

PROPOSED CLOSING OF A PORTION OF WISCONSIN AVENUE IN SQUARE 1944

Between Woodley Road and Massachusetts Avenue, NW,
Washington, D.C.
(S.O. 05-2378)

Delegated Action of the Executive Director

May 27, 2005

Pursuant to delegations of authority adopted by the Commission on October 3, 1996, I comment favorably that the proposed closing of a portion of Wisconsin Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C., as shown on NCPC Map File No. 72.00(44.40)41611 (S.O. 05-2378), would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital, and would not have any adverse impact on the federal interest.

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The District of Columbia's Office of the Surveyor has submitted a proposal to close a portion of Wisconsin Avenue, NW in Square 1944. The proposal would affect the portion of the Wisconsin Avenue right-of-way that borders the west side of the National Cathedral. The portion that would be closed is approximately 11 feet wide and extends southward approximately 750 feet from Woodley Road. And easement, over the portion of Wisconsin Avenue to be closed, would be conveyed to the District of Columbia in order to maintain the Wisconsin Avenue 120-foot right-of-way. It is part of an existing tour bus lay by that parallels Wisconsin Avenue. The proposal is being initiated to provide for the construction of two underground garages, one for buses and one for cars. The proposal would provide a four-level car garage accommodating 427 cars located below the cathedral's north lawn. The primary entrance and exit would be off Wisconsin Avenue and a secondary entrance would be from Woodley Road. The Wisconsin Avenue entrance would replace the parking lot on the south side of Hearst Hall, with the ramp entrance located within a new landscaped circular drive inspired by the 1924 Olmsted landscape plan for this area. The bus garage would be located below the existing bus lay-by lane parallel to Wisconsin Avenue and would include parking for 18 tour buses as well as security personnel offices and visitor toilet facilities. As currently exists, buses would turn in from north-bound Wisconsin Avenue whereupon the road would ramp down below grade. The overall proposal would result in the removal of surface parking lots and roads, prohibition of cars and buses from immediately surrounding the building, and additional landscaping would provide a more appropriate and dignified setting for the cathedral and its supporting institutions. The District of Columbia Department of Transportation has been coordinating with the Cathedral Foundation in the development of this project and strongly supports its implementation. The Advisory

Neighborhood Commission also supports the proposal in that it would mitigate the current traffic congestion in this area as a result of high tourist visitation.

There would be no adverse impact on any federal interest, the 120-foot right-of-way of Wisconsin Avenue would be retained, and the action would not be inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan for the National Capital. The proposal was reviewed and coordinated by the Coordinating Committee at its May 11, 2005 meeting. The staff of the District of Columbia's Historic Preservation Review Board is recommending approval of the proposed underground garage and improvements to the grounds of the National Cathedral.

Patricia E. Gallagher, AICP
Executive Director