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December 14, 2008

Anthony J. Hood, Chair
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th St NW, Suite 210
Washington DC 20001

Reference: Case 08-15

Dear Chairman Hood:

As a neighbor and customer of the Wisconsin Avenue Giant Food store for 36 years, I have shared with many other neighbors and customers the hope that an ample, modernized supermarket would take the place of the shabby, existing facility. We have waited for over six years for such an improvement, but the proposed development the Commission is to consider next year sadly disappoints our expectations.

If the PUD application were a product on the store's shelves, it would have to be removed for deceptive packaging. The scale and components of the Giant proposal are all too likely to diminish the residential quality of nearby Cleveland Park.

As designed, the new store is far too large to be a "neighborhood- friendly supermarket," the intent the company claims to be pursuing.¹ Its size equals that of a Giant store opened last September in LaPlata, Maryland to serve the 140,000 residents – twice the Ward 3 population – of Charles County.² Tripling the size of the existing supermarket can only be justified if the plan is to make it a magnet for shoppers from many other areas of the city.

Most of them would come by car along the already congested Wisconsin Avenue corridor. The Giant's own study projects increases of up to 15 percent in traffic on that artery and on adjacent side streets.³ The predictable impact on neighborhood parking – already difficult for residents -- is also alarming.

Even if the megamarket provides adequate spaces for the customers and vehicles it hopes to attract, the proposal includes no adequate, designated space for cars drawn to the new street-level restaurants, bars and fast-food outlets that could easily become tenants of a rezoned stretch of Wisconsin Avenue. Customers of four popular nearby restaurants and a winebar are already hard-pressed to find nighttime parking. Adding to their number without adding commensurate parking facilities only makes sense if the intent is to drive existing homeowners away.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO.

08-15

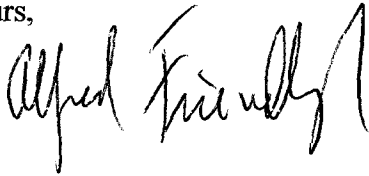
EXHIBIT NO.

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That concern is the central one I hope you and your fellow Commissioners will weigh. Can you justify overriding the intent of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan that the area for which the PUD is proposed be a neighborhood shopping district primarily serving residents within a one-mile radius? In the interest of maximizing the city's revenues from commercial property, might you not risk an unintended consequence: lowered revenues from deteriorating, nearby residential property values? An in-town version of a strip mall is still a strip mall, and the Giant's over-sized, under-equipped project is closer to a strip mall in conception than northwest Washington needs or deserves.

The applicants have indicated that they plan to build the store first and the north, apartment block later. Accordingly, I hope that you and your fellow Commissioners will treat the two elements of the PUD separately and refer the proposed rezoning requests to the Board of Zoning Adjustment for consideration under its terms of reference.

Yours,



¹ <http://www.wisconsinavegiant.com/FAQ.htm> ("Today, a user- and neighborhood-friendly supermarket is Giant's goal.")

² http://www.giantfood.com/about_us/news_media/press_release.htm?p=4b69d23c-c7eb-44ed-811e-92215dba2933

³ <http://www.wisconsinavegiant.com/FAQ.htm> ("Traffic on Wisconsin Avenue, Macomb Street, Newark Street, and Porter Street would increase by *only* [emphasis added] 2 to 15 percent during peak hours.")