

October 19, 2009

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

2009 OCT 19 PM 1:47

TO: DC Zoning Commission

FROM: Adam and Susan Rubinson, residents living on 43rd Street, NW, adjacent to the Safeway property (supported by neighbors similarly affected)

RE: Upper Wisconsin Safeway PUD, Case 09-14

My family and our neighbors live on 43rd Street, NW, in homes *immediately* adjacent to the Safeway at Wisconsin Avenue and 42nd Street, NW, and we wish to express our strong concerns about Safeway's plans for its redevelopment project.

We wish to stress that we are not against Safeway building a newer, larger, nicer store. We are not anti-development NIMBYs who are trying to prevent this project, just because it happens to be (almost literally) in our backyards. We believe in smart development along the Wisconsin Avenue corridor.

Context: Our homes. We live on the block of 43rd Street, NW that is a cul-de-sac just south of Ellicott Street, on the other side of the back fence from the Safeway parking lot. It is a quiet, residential neighborhood, surrounded by row-houses and single-family homes, the Georgetown Day School playing fields, and the Safeway parking lot. Our 3-story row houses on the east side of the block have *extremely* small backyards, and no rear alley separating us from the Safeway fence – the outdoor parking lot is right there behind us. Our backyard 2nd-story decks face the airspace above the Safeway fence. Currently, we see trees and sky, with lots of light all year around. In the winter, some of us can just barely see the distant sign of the Safeway façade through the trees. Though we are just one block from Wisconsin Avenue, in our backyards it is as quiet as living in an outer-suburb "Mayberry" neighborhood (except for the very occasional truck horn).

How the current plans will affect us. When we moved here we never imagined that Safeway would someday wish to build a multi-story megastore covering almost the entire footprint of its current property (built over the land that is currently zoned for residential purposes), and with an enormous rear wall, just 15' from our small back yards, and rising up to the very top of our three-story homes. That will be an enormous store, right next to and thoroughly dominating our homes. The Safeway property elevation is slightly higher than our yards on 43rd Street, so the planned wall will rise to about 40' relative to our homes. This wall will completely dominate our yards, and take away our sylvan views, our light, and our feeling of space. Instead, in our rear yards and decks, we would be staring at a very large wall. Noise is a potential concern, too. The air-conditioning units on the new Safeway roof, if too close to our homes, could be loud enough to destroy the tranquility of our backyards. Car noise from the new "indoor" garage (which will be open on two sides) could echo loudly. The store plans to be open 24 hours, and we have very young children whose bedroom windows face the Safeway.

The concerns we would like addressed. We are not asking to stop the development. On the contrary, *we are simply asking here for a few minor, highly reasonable changes to the Safeway plan, which will make an enormous difference in our continued enjoyment of our homes.*

The following are our most significant requests:

1. Move the planned rear wall further back from our homes than the currently planned 15'.

09-14
12

2. Lower the height of the planned rear wall further down in the back than is currently planned. This could be achieved by digging in the ground to a lower elevation, and by building the rear of the store to a lower height.
3. Provide assurances that enough trees will be planted in the back (on the other side of our rear fence), to provide ample camouflage. Some trees are in the current plans, but the Safeway rep had discussed the possibility of even more trees, planted close together, and mature enough so that they will provide adequate coverage on Day 1 (and also of an all-year evergreen variety that provides coverage in the winter months). We'd like the amount of tree coverage addressed clearly in the PUD.
4. Provide assurances that the AC units will be as far away as possible from our yards, and that the quietest units possible will be used. We are told that will be the case, but would like to see that memorialized.
5. Examine ways of reducing noise that will come from the garage.

We also request a construction management plan that will not involve construction in the evenings or early mornings. And some of our neighbors also have concerns about the store being open 24 hours. We expect that issues related to planned liquor sales would be addressed later.

We believe that our major concerns (especially distance and height of the wall) are highly reasonable under the circumstances, and can easily be addressed, preserving the goals of the project for Safeway and the community, while still preserving the enjoyment of our homes, and our property values. *With these reasonable concerns addressed, we will wholeheartedly welcome the improvements to the community that this new store will bring, and Safeway will maintain its good will with the neighborhood, as it has for decades. Thank you.*



10/19/09

Adam and Susan Robinson
4821 43rd Street, NW

cc: Office of Planning