

## **FRIENDSHIP SHOPPING CENTER**

**3306-36, 3400-30 Wisconsin Avenue, N. W.**

The Friendship Shopping Center (1952-53) is qualified for landmark designation under the provisions of D.C. Law 2-144, possessing qualities of distinction under criteria a (2), a (3), and a (4) as well as meeting criterion a (6) (b).

### **a (2) : significant to the economic history of Washington**

The primary tenant, Giant Food Company, was the pioneer in introducing the supermarket concept to the Washington metropolitan area in the mid 1930s and remained the local industry leader through at least the 1950s.

The supermarket represented one of the most revolutionary changes in retail distribution in the 20th century, based on selling a large quantity and variety of quality goods at reasonable prices in a non-hierarchical, non-directional setting whereby customers could freely select goods for themselves in any order and for any length of time, paying at one place and only after completing all selections. This approach differed significantly from previous sales methods and had a profound effect on virtually all forms of retail distribution during the second half of the 20th century.

### **a (3) : significant as an example of a building type, the shopping center**

The Friendship Shopping Center is one of the two largest of its kind erected in the Washington, a city that was a national leader in the development of the type in the 1930s and 1940s. Owing to topography and location, it is unique in having a street front orientation, with car lots at the rear rather than the front. It is also unusual in having offices as a major component of the design.

The complex is also among the first in the city and region where a supermarket and a large variety store served as the anchor tenants. Most supermarket and variety store chains resisted locating in shopping centers until the mid 1950s.

The complex is also significant as an example of avant-garde modernism in a popular vein from the postwar era --embodying forms of expression that exemplified the pursuit of newness by a generation whose notions of modernity were deeply affected by the technical and logistical innovations of World War II. The architect, David Baker, studied under two of the foremost modernists of the era: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe at the Illinois Institute of Technology and Walter Gropius at Harvard's Graduate School of Design.

**a (4) : significant as a notable example of a prominent real estate developer**

The complex was created by Garfield Kass, locally a leading developer of commercial properties from the 1920s through the mid 1950s. Kass was probably the leading developer of chain stores, store blocks, and movie theaters in outlying business sections of the city during the 1920s and 1930s .

Kass was also the foremost developer of neighborhood shopping centers in the region prior to World War II. After the war, Friendship Shopping Center was an even more ambitious undertaking, where he located his offices. His career was capped by 7 Corners near Falls Church, Virginia, the first true regional shopping center in the metropolitan area, one of the largest shopping centers South of New York when it opened in 1956, and one of the first in the country to realize a plan with two major department stores as anchors.

Besides 7 Corners, Kass's most innovative works include Friendship Shopping Center and Chevy Chase Park and Shop (1938) on Connecticut Avenue, which included a skating rink and broadcasting studios. No developer of his generation in the region undertook more substantial experiments at a formative stage of the shopping center's evolution.

**a (6) (b) possesses sufficient integrity**

Very little change has occurred to the fabric of the complex, with the exception of the second-floor windows on the north building.

Friendship Shopping Center represents one of the most intact example of retail development of the postwar era to remain in the metropolitan area. Almost all other example, even those of lesser note, have experienced considerable alteration or demolition. The complex is indeed now an extremely rare survival of its type and era.

**Other issues:**

Although this is a hotly contested case, Giant's current plans do not call for demolition of the existing building, but rather remodelling it. It is the applicant's contention that the desired interior expansion and reconfiguration can be accomplished while keeping the salient historic features of the exterior. Landmarking, in other words, will in no way prevent Giant from introducing significant improvements to the facility.

The landmark nomination was filed by the Cleveland Park Citizens Association and has the strong endorsement of the ANC and the Cleveland Park Historical Society. While not everyone in Cleveland Park or nearby neighborhoods may agree and many are misinformed, this initiative has solid community backing .