1: Avenues/Boulevards and Urban Form***

*Use Washington's major avenues/boulevards as a way to reinforce the form and identity of the city, connect its neighborhoods, and improve its aesthetic and visual character. Focus improvement efforts on avenues/boulevards in emerging neighborhoods, particularly those that provide important gateways or view corridors within the city.*

***Policy UD-2.2.3: Neighborhood Centers***

*Undertake strategic and coordinated efforts to create neighborhood centers, civic buildings, and shopping places that reinforce community identity.*

***Policy UD-2.2.5: Creating Attractive Facades***

*Create visual interest through well-designed building facades, storefront windows, and attractive signage and lighting. Avoid monolithic or box-like building forms, or long blank walls which detract from the human quality of the street.*

***Policy UD-3.1.7: Improving the Street Environment***

*Create attractive and interesting commercial streetscapes by promoting ground level retail and desirable street activities, making walking more comfortable and convenient, ensuring that sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic, minimizing curb cuts and driveways, and avoiding windowless facades and gaps in the street wall.*

***Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space***

*Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the "activation" of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas.*

**Chapter 23 – Rock Creek West Area Element**

***Policy RCW-1.1.5: Preference for Local-Serving Retail***

*Support new commercial development in the Planning Area that provides the range of goods and services necessary to meet the needs of local residents. Such uses are preferable to the development of new larger-scale or "big-box" retail uses that serve a regional market. "Destination" retail uses are not appropriate in smaller-scale commercial areas, especially those without Metrorail access. Regardless of scale, retail development must be planned and designed to mitigate traffic, parking, and other impacts on adjacent residential areas.*