

To Members of the Zoning Commission::

Opposition to the new Giant PUD

We write as long-term (35 year) residents of Macomb Street, at 3508 Macomb, N. W.. Although we have questions about several aspects of the PUD as presently proposed, our gravest concern is with the patent inadequacy of the planned parking facilities and the impact of this inadequacy on the parking and traffic on Macomb Street in the blocks closest to Wisconsin Avenue. Like most of our neighbors we would welcome an expanded Giant store, but not at the cost of the presently planned PUD. We hope that the Zoning Commission will oppose the PUD in its present form until these problems are corrected.

As we understand it, the new facility would have underground parking for 395 vehicles. Seven of the spaces would be reserved for the seven townhouses. Thirty places are assumed adequate for the patrons of existing restaurants in the immediate area. There are 137 apartments planned (124 plus 13) Assuming only single cars for each of these, the total thus uses 174 spaces. (The location is far from the Metro; residents will have cars.) We know that proponents believe that many of the residents will walk or ride the bus to work, but we find that irrelevant. The tenants will still own cars that will have to park somewhere. The suggestion that the Alban Towers Garage offers an alternative is ludicrous. The tenants are unlikely to choose to pay for parking three blocks away when free spaces are available 24 hours a day in their basement.

Subtracting the 174 listed parking needs from the 395 planned spaces, 221 spaces would be available for parking for the expanded Giant and the other new stores and restaurants in the complex. This is slightly less than the capacity of the present 233-space Giant lot.

But this is demonstrably insufficient. Why? Because every assumption is likely understated. First it is likely that many of the residents, especially those in the townhouses, will own more than one car. Second, even more of them will have guests from time to time who will need to park in the area. Third, thirty spaces for the existing restaurant parkers is clearly a major understatement. Any casual observation of the parking situation in the present Giant lot during any evening and on any weekend will show the large number of cars parked starting at the opposite end of the lot from the entrance to the Giant store. We have not counted them, but the usual number certainly far exceeds 30. Fourth, no allocation is made for the patrons of the anticipated new restaurants and stores in the PUD. Fifth, nor is there any reference to the number of added cars of customers newly drawn to the expanded Giant store. Sixth, there is no room for the cars of the added Giant employees who will man the expanded store. Seventh, there is no provision for the substantial number of employees of the new stores and offices within the PUD. All in all, these make clear that Giant's parking plans are substantially inadequate.

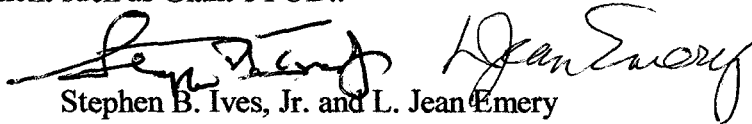
We do not understand the argument that some have been making that the expanded grocery store will cause more neighborhood people to walk, rather than drive. We live two-and-one-half blocks from the present Giant. We do not, and will not, walk to buy groceries. We need the car to carry home the several bags of purchases, many of them heavy (milk, orange juice, soft drinks, water, canned goods, etc.). And we suspect this is the common experience.

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We recognize that Giant wants to build a profitable complex. But the fact that it is filling the space needed for parking to produce major income (viz., particularly the seven town houses and the high-rise building with even more drivers, etc.) shows the basic imbalance between the Giant's needs and the needs of those of us who hope to welcome a new Giant as a neighborhood friend. The latter is, as we understand it, the purpose of the applicable zoning rules and of our historic district.

Finally, we address the problem of traffic on Macomb Street, which some have stated is not an issue. We strongly disagree. First, Macomb is the only through cross street in Cleveland Park between Massachusetts and Connecticut Avenues. Despite its narrowness in places, it carries more than its share of through traffic; for example it is where the fire engines travel. Second, this is compounded by traffic using Macomb to access National Cathedral and Beauvoir Schools, as well as to the Cathedral complex generally. Traffic also carries students to and from Maret School, John Eaton School, and to a lesser extent, Sidwell Friends and other schools. Third, we already have an occasional parking problem from events at the Cathedral and now increasingly from evening and weekend restaurant patrons in the Macomb/Wisconsin area; the PUD's parking space deficiency is a real threat to our parking.. Fourth, Macomb is a narrow street for through traffic. Additional parking will exacerbate our traffic problems. ~~Fourth~~, last week the city installed speed humps on adjacent Newark Street, a block away. We do not know if these were installed as forerunners to anticipated traffic from the PUD, but they certainly will divert more cars and trucks from Newark to Macomb Street. The latter's already expanding traffic problems would be greatly magnified by extra parkers who will not find parking spaces in the PUD.

Although we have no traffic study to support these points, we do feel strongly that we must rebut claims of some that there are no parking and traffic problems on Macomb Street, There are, and they will be increased by a development such as Giant's PUD..


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