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**Testimony before the Zoning Commission in Opposition to the Development of the Giant at
Newark and Wisconsin,
Project 08-15**

Summary of Testimony

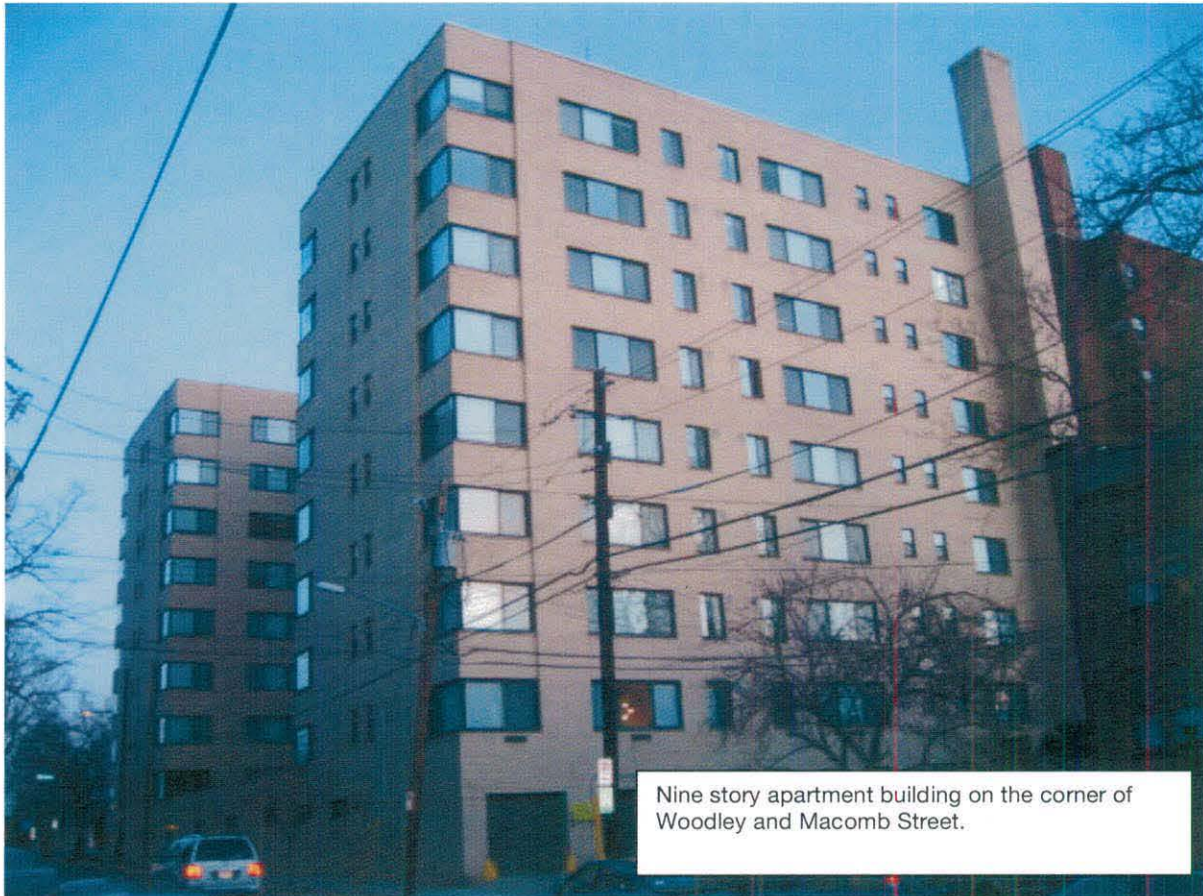
- Cathedral Heights, bounded by Wisconsin, Macomb, Massachusetts and Idaho Avenues, located less than a block from the proposed Giant project, will bear significant impact from the increased traffic from the new garage.
- This geographically compact neighborhood is already overparked because of apartment buildings and a lack of private garages, it is the least able to bear increased traffic and an overflow of cars.
- The project is not served by Metro which means an inevitable increase in vehicular traffic.
- The Giant has not presented a viable plan for ameliorating traffic as the result of this project.
- Cathedral Heights is a neighborhood of long-standing residents whose home is their primary asset. The massive project threatens to decrease the value of those homes.
- The project is simply too big for the scale of the neighborhood of modest semi-detached three bedroom homes and rental apartment buildings.
- Removal of the existing overlay may invite bars and restaurants that would further increase vehicular traffic and discourage businesses that serve the immediate neighborhood.

