

Statement before the
D.C. Zoning Commission
for Z.C. Case #06-11A/06-12A
Application by George Washington University
February 3, 2011

I am Sara Maddux, a resident at 522 21st Street N.W. a block and a half away from the Square 103 site, and I have lived in this neighborhood since 1966. I have been an observer of the changes on the streets and blocks through these many years. Although the Zoning Commission approved the Campus Plan to include future building sites within it, the development of this Square 103 as stage one of a very large building is not appropriate or logical in terms of design and function.

Logically to begin, you are being asked to approve what in essence is the base of a building which will not be able to be changed significantly in the future without even an imaginative presentation of the whole building to the Commission. When GWU returns in the future, you will be presented with a *fait accompli*. This is an unusual process.

As a resident of the involved neighborhood, I have great concerns based on experience about the design of the garage and the associated projected traffic flows. Although DDOT seemed to have laid some rules for use of the alley, it was done without onsite observations and an independent traffic analysis.

The site, please see the little maps, is bounded by the alley, east to west, in the middle of the block which is bounded by F Street and G Street, and 20th and 21st Streets. 20th and 21st Streets are major commuter streets now and unregulated traffic from an alley will worsen the traffic flow. 20th Street, in the mornings, serves GWU buildings and parking lots (including the GWU President's House and garage), and the International Monetary Fund and World Bank Buildings with their garage entrances. It continues across Pennsylvania Avenue NW to feed the commercial buildings with indoor parking lots. These buildings, which have received TDRs and other expansions, draw more traffic than ever. When the traffic backs up, as it frequently does, the back-up extends into the E Street Expressway to the Roosevelt Bridge. That situation is frequently reported on the traffic spots on the morning radio shows.

21st Street in the evening is the reverse flow of that traffic as people are surging home to Virginia across the Roosevelt and Memorial Bridges. This will become more complicated as the Square 54 project (at Washington Circle -23rd-22nd-I Streets) is completed and there will be even more commuter traffic. Two other recent additions in the area are the Institute of Peace at 23rd and Constitution Avenue NW and the American Pharmacists' building across the street, which have thus further saturated the

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neighborhood. And no, most of these commuters do not use the Metro. When the National Academy of Sciences on Constitution Avenue with its garage entrance on 21st Street finishes its renovation, there will be even more traffic. Afternoon traffic backs up sometimes as far as Dupont Circle. As far as I and others can discern, the District of Columbia government is not taking a holistic review of the area from Constitution Avenue between 19th and 23rd Streets NW to Pennsylvania Avenue NW – our impacted neighborhood. They focus with a reverse telescope.

Also a special event in our neighborhood is the transit of Presidential motorcades. At any time of the day or night, the traffic can be held in this whole area for 15-20 minutes.

The Square 103 proposed garage using an alley for ingress and egress is in the middle of all of this traffic and congestion. This much traffic needs to be regulated by stop-lights. Alley ingress/egress in a two-way manner is not safe for pedestrians and does not provide for a regulated traffic flow into 20th and 21st Streets. To access either 20th or 21st Streets, a driver will have to inch out onto a sidewalk stopping at the curb line, peering around parked cars, to get a clear view for merging or might just bolt out quickly if he/she sees a small break in the traffic. This would be the circumstance for probably 500-600 cars a day. Remember, this will be a commercial, public garage with turnover during the day and evening and most likely very few, assigned 'executive' parking spaces. This is noted in Paragraph 2 under the DDOT Analysis. We are also concerned about the personal security plan for a garage located in that part of the campus.

Although the DDOT report, at the bottom of page 2, notes the lack of planning for loading and unloading facilities for the *fait accompli* building to come, it skips over the current and real loading and service areas in the alley on the back of the GWU facilities which front on F Street. These vehicles include a wide variety ranging from large trucks, garbage trucks, small repair vehicles, and commercial delivery trucks. The DDOT report seems to assume that only commuting passenger vehicles will use the two way alley - (see first paragraph, line 4 of the DDOT analysis). GWU has not adequately addressed the problems of the trucks servicing "Tonic," the restaurant at the corner of 21st and G Street. We have brought this problem to GWU's attention during many community meetings but there are no resolutions. Currently, these food and liquor delivery trucks block the alley and park across the sidewalk on 21st Street creating hazards for pedestrians. This is an on-going situation.

The DDOT report also notes that utilities will be located in out of the way vaults for the future building. They did not take into consideration the utility poles and fire stands which currently project out into the south side of the alley which service the buildings on F Street and 21st Street. What will be come of them?

The use of the Square 103 alley in this proposal is more than a certain hazard for the heavy traffic of pedestrians – students, government workers, non-profit organization employees, residents of the neighborhood, and tourists – who regularly use both 20th and 21st Streets, including during the morning and evening rush hour traffic times. There must be a regulated traffic flow. An example, previously given by Mrs. Kahlow, was the

installation of the traffic light at 21st Street and F Street NW. When that intersection was a four-way stop, there were innumerable serious traffic accidents and several pedestrians were hit by drivers running the stop signs.

Although there is a short report from the Fire Department, we nevertheless have serious concerns about access in the alley for the two GWU dormitories which back on the alley. There is little memory now of the fatal fire years ago in the building now called Thurston Hall on F Street. I would expect a higher sensitivity to this safety issue in the Square 103 alley from the Fire Department, DDOT, and the Zoning Commission.

For the greater good, logical development, and civic responsibility, the entrance to the garage should be on G Street. There is a good place in the middle of the block on G Street which would be the ideal choice. This would relieve this project of the many problems and hazards which have been presented. Now is the time to address the problem and resolve these issues in advance. After a building is built, it is too late for corrections or modifications to ever be incorporated. With a redesign and resubmission, GWU could even address the bicycle issues raised in the report.

Thank you for your time.

SQUARE 103

Traffic Light
⊗

G Street NW

Tonic Restaurant

* * * Appropriate
Entrance

Traffic Light
⊗

ALLEY

GWU
Service / Loading
Area

GWU
Dorm

Francis Key
Scott Down

Row Houses

Row Houses

F Street NW

Traffic Light
⊗

Traffic Light
⊗

— = parking spaces w/motors

Chapel
access

Club
Pres
Gounge

on a way
to St Street

St Street → one way

