

7 JUL 1988

Woodley Park Resident Concerns

Testimony of  
Ellen Burton

Z.C. Case No. 86-26

District Building  
July 7, 1988

ZONING COMMISSION  
District of Columbia

Case...86-26.

Exhibit...532.

I am a resident of Square 2204 of Woodley Park, in Ward 1. The purpose of my testimony is to summarize concerns of Woodley Park residents on the matters before this commission in Z.C. Case No. 86-26.

Woodley Park residents commend the commission's actions to date to establish a Woodley Park Commercial Overlay Zone and to address particular issues concerning Square 2204. We strongly urge the commission to respond further to resident concerns by adopting the following proposals of the Woodley Park Community Association (WPCA):

- to prohibit Planned Unit Developments in the proposed Woodley Park Overlay squares 2202, 2203 and 2204;
- to limit heights to 40 feet in all three squares;
- to limit density to 60 percent in all three squares. This would be roughly equivalent to 2.0 FAR and would be consistent with what this commission is considering for Cleveland Park and has approved in similar zoning actions in northwest Washington;
- to assure that underground commercial space is included in FAR calculations;
- to limit density of restaurants and bars and to prohibit fast food, hotel, movie theatre and certain other uses throughout the overlay zone;
- to strengthen the burden of proof requirements for exceptions to the Woodley Park Overlay Zone;
- to require that new commercial developments and redevelopments provide 20-foot set-backs from the alley in Square 2204 and from the public walkway on Connecticut Avenue in Square 2202; and
- to require that the 20-foot set-back from the alley in Square 2204 include a 10-foot unencumbered vehicle pullover for public use.

In my personal view as a resident of Square 2204 and in the view of several of my neighbors in that square, extreme alley congestion in Square 2204 also calls for modification of the prohibition that I understand this commission has put on curb-cuts from Connecticut Avenue. Alley congestion is so extreme that access to automobile parking facilities at major developments or redevelopments in Square 2204, including the project under construction at 2631-2641 Connecticut Avenue, should be required to be through limited curb-cuts to Connecticut Avenue. Prohibitions should be placed on drive-throughs throughout the Woodley Park Overlay zone, however.

Copies of photos of typical conditions in the alley in Square 2204 appear at the end of this testimony.

Woodley Park residents are concerned:

- about preservation of the neighborhood and its quality of life, including businesses that serve the local neighborhood; and
- about alley congestion, excess noise and trash, traffic density on residential streets, and about illegal and unsafe parking in residential areas.

Woodley Park residents support an economically vital, locally focused commercial area as a positive aspect of the quality of life in Woodley Park and as a fair and full contributor to the economy of the District. This commission has before it the opportunity to complete actions to assure that Woodley Park remains a reasonably stable mix of small scale retail establishments serving the local community and the many visitors to the National Zoo and to the Shoreham and Sheraton hotels. Under appropriate commission action, Woodley Park may remain a low density commercial and local neighborhood commercial center, while continuing to support the substantial blue collar employment and tax base of the two very large neighboring hotels.

Development that is in scale with in-place commercial structures is essential if the two- to four- story residential townhouses of the neighborhood, which are downhill from Connecticut Avenue, are not to be overwhelmed and literally overshadowed by commercial buildings on Connecticut Avenue. This will be assured by a prohibition on PUDs and establishment of a 40 foot height limit for all three Woodley Park Overlay squares.

When I testified in this proceeding on January 25, I discussed the serious problems that increased density of development in the proposed Woodley Park Overlay would pose for residents of the neighborhood and, in particular, how the substandard and very poorly maintained 10- to 15-foot wide alley in Square 2204 limited commercial development in that square to current density and use patterns.

I discussed how inadequately controlled growth anywhere in the proposed Woodley Park overlay would result in increased problems with noise, trash, traffic and safety. I mentioned that extreme noise from restaurants had resulted in a neighborhood petition to the District and that trash pickups from commercial establishments routinely result in debris laden alleys. I discussed how increased density of use would increase traffic circling in residential areas in search of parking, illegal parking that limits access to emergency vehicles and blocks curb cuts for the handicapped, and decreased pedestrian safety for the many Woodley Park metro stop users from the neighborhood, Adams-Morgan and elsewhere.

I can assure the commission that the situation has not improved since January. Construction under way at the Connecticut Avenue site is being handled with as much sensitivity to the community as seems possible given the constraints of the site, but dump trucks have nevertheless blocked the alley at times during excavation of the foundation. A water main break on the second day of work flooded neighboring residential parking lots with mud and water. Similar neighborhood disturbances can be expected at any additional development sites.