My name is Alice Leccese Powers and I live at 3212 38th Street NW, half a block from the 38th Street entrance to the proposed Giant garage and a block-and-a-half from the proposed loading dock in the Macomb Street Alley. Except for the residents of Idaho Avenue adjacent to the main loading dock, my neighborhood will bear the greatest impact from the development of the Giant project. Potentially, we could become a thoroughfare for traffic entering and exiting the garage. In addition, our two interior streets, 38th Street and Woodley Road, will absorb the overflow parking for customers going to the Giant properties as well as to popular restaurants like Two Amys, The Cactus Cantina, and Café Deluxe.

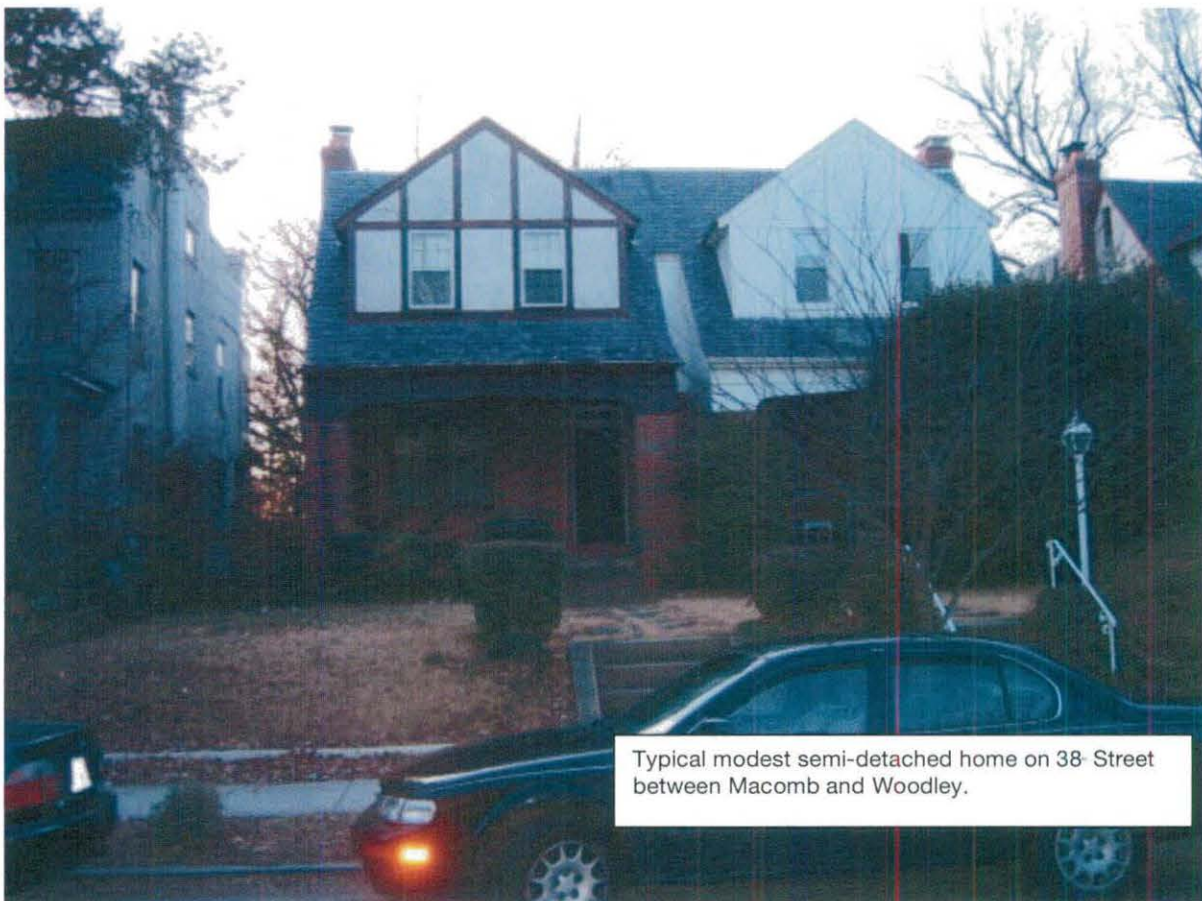
ZONING COMMISSION
CASE No. 08-15
EXHIBIT No. 228
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 08-15
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First, I would like to describe our neighborhood, as it is quite different from adjacent Cleveland Park. The four square blocks known as Cathedral Heights are bounded by Macomb Street, Wisconsin Avenue, Massachusetts Avenue, and Idaho Avenue. Boxed in by these busy streets, we are geographically restricted and contained. Several multi-story apartment buildings without parking for their residents form our eastern border, our two interior streets, 38th Street and Woodley Road, are often completely filled with parked cars, even during the day. In addition, we get overflow parking from patrons who are going to the restaurants.

