

Northwest sites tell the story of grocery trends

By **BRADY HOLT**
Current Staff Writer

In 1987, Safeway closed its longtime Cleveland Park grocery store at 3427 Connecticut Ave. NW.

Known informally as the “Soviet Safeway” for its limited selection, the 7,000-square-foot shop reflected an earlier era for the chain. Customers were encouraged to instead go to the Van Ness location, 4310 Connecticut, which The Washington Post described at the time as “a food store aglow with newness and neon.”

But even that location quickly

fell behind the times, and within a decade, it too had shut down.

“What you’re seeing is simply an evolution of the business to meet customer needs, customer demands,” Safeway spokesperson Craig Muckle said in an interview with The Current. Today’s dominant



Brian Kapur/The Current
The Safeway at 1855 Wisconsin Ave. is the latest of the chain’s stores to occupy the same site.

D.C. grocery chains — Safeway and Giant — have increasingly moved to add selection and amenities to their stores, regularly requiring new facilities to match their changing needs.

In many cases, particularly in high-demand areas, the old build-

ings have been torn down to allow more intensive use of the space. For instance, Safeway replaced its 1930s-era grocery at 2011 S St. NW with a larger adjacent space in the 1970s, before closing that location in 2010. And the current Georgetown Safeway is the fourth building the chain has used in the area of 1855 Wisconsin Ave. NW.

Safeway opened its first grocery at 1855 Wisconsin six decades ago — replacing a smaller Safeway next door — as part of a blitz of 19 new stores across the region averaging 17,000 square feet, The Washington Post reported in 1954. This was a big jump from the chain’s 6,000-square-foot average of groceries built before 1950, according to the Post.

Safeway demolished that 1955 building in Georgetown just over two decades later to double the size of its store there and to add a larger parking lot. Then in 2009, it nearly doubled its facility again, to a whopping 71,000-square-foot building that covered the old parking lot

and added an underground garage.

Despite all the redevelopment, Northwest still remains scattered with former Giants and Safeways, as other establishments found ways to use the buildings the big chains outgrew. A number of grocery stores with smaller or more specialized selections occupy some of those old spaces, including Brookville Super Market at 3427 Connecticut. The space at 4310 Connecticut now houses a Gold’s Gym. Several Giant and Safeway buildings have been reoccupied by CVS Pharmacy. There are also offices, restaurants, a thrift store, medical practices and even a funeral home operating out of former Northwest supermarkets.

David Gwynn, who runs the supermarket history website grocceteria.com, said in an interview that grocery stores constructed through the 1950s have proved the best suited for other uses. Supermarkets of that era were generally sturdily built low-rises that were more easily adaptable than the bigger stores constructed later. Suburban-style stores with big parking lots — such as the Petworth Safeway, 3830 Georgia Ave. NW, and Cleveland Park Giant, 3336 Wisconsin Ave. NW — have been particularly ripe for redevelopment. “The land became too valuable to have old, dumpy, outmoded stores on them,” Gwynn said.

Looking back even further, before World War II, the D.C. grocery scene primarily occupied ordinary small storefronts and specialized in particular goods. Safeway and its local predecessor, Sanitary, focused on dry and canned items, Gwynn said.

“If you can imagine, they’re actually more common than Starbucks stores are now,” he said.



Above: Brian Kapur/The Current
Left: From the Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division



Now a CVS, as shown above, the building at 4555 Wisconsin Ave. NW previously housed a Giant Food store, as shown in this 1942 photo by Marjory Collins now in the Library of Congress’ archives.

cities, including the District. Gwynn said Safeway, Sanitary and Piggly Wiggly (locally run by Sanitary) had a combined 261 stores in Washington in 1935. Consolidation followed soon after, with Safeway dropping to 60 D.C. stores in the 1970s, 30 by 1980 and 12 today. Giant has also closed stores over the years and now has seven D.C. locations.

Miller, the Giant spokesperson, said the latest supermarkets must be big enough to fit a larger selection — an average of 40,000 different items per store — and auxiliaries like pharmacies, coffee shops, prepared food areas and even bars. “It’s not where customers come and do their shopping and get out quickly — they come to the store as a destination,” he said.

Muckle, meanwhile, said Safeway is making its D.C. stores better reflect the advantages of urban locations. The company for a time built suburban-style stores in the District that were about 40,000 square feet and had large parking lots, such as the Georgetown store built in the late 1970s, he said. The

See **Groceries**/Page CG10

“They were everywhere, sometimes just one or two blocks away from each other.”

Even Giant Food, named for its above-average size, focused primarily on nonperishable items when it opened a 15,000-square-foot store (since demolished) at Georgia Avenue and Park Road NW in 1936, according to company spokesperson Jamie Miller.

In the 1930s, though, technology was already starting to change the face of the D.C. grocery scene, according to Gwynn. More customers had refrigerators, so they could stock up on perishable food for multiple days, and they had cars that let them travel to one larger store without relying on corner markets. The Great Depression further tipped many shoppers’ scales in favor of a supermarket’s cost savings over a corner store’s convenience, he said.

