



D. R. Horne & Company

To: Chairman Anthony Hood
District of Columbia Zoning Commission

From: Douglas R. Horne *DHR*

Date: May 19, 2009

RE: **Wisconsin Ave. Giant PUD and Zoning Map Amendment Application**
(Case #08-15)

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Introduction and Background

I reside at 3403 36th Street NW, in the neighborhood (ANC 3C) where the proposed project is located. I offer the following commentary regarding the project's sustainability and its design character, areas in which I have considerable professional expertise with over thirty-five years of experience in planning, real estate asset management and development. As President of D. R. Horne & Company (www.drhone.com), a firm I founded in 1982, our mission is to execute real estate projects across the country that meet extraordinary standards of design, focusing particularly on matters of sustainability. We have recently developed a LEED Gold commercial building and a LEED Platinum public building. I also serve as Director of Land Advisory Services for The Conservation Fund in Arlington, VA.

Environmental Issues and Concerns

The lack of detail in the current Giant plans makes it difficult for me to determine what, if any, sustainable design elements will be incorporated into the project. Focusing on the supermarket itself, company statements and other circulated material reveal no discernible measures aimed at energy efficiency, renewable and carbon-neutral energy sources, greenhouse gas reductions, sustainable materials/goods, waste reduction and recycling initiatives. This is particularly disappointing given the significant advances that have been made in recent years in the greening of the supermarket industry overall, as well as the District of Columbia's own efforts to establish stringent green building standards citywide.

Despite the parent company Ahold's stated commitment to environmental initiatives (e.g., company-wide CO2 emissions targets) and its involvement in a LEED pilot program to green 52 existing stores in its U.S. portfolio (i.e., Giant/Stop & Shop), there is zero indication that significant sustainable elements will be instituted at the Wisconsin Ave. project. I make this

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determination based on review of the October 2008 PUD submission materials (plans, LEED checklists, etc.) and on remarks by Julia Craighill of Steven Winter Associates (project LEED consultant) at the February 19th, 2009 public hearing. Beyond some stormwater management features to be installed on the site (cisterns, raingardens, etc.) and certain water conservation measures, little else in the way of sustainable design resulting in energy, waste or greenhouse gas reductions is proposed, particularly in construction and operation of the supermarket. Both a February presentation to the Zoning Commission and statements on “environmental benefits” in the PUD submission allude to the incorporation of various sustainability features in the supermarket design but offer no concrete examples or reference to specifics. The District and the community need to understand the true extent and nature of the alleged environmental benefits of this project in order to evaluate the proposal.

The submitted LEED checklists fail in several respects to demonstrate meaningful environmental benefit. While the company has recently agreed to register the project for LEED-silver certification, the proposed green elements have very little to do with the actual building. Upon review of the checklists, it is evident that the majority of the LEED “points” are based on preexisting conditions – the site itself – rather than any attempt to achieve sustainability through design, materials and operations. Furthermore, their choice to apply the *LEED-ND* and *LEED for Homes* certification programs fails to address environmental concerns specific to a grocery store; the LEED for Retail pilot is probably the most relevant and appropriate standard, though it is not ideal in this instance. I suggest that programs like EPA’s *GreenChill* and *Energy Star* could be used to supplement LEED certification for aspects more directly related to the environmental impacts of a supermarket operation.

I perceive many missed opportunities for integrating sustainable design into the Giant plans. Following are suggested elements and low-impact techniques to consider:

1. *Heating & Cooling* (cooling loads contribute to ~50% of supermarkets’ annual electricity costs)

- Employ high-efficiency refrigeration/HVAC techniques: variable speed compressors, efficient fan motors, low energy glass doors, etc.
 - Efficient and environmentally friendly refrigeration technology: <http://www.appliancemagazine.com/editorial.php?article=1721>