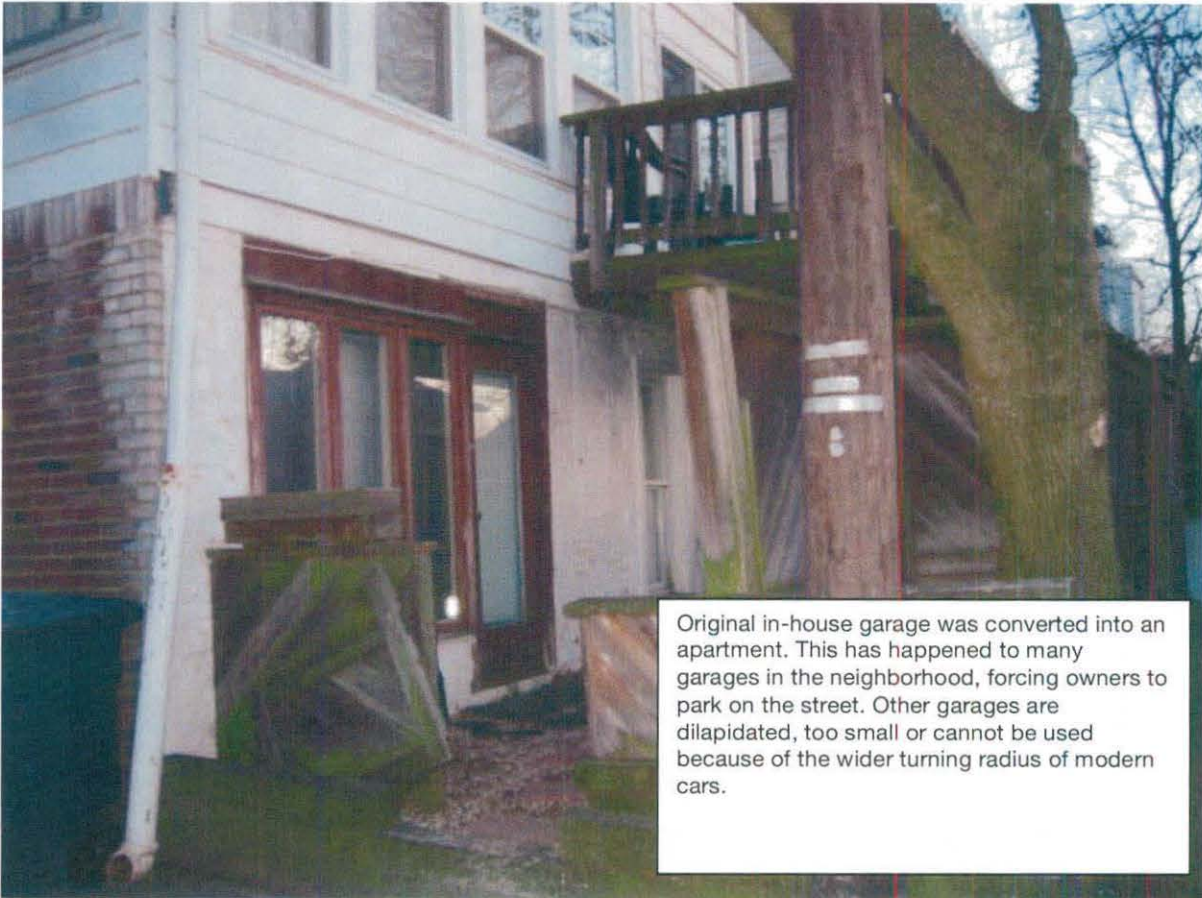


With the exception of a few turn-of-the-century farmhouses, Cathedral Heights (sometimes referred to as Fairview Heights) is a very modest neighborhood of brick detached, semi-detached, and row houses. Most were built in the early 1920s for merchants who moved from downtown apartments to homes. In their original configuration most houses had three bedrooms and one bathroom. Backyards are either tiny or non-existent; the houses simply end in an alley.