Grocceteria.com maintains a spreadsheet of chains’ store locations over the years in a number of

D.C. ranks No. 1 for green roofs

Current Staff Report

The organization Green Roofs for Healthy Cities has named the Washington region No. 1 in North America for its use of plantings atop buildings.

The “2014 Annual Green Roof Industry Survey” says the D.C. area gained over 1.2 million square feet of green roofs last year. Toronto came in second, with 775,216 square feet, followed by Philadelphia and then Chicago, according to a news release from the D.C. Department of Energy & Environment.

The agency offers incentives to D.C. building owners who install green roofs voluntarily, providing \$10 to \$15 per square foot.

“Green roofs retain rainfall, which reduces combined sewer overflows and prevents stormwater

runoff from carrying pollution and sediment to streams and other waterways,” the release states.

“Vegetation dramatically reduces the temperature of the roof and surrounding area [which] reduces the urban heat island effect and helps cool the District.” For instance, the green roof on the American Society of Landscape Architects building downtown can be 32 degrees cooler than neighboring black roofs. The roofs also provide financial benefit.

Department director Tommy Wells points to recently adopted stormwater regulations and a stormwater retention credit-trading program as part of the city’s broad emphasis on sustainability.

The survey takes into account such factors as square footage, building type and green roof type for each project.

Sibley Memorial Hospital is ranked in the **top 10 percent of hospitals nationwide for hip and knee replacement.**

Learn more at **Sibley.org** or call **202-660-MOVE** (202-660-6683)



SIBLEY MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
JOHNS HOPKINS MEDICINE

Source: U.S. News & World Report Best Hospitals for Common Care Ratings

Sibley Memorial Hospital
5255 Loughboro Road, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20016

City Dogs now offers Full Service Grooming!

Bath, Haircut, Deshedding, and more



www.city-dogs.com

Tel. 202-234-9247 • info@city-dogs.com • 1832 18th street nw



GROCERIES: History of change has left sites suitable for other uses

From Page CG8

chain's newer supermarkets in the District are more tailored to their locations, generally part of mixed-use projects.

"Now what we're seeing is more of an urban model, ... stores that are facing the street, directly on the street, allowing them to have engagement with the street, don't make people rely on their cars so much," said Muckle. "Stores that we've built in recent years whether it's Petworth, City Vista, Southwest — all of those are more of that model that are maybe near a Metro ... that really is more environmentally friendly. You're putting more density in a confined area."

Gwynn said consolidation yields efficiencies for the companies at least as much as it benefits customers. "It's a lot easier to manage five 50,000-square-foot stores than 10 20,000-square-foot stores," he said.

But even when customers lament the loss of their smaller neighborhood groceries, Gwynn acknowledged that it's difficult to

meet expectations for selection and consistent inventory in a compacted space. "You'll hear them say they'd rather shop in a smaller store, but at the same time they want the smaller store to have every item they'd buy at the bigger store," said Gwynn.

The contraction period was also more pronounced in D.C. than in some other cities because of its population loss and high amounts of poverty, he added; indeed, searching the addresses of supermarkets in a Washington Post database illustrates the District's decline, with dozens of articles about the stores being robbed.

Muckle said Safeway never likes closing one of its locations, but that the switch to fewer, bigger stores has been the best path forward.

"Times change — people had less time, and there was more of a desire for one-stop shopping, and we tried to move with those times," he said. "If you don't adjust for what best serves the customer, you'll be left behind."

Today's uses for some of Northwest's former chain grocery locations, identified by grocereria.com:

- 1231 11th St. NW: Capitol Supermarket (formerly Safeway)
- 4411 14th St. NW: Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority (formerly Safeway)
- 5427 14th St. NW: Children's Medical Care Center and a contract compliance firm (formerly Safeway)
- 1619 17th St. NW: McDonald's (formerly Safeway)
- 1864 Columbia Road NW: Metro K Supermarket (formerly Safeway)
- 3412 Connecticut Ave. NW: Currently vacant, but recent occupants have included the Uptown Tap House and Ireland's Four Fields (formerly Giant Food)
- 3427 Connecticut Ave. NW: Brookville Super Market (formerly Safeway)
- 4310 Connecticut Ave. NW: Gold's Gym (formerly Safeway)
- 5013 Connecticut Ave. NW: CVS Pharmacy (formerly Safeway)
- 5227 Georgia Ave. NW: CVS Pharmacy (formerly Safeway)
- 6101 Georgia Ave. NW: Georgia Avenue Thrift Store Center (formerly Safeway)
- 6428 Georgia Ave. NW: Dental Dreams (formerly A&P)
- 124 Kennedy St. NW: CVS Pharmacy (formerly Giant Food)
- 716 Kennedy St. NW: Johnson & Jenkins Funeral Home (formerly Safeway)
- 3255 M St. NW: Chipotle (formerly Safeway)
- 4851 Massachusetts Ave. NW: CVS Pharmacy (formerly Giant Food)
- 2001 S St. NW: Glen's Garden Market (formerly Safeway)
- 2011 S St. NW: Thaiphoon (formerly Safeway)
- 4555 Wisconsin Ave. NW: CVS Pharmacy (formerly Giant Food)



Brian Kapur/The Current

Now a Gold's Gym, the space at 4310 Connecticut Ave. NW was formerly a Safeway.