- Minimize ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas emissions from HCFC refrigerants, coolants – reduce usage and leakage, switch to alternative refrigerants
 - Advanced refrigeration systems that reduce refrigerant charges and emissions: secondary-loop refrigeration, distributed systems (<http://www.epa.gov/greenchill/alttechnology.html>)
 - EPA's GreenChill Certification Program: The GreenChill Advanced Refrigeration Partnership is an EPA cooperative alliance with the supermarket industry and other stakeholders to promote advanced technologies, strategies, and practices that reduce refrigerant charges and emissions of ozone-depleting substances and greenhouse gases. The GreenChill program recognizes food retailers that have achieved an annual storewide refrigerant emissions rate of 15% of refrigerant charge or less. Working with EPA, GreenChill Partners: transition to non-ozone-depleting refrigerants; reduce refrigerant charges; reduce both ozone-depleting and greenhouse gas refrigerant emissions; and promote supermarkets' adoption of advanced refrigeration technologies.
- Install innovative heating/cooling systems:
 - Geothermal
 - Radiant
 - Cogeneration (combined heat and power)

2. *Energy Use & Efficiency*

- Purchase renewable and non-polluting energy sources for lighting, HVAC, and other systems, appliances and equipment, such as solar, wind, geothermal, biomass, etc.
- Install *onsite* energy generation systems for renewable low-impact energy production, e.g., solar photovoltaic panels
- Create a building design that maximizes energy performance
- Incorporate energy conservation measures and technologies, such as LED, fluorescent and fiber-optic lighting; skylights/daylighting; reflective roofs; energy management systems; and occupancy sensors
- EPA's Energy Star certification (the Energy Star Program has established energy benchmarks for grocery stores)

3. *Greenhouse Gas Emissions/Carbon Footprint*

- Focus on local sourcing of products, materials
- Use low emission, alternative fuel delivery vehicles (electric, hybrid, biofuel)
- Store location and site design – access to public transportation, bicycle storage, car sharing, pedestrian-friendly design
- Use alternative modes of shipping transport (train, barge, etc. vs. truck)

4. *Materials & Waste Reduction*

- Maximize use of recycled and/or compostable packaging, FSC-certified paper products
- Establish waste reduction programs (for food, construction, etc. waste) – cut down or eliminate landfill usage (and truck emissions) through reuse and recycling, conversion of waste to biofuels or other materials (feed, lubricants), and similar innovative measures
- Provide reusable shopping bags, phase out/ban plastic bags, provide plastic bag recycling
- Use sustainable/recycled construction materials
- Maximize existing building reuse (retain structural and non-structural elements in reconstruction projects)
- Use environmentally friendly cleaning products

5. *Stormwater Management*

- Install green roofs (with low-maintenance vegetation featuring water-storing succulents)
- Incorporate low-impact site and parking lot design techniques, such as
 - Permeable/semipermeable surfaces
 - Grading & vegetated infiltration strips to control runoff
 - Stormwater, wastewater filters
- Use native, water-efficient landscaping

6. *Goods & Merchandise*

- Feature organic foods
- Implement no/low pesticides criteria
- Focus on local products
- Purchase sustainable seafood only
- Offer environmentally responsible products (household electrical, composting, etc. goods)

7. *Indoor Environmental Quality*

- Implement indoor air quality standards
 - Ventilation, fresh air
 - Low-emitting, low-VOC, non-toxic materials
 - Air quality sensors
- Provide daylighting through windows, skylights

8. *Water Efficiency*

- Install water-saving taps/toilets/fixtures (low-flow, bio systems, etc.)
- Reduce water consumption
- Employ water reuse measures (rainwater harvesting, graywater, etc.) to offset demand

Aesthetics and Urban Design

In my opinion, the applicant has done a good job with the overall scale and massing of the project, but I do not understand why they cite the existing Giant building as the design precedent for the new supermarket. It baffles me why they choose to perpetuate the bland and boxy 1950's approach to commercial architecture rather than attempt to bring something more contemporary and expressive to the Wisconsin Avenue streetscape. I applaud their efforts to activate the sidewalk with storefronts and outdoor seating, but wish for some design reconsideration of the second floor façade and cornice. Similarly, I believe that the generic-looking commercial flatiron building at the corner of Wisconsin and Idaho is in a highly visible location, and should carry a higher degree of design consideration in its façade as a gesture of public responsibility.