Typical modest semi-detached home on 38- Street between Macomb and Woodley.

The architecture of the neighborhood has a bearing on this current debate. Originally, most of the houses had very small garages designed for old-fashioned cars. Some garages were freestanding structures off the alley and some were incorporated into the house itself. Very few of those old garages can accommodate residents' cars today. The garages are either too small, uninhabitable, have been torn down or have fallen down. Most of the residents who had garages in the lower level of their homes have made them into living space. In comparison to other neighborhoods where there is plentiful parking in one or two car garages, our residents have little recourse but the already overparked street.



Although we are on a major bus line (the 30s bus runs north-south on Wisconsin Avenue), Cathedral Heights is not served by Metro. We are equidistant from two stops, Tenleytown and Cleveland Park, both a mile and a quarter away in different directions. Unlike the new shopping area in Columbia Heights, customers would not be arriving at the Giant development by subway. Much of the potential traffic would come from neighborhoods to our west, American University and Spring Valley. And almost all of those customers would come by car.

Cathedral Heights is a very stable community and families move here for its convenience, relatively modest housing prices, and small-town atmosphere. I did a survey of the fourteen houses on my block, the west side of 38th Street between Woodley and Macomb. Two of the houses are large frame structures, six are semi-detached, and six are rowhouses, three to a row. One house is empty (but that house was occupied by a woman who died last year and lived there for fifty years or more). Of the other thirteen, the **average** length of occupancy is 26 years. That includes two young families who have lived in their homes about two years, one woman who has been here 43 years, and a man who was born in his house and continues to live there. He is in his sixties. Many of the neighbors

have followed a pattern similar to ours: we moved here with babies and now twenty three years later, we live here still. It is that kind of neighborhood.

And what bearing does that have on the development of the Giant? Without a doubt, traffic will increase, although the Giant claims not to know exactly how much. We will continue to be pressured by parking because the spaces allotted to non-Giant customers will not be sufficient for the demand from the existing restaurants. As it is now, there is rarely street parking for residents after 4:30 or 5 PM and families on 38- Street are forced to find parking on Idaho, Macomb, or even in the existing Giant lot itself.



Like most people, our homes are our primary asset. This is a neighborhood of teachers, government workers, young families, and retired people. The value of our houses has decreased because of the economy, but we face further devaluation because of the Giant project. The qualities that we value most about life in Cathedral Heights is threatened by a huge, inappropriately scaled development just steps from our front porches. I am not theorizing that the development will affect us adversely; it simply will.

Despite our proximity to this project, my neighbors and I do not unilaterally oppose it. We have lived with empty storefronts and a substandard foodstore for almost a decade. Many elements of Streetworks' plan are laudable: a lively, pedestrian friendly streetscape on Wisconsin Avenue would be welcome. The underground garage is far preferable to a multi-story above-ground facility in the original proposal.

But our concerns about the project and its impact on our neighborhood remain and have not been addressed by either Giant or Streetworks.

First, Streetworks and the Giant have not provided **a reasonable plan for dealing with the inevitable increase of traffic**. Their "wait and see" attitude belies the fact that there are effective ways to anticipate traffic problems based on the new patterns established by the plan. The Giant said that money has been placed in escrow to ameliorate problems created by the project, but it is unclear whether this will be enough to address the inevitable problems.

Second, **the mass of the project is simply too big** for this area. Huge grocery stores are more appropriate for suburban locations. New Urbanists theorize that small neighborhood stores can be finely tuned to their surrounding demographics. An urban store that has at least a half a dozen competitors within a small radius does not need to be comprehensive. Big box stores belong on Rockville Pike, not on Wisconsin Avenue.

Third, the change in zoning will also lift the overlay. **Without the overlay, bars and other businesses could dominate the commercial area and have a negative effect on our neighborhood.**

Cathedral Heights, geographically small and corralled by major arteries, is a fragile urban ecosystem. Within its boundaries are seven story apartment buildings, closely packed, small homes, and an already existing commercial strip on Macomb Street. A project of this magnitude threatens to overwhelm and destroy the very qualities that make our neighborhood desirable.