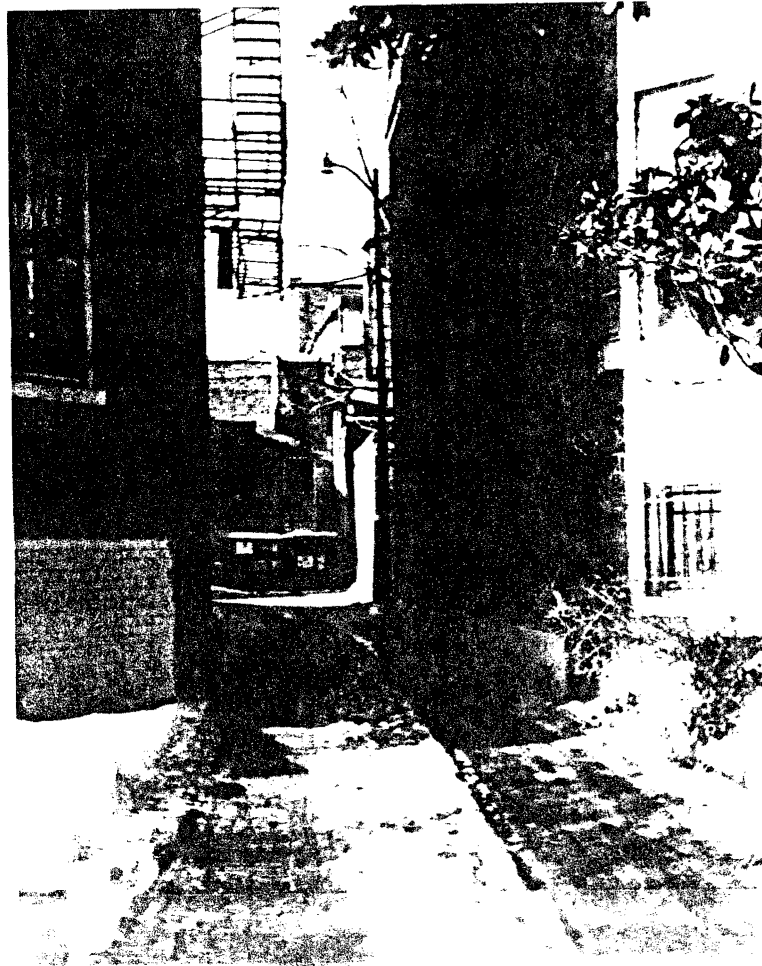
Alley congestion and trash problems in Square 2204 have worsened. A new restaurant on this block has inadequate trash receptacles and disposes of grease in open barrels so that the alley often smells of rancid grease. Trash and delivery trucks continue to create grid-lock. On June 22, for example, on a day when the temperature reached 101 degrees, a commercial trash truck broke down in the alley entrance and blocked traffic for a large part of the morning. My back fence was damaged by a food delivery truck turning around on my property to exit the alley during this time.

Adoption of the Woodley Park Commercial Overlay with the additions listed at the beginning of my testimony will respond to resident concerns about the neighborhood effects of additional density and inappropriate development. Timely and appropriate commission action will establish feasible and appropriate ground rules for commercial development and for the preservation and improvement of Woodley Park as a place to live, visit and work.

Thank you for your consideration of resident concerns in this important action.

CONDITIONS IN THE ALLEY IN SQUARE 2004

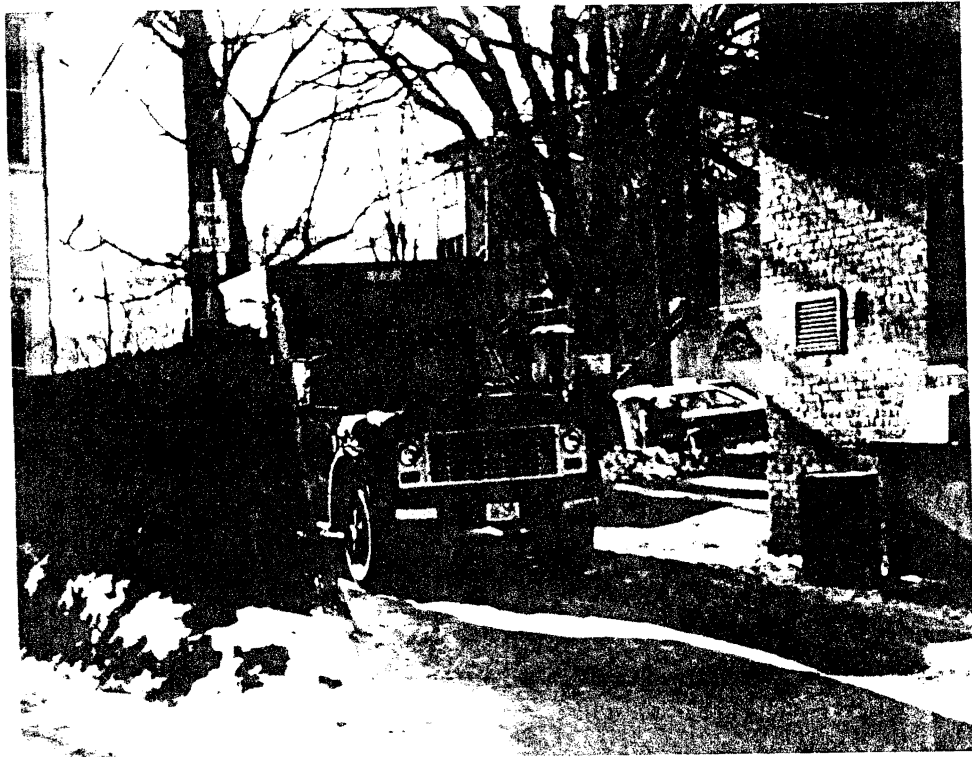
The alley is approximately 10 feet wide at its narrower entrance:



It takes 90-degree turn near this small entrance:



Otherwise, the alley is 15 feet wide throughout, including at its wider entrance. As a result of this configuration, most commercial trash and delivery trucks back up the alley:



There is extreme wear and tear at the larger entrance:





There is persistent congestion in the alley. Current levels of traffic congestion result in illegal parking on residential and commercial property and in delays in traffic flow or access to parking spaces of 20 minutes or more:



Also, property such as this residential fence is damaged when trucks try to turn around despite the alley's size limitations:

