



GW HILLEL

Foundation for Jewish Campus Life at the Gewirz Center

April 18, 2014

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Members of the Zoning Commission:

I am writing this letter in support of The George Washington University's application for minor modification to their Campus Plan / PUD Order. The need for this application is actually a result of the university's desire to help Hillel build a new facility that will allow our organization to meet the needs of the 21st century student and beyond. Frankly, without GW assistance the completion of this project is at risk.

Hillel is a 65 year old small non-profit organization located on campus that serves the Jewish student population specifically, but is available for all students, faculty and neighborhood members who wish to participate in our services. The mission of Hillel is to enhance Jewish life on campus, help meet student religious and social needs, and serve as a center for creative Jewish thinking. In addition, Hillel fosters the act of Tzedaka or "giving back" to the community by promoting charitable acts. Hillel has served the university community and Foggy Bottom admirably over the years and wishes to continue this role well into the future.

Hillel is currently housed in the Gewirz Center on the corner of 23rd and H St. Owned by the Hillel Foundation for Jewish life on Campus, this facility built in the mid-80s has served students for approximately 30 years. Sadly, due to deficiencies in structure and design the facility has not aged well. Furthermore, the facility no longer meets the needs and usage patterns of its students. Therefore, the Hillel Board, after considering various options including a complete renovation, decided it would be more cost effective and beneficial to build a new state of the art facility on the current site.

Unfortunately, the project was well beyond the immediate financial scope of our small non-profit. Given that Hillel exists for the purpose of serving Jewish students on campus (one third of GW student are Jewish), we decided to approach the University to see how we might work together to make this dream a reality. Our idea was to see whether the university would consider leasing some of our space until we have paid off the building.

After a series of discussions with the University, an MOU was reached that would provide us with the wherewithal to build the new facility. In a nutshell, the building will cost approximately \$13 million. The University has agreed to a generous 20 year lease to occupy two floors of the new building. This will provide us with about \$6.7 million in revenue over the life of the lease, allowing us to borrow the funds necessary to finance the construction of the new Gewirz Center with the understanding in the future Hillel will one day, as our program expands, reoccupy the space. **Without this lease we will not be able to secure the additional financing required to construct the building.**

Clearly the University recognizes the importance of Hillel to campus life and as a result has agreed to an approach that most benefits our organization, the student body and the local community. Their students are our members, and their academic mission compliments ours. The University is a critical partner to the success of our mission.

Sincerely,

Robert G. Fishman, PhD
Director Capital Campaign
Executive Director Emeritus

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.06-11M/06-12M
EXHIBIT NO.1C