FARMING

From Page CG6

dents, the university offers a sustainable urban agriculture certificate program open to its students as well as the general public. The program offers two tracks: urban agriculture techniques, and business principles in urban agriculture. It costs \$200 for the certificate or \$60 per class. Program officials have noticed a recent influx of professionals making a mid- to late-career change, Malone noted.

UDC's master gardener program, a national initiative that's also part of the school's land-grant mission, provides intensive training to residents in horticulture and environmental stewardship, and its graduates then volunteer in the community to share information and best practices and participate in community gardening programs. Members also volunteer at the research farm and at UDC's new rooftop garden on its main campus.

The research farm also plays host to hundreds of D.C. public school students each summer who participate in a youth in urban agriculture program as well as Agroecology Day each fall.

"Many young folks who come here have never been to a farm before — they've never tasted a carrot pulled right out of the ground or a freshly picked tomato," Axum said. "One of our major accomplishments is connecting young people to the food system and planting a seed to help them understand farming and that if you eat, you're part of the agricultural food system."

On Oct. 23, UDC will hold its second annual Urban Agriculture Symposium on its main campus, which is open to the public and will include talks from food policy leaders as well as cooking demonstrations from celebrity chefs.

The school's reputation for urban agriculture innovation has spread far beyond the greater Washington area. In recent weeks, a group from the Delaware Tribe of Indians in Oklahoma flew out to visit the farm to learn more about the techniques being used, and two ministers from Aruba also visited because their country imports about 90 percent of its food and wants to change that. Officials from Europe and Africa have also shown interest in the work the university is doing, Malone said.

"When you look at it from a larger perspective, you see how food security is important everywhere, not just in D.C.," Malone added. "We think of ourselves as the little engine that could. ... Anyone in the area may know of UDC for other things but not for urban agriculture, and it's nice to be able to use the land-grant programming to our advantage to help chart a new positive course for UDC that benefits everyone."

For more information about UDC's urban agriculture programs, go to udc.edu/causes.

At Your Service

FLOOR SERVICES

Chevy Chase Floor Waxing Service

POLISHING, BUFFING, WAXING, CLEANING,
ALL TYPES OF FLOORS, PASTE WAX SERVICE
FOR WOOD FLOORS. WORKING OWNERS ASSURES
QUALITY. OVER 30 YEARS OF CAREFUL,
KNOWLEDGEABLE WORKMANSHIP IN THE AREA.
HISTORICAL RESIDENTIAL SPECIALISTS
301-656-9274,
Chevy Chase, MD
Lic., Bonded, Insured

LANDSCAPING

BKB Tree Landscaping Handyman Service

Quality Work, Very Cheap Prices
Safe removal of LARGE DANGEROUS TREES
Landscaping, Mulching, Seeding/ Sodding,
Power Washing, Light/Heavy Hauling,
Demolition for Residential and Commercial
Gutter Cleaning **Senior Citizen Discount 20% off**
Excellent References

202-497-5938
202-621-9526

HAULING



www.CollegeHunks.com
202-999-3876
Let Tomorrow's Leaders Haul
Your Junk or Move You Today!



THE CURRENT

PETS

[202] 277-2566
PO Box 25058
Washington, DC 20027
jule@julespetsitting.com
www.julespetsitting.com



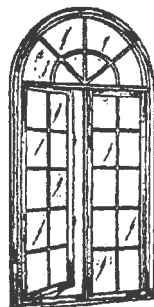
- Mid Day Dog Walks
- Kitty Visits
- In-Home Overnight Pet Sitting and other Pet Care Services
- Insured and Bonded

WINDOWS

Ace Window Cleaning

Family owned and operated for over 20 years.
301-656-9274 Chevy Chase, MD
Licensed • Bonded • Insured
• We also offer glass, screen, and sash cord repair service
• Gentle, no damage, low pressure, power washing.
• Thorough Cleaning.
Over 30 years of careful, knowledgeable workmanship in the area.
Historical Residential Specialists

THE CURRENT
202-244-7223



WINDOW WASHERS, ETC...

Celebrating 15 years
RESIDENTIAL SPECIALISTS
SERVING UPPER N.W.
202-337-0351

In the heart of the Palisades since 1993

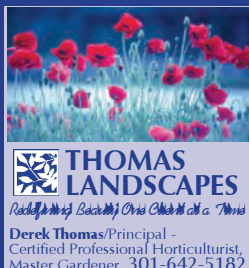
Residential Specialists

Windows • Gutters • Power Washing
DC • MD • VA

FREE ESTIMATES Fully Bonded & Insured

Member, International Window Cleaning Association • In the heart of the Palisades since 1993

THE CURRENT



Comprehensive Design & Maintenance Services

- ◆ Patios
- ◆ Roof Top Gardens
- ◆ Formal & Informal Gardens
- ◆ Arbors
- ◆ Retaining Walls
- ◆ Lighting
- ◆ Ponds & Water Features
- ◆ Fencing & Iron Work

www.Thomaslandscapes.com