



October 25, 2017

City of Takoma Park, Maryland  
Suzanne R. Ludlow, City Manager  
7500 Maple Avenue  
Takoma Park, MD 20912

Dear Ms. Ludlow,

Thank you for your letter, dated October 18<sup>th</sup>. We are providing these preliminary responses in order to give you as much information as we can before the Council hearing scheduled for tonight. As you know, your questions required detailed operational answers and some require further research, and I anticipate supplementing this letter after we finish analyzing the issues raised. In the meantime, please accept the information that we now can provide.

**Delivery Schedules**

Our receiving hours are from 5:30 am to 2:00 pm, Monday through Sunday. In response to your inquiry regarding whether or not we can schedule deliveries of our smaller trucks, the short answer is no. It's industry practice to have a window of time during which to receive deliveries. We cannot prescribe when a specific local vendor can deliver at a specific time. Each vendor has many factors that dictate each day how they design their delivery route (e.g., the type and source of the products being delivered, the various delivery locations each vendor must accommodate, traffic patterns, etc.). We are limited to specifying general receiving hours. We also need food to be as fresh as possible and we want it available as early as possible for our shoppers in any given day. For example, bread is delivered daily, as it should be.

Last week our two largest deliveries (the 18-wheelers) arrived between 5:30 am and 8:00 am and their arrival and unloading time overlapped twice. This illustrates our consistent concern that the lay-by doesn't address this reality. Our largest supplier, UNFI, takes up to an hour to unload. This includes unloading pallets and bringing them into the store, and then (often) redistributing the remaining load inside the truck. Last week one day five smaller deliveries arrived between 5:30 am and 8:00 am, with four and three smaller deliveries during those hours on other days of the week.

The total number of deliveries between October 10/16/2017/ and October 10/22/2017/, broken down by the days of the week was:

Monday = 18	Tuesday = 13
Wednesday = 4	Thursday = 20

Friday = 21  
Sunday = 5

Saturday = 10

### **Location of Deliveries**

The Co-op's parking lot and old loading dock that parallel Sycamore and Columbia Avenues are alongside single-family residential neighborhoods. In our effort to be a good long-term neighbor, we don't consider those two sides of the property to be viable locations for receiving our deliveries, especially given the very early morning hours that many of our deliveries arrive. Of note is the noise associated with unloading products such as the sound of the truck's engine and compressor as well as the sound of the workers moving the goods.

We are open to the idea of an elevator on the west side of our building to access the Co-op's lower level for shoppers (with and without a shopping cart), including possible access from the store to the parking garage. We have not done any design work on this concept because it remains a hypothetical possibility until NDC's development plans are more certain.

### **Trash/Recycling Collection**

Our trash and recycling contracts are with Waste Management of Maryland, and between the two services WM trucks serve our property every day except Sunday. We have an 8 yard dumpster for trash (emptied Tuesdays and Fridays), and an 8 yard and a 2 yard dumpster for recycling (emptied Monday through Saturday). We do not control WM's trash or recycling pickup schedule. Some pickup is very early in the morning (as early as 5:00 am), and others are mid-day. In our view, having the storage and pick-up of those dumpsters in lots that confront the adjoining single-family homes would be unsightly and (given the number of pickups) disruptive to our neighbors.

The WM trucks are standard commercially-sized front loaders that require access of 15' in width and 25' in height. I don't believe the garage can accommodate underground trash pickup, as they would require a minimum underground parking garage ceiling height of 25 feet. I understand based on my research that this garage design is rare. If NDC can accommodate this design in its project we would welcome the opportunity to explore this option with it.

Barring design changes in the NDC project, at this time, we see the option for receiving goods and having trash removed on the west side of our building.

### **Parking**

The 25 spaces that we determined would be needed is based on an industry standard of grocery stores requiring 4 to 7 spaces per 1000 square feet of retail space. We have 5,500

square feet, which would put the range from 22 to 39. Too little parking is a very real and significant problem for a grocery store. In our perfect world we would want 39 spaces, but are trying to acknowledge site constraints. With NDC's acquisition of the Auto Clinic site, we are hopeful additional spaces might be possible.

Factoring the seventeen spaces on the Sycamore lot, the Co-op requests a minimum of 20 dedicated spaces. I imagine we could do a combination of dedicated spaces and use some kind of voucher, validation or ticketing system for additional spaces. Many urban grocery stores provide parking ticket validation for their customers in adjacent garages for a fixed period of time while shopping. We are currently conducting a shopper's survey to get more specific information for our parking needs.

At this time our business model does not include a delivery service. At some point in the future we may expand to include an online shopping service, but that is not in the foreseeable future nor can we anticipate how it would change parking requirements. (For example, that type of service may be useful to people who don't now shop in the store but would be interested in a home delivery service.)

#### **Possible Co-op Site Changes**

We are thrilled to have the capital improvements grant from the State of Maryland, and there are grant restrictions that constrain changes to our building because the grant program is intended to restore old buildings and stay true to their design heritage. Much of the grant work is structural restoration and upgrade with a focus on ADA compliance.

I agree we need a collaborative approach to find the right design. I regret that we cannot be more specific at this time with some of our responses, but the NDC plan continues to change and significant elements remain unclear. This lack of detail hampers our ability to fully respond at this time. I hope the information currently provided is helpful to you and City officials in further evaluating the NDC proposal, and we look forward to working with you as well.

Sincerely,



Martha Whitman

Interim General Manager

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