

Statement of Emily S Andrews to ANC 3D Meeting (October 21)
BZA Application for TCC on Safeway Site

My name is Emily Andrews. My husband and I have lived in our Palisades home for nearly 25 years. I am a retired economist. During half my career I evaluated development projects for the World Bank and the Millennium Challenge Corporation. Recently, I helped our summer community in Colorado stop a project that would have brought no employment of income to our small town

With that in mind, I would like to thank you for this opportunity to express my thoughts and those of some my neighbors on Trammell Crow Company's (TCC) forthcoming BZA application for the former Safeway site zoned R-1-B.

I am in opposition to rezoning for the following reasons.

The crux of the rezoning argument for the Palisades community rests on the promise that TCC will provide a grocery store if and only if the rezoning goes through. This is completely disingenuous as TCC could easily provide a grocery store whether or not rezoning is approved. Thus, TCC's position essentially reflects an implicit bribe to the neighborhood to support rezoning. However, this is a bribe that is important to some, but not all, Palisades residents.

I would like to remind those in favor of this small grocery store is that evidence from a retail specialist suggests that "few-to-no grocery businesses" in our market have a proven track record and capacity to operate in a 5,000 square foot space. Furthermore, the profit margins in the grocery industry are among the lowest of all retail categories averaging from 1% to 3% per year. This was posted on our list serve on October 18 as an attachment by Spence Spencer. Despite the absence of a market survey by TCC, I suspect that a grocery store in this location has little to no chance of survival.

Further, as my neighbors have pointed out, there are many food stores in North-West DC that are easily reached by major thoroughfares. For example, the Sangamore Safeway is 10 minutes away from our house, does not interfere with residential streets, has plenty of parking and is better than our old Safeway ever was in terms of ambiance and size.

But outside of the retail grocery store issues, there are serious considerations with regard to traffic and neighborhood safety that have not been sufficiently discussed or even considered. For example, many neighbors have found that there still are competing and confusing studies on parking for residents and staff in the proposed Continuing Care Residential Community (CCRC). Furthermore, the status of parking sufficiency continues to be a moving target with each change in building plan. The counts of assisted living and independent living units have also been moving targets that have interacted with changes in parking space provided at both the retail and residential level.

Also, there are other significant issues related to parking, traffic and traffic safety that remain unanswered. TCC has tried to respond to some of them, but their responses are again a moving target without adequate neighborhood review. For example, TCC has very recently indicated they are interested in dealing with the following issues (i) denying residential parking permits to CCRC residents; (ii) safety of residents and visitors on V Street (through support for a variety of traffic restrictions) and (iii) other suggestions for parking control. Yet these are as yet just suggestions and have not been subject to discussion by the PCA membership.

One of the reasons for my recent NO vote on the TCC MOA was the fact that I was asked to vote for a moving target that would rest on an assumption of a lot of good faith in TCC. This I could not do given past history. You can read my remarks in the Palisades list serve dated October 14. Another example can be found in my reading of the most recent BZA Application. In that TCC states "There is no access to the building (in the R-1-B area) from V Street and community outdoor space is sited along the commercial corridor of MacArthur Boulevard." This is quite disingenuous as the MOA which was up for the PCA vote stated that "Developer will construct, maintain, and operate a fifteen (15) space parking lot with a curb cut off of V Street, if approved by the District of Columbia."

Furthermore, we have no clear idea of where vehicles making deliveries to the proposed grocery store and/or the CCRC will have entry and exit or at what times. And there has been no reliable study to date to determine if this new V Street curb cut will or will not "become objectionable to neighboring properties because of noise, traffic, or other objectionable conditions," as required by the BZA.

A number of other related safety issues have been raised by the community and have not been substantively addressed except for a laundry list of suggestions, some of which were only offered as 'for instances' by neighbors and not concrete suggestions representing best practice. For example, there must be safety for neighborhood children on all sides of the development; safety for the elderly and particularly safety for those in memory care who may roam outside the building. Additionally, we have seen no assurances to date that project entrances are sufficient to ensure that the DC Fire Department can come to the aid of CCRC residents and staff should evacuation need to take place. The evacuation of those in memory care would be much more difficult than in an apartment building per se, as many could not easily find fire exits on their own and safety strategies would require considerably greater planning.

In view of these outstanding questions and issues, I regret to say that I must continue to object to the rezoning of the R-1-B property on the former Safeway site.

Thank you for your attention.

October 2020 PCA Vote for Safeway Site Rezoning

I have given considerable thought to the upcoming PCA vote (online Oct. 13-16) on the Trammell Crow Company's (TCC) Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for rezoning the Safeway site. Should the current MOA be approved by PCA membership and by the DC ANC 3D, it would lend support to TCC's Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) rezoning proposal. The BZA hearing is to be held on November 4th and will not be delayed.

As a PCA member, I will vote NO for the following reasons:

The current MOA is provisional and is in the process of being updated. Consequently, to vote YES, in favor of the proposal, would lend support to a proposal that may be changed substantially and will not reflect the final MOA presented by TCC to the BZA.

Unfortunately, provisional elements are substantial.

1. For example, (a) the plan for a small grocery store is still in limbo; (b) there is no operating plan for the community parking lot; (c) no traffic mitigation plans or pedestrian safety plans for the community are specified; (d) there is no final decision on how residential permit parking would be handled; (e) no employee parking plan is proposed; (f) there is no protection for current community parking in streets contingent to the new development; and (g) the construction management plan is incomplete.
2. In the past, numerous promises were never implemented: (a) a valet parking plan was abandoned; (b) the initial TCC plan consisted of a community of many independent living units – now there are only ten; and (c) community benefits such a café tables and a new neighborhood kiosk apparently have been swept away. These are only a few of many unexpected changes in TCC's plans. A lack of consistency and timely prior community notification suggests that key elements of the current MOA are likely to be changed as well.

In sum, my trust in TCC has been eroded by incomplete planning and unanticipated shifts in project structure. Since there will not be time for the neighborhood to evaluate the final document, I cannot in good conscience vote in favor of this preliminary MOA. Perhaps others will share my view.