

**Phillip M. Robinson, Jr.
Statement of Support**

George Washington University Foggy Bottom Campus Plan 2006-2025 04-11
September 25, 2006

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

EXHIBIT NO. 114

Chairman Mitten, Vice-Chair Hood, Commissioners Jeffries, Turnbull and Parsons; community members present in the gallery this evening and citizens throughout the District of Columbia:

It is an honor and a privilege to come before you this evening to lend my support for The George Washington University's (from henceforth referred to as GW) Foggy Bottom Campus Plan: 2006-2025. As a former student and campus leader, I believe it is vital that GW maximize development opportunities within the existing campus plan boundaries to maintain its status as a world-class university. At the same time, I believe it is equally important that GW preserve open spaces and important campus historic resources beneficial to the Foggy Bottom community and the District of Columbia.

The goals I have just outlined, serve as the basis for the *Grow Up, Not Out* development strategy that complements the GW campus plan. It is my unique experience as a student, Foggy Bottom resident and professional working in the District of Columbia that provides me with an alternative view of the campus plan before us today. Thus, please bear with me as I briefly outline to you why it is necessary to approve the proposed campus plan.

The George Washington University, founded in 1821 and rooted in the Foggy Bottom neighborhood since 1912, combines the resources of a major international research university with the unique dynamics of a vibrant, urban setting in the heart of the nation's capitol. It is this institution that served as the perfect backdrop for the coming of age of a young black man from Cleveland, Ohio. Upon arriving to campus in the fall of 1999, I instantaneously became immersed in campus life and the surrounding community.

During my sophomore and junior years, I served as president of GW's Black Student Union. In that capacity, I had the opportunity to work with students, university officials and community leaders to increase minority enrollment at GW, provide tutoring to local area high schools such as the School Without Walls, and donate time and money to local charities and soup kitchens. At the end of my junior year, I was elected president of GW's Student Association. From 2002-2003, I represented over 23,000 undergraduate and graduate students. Working with other students of all walks of life, we were able to rally GW's student body to join the fight for DC Statehood, register GW students to vote in the District of Columbia, and bring the D.C. mayoral debate to both GW's campus and the Foggy Bottom community for the first time. Also, I worked with many energetic and compassionate students to run our annual Neighbor's Project, which mobilized GW students to lead beautification efforts throughout Foggy Bottom. As a result of these endeavors, I not only developed a strong love and passion for my alma mater, but I developed a powerful bond with numerous residents of the District of Columbia, especially in Foggy Bottom. Due to my experiences as a student and resident of Foggy Bottom, I believe there are three compelling reasons why the campus plan must be approved.

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First, GW students have become contributing members of the Foggy Bottom community. Whether it is helping to re-paint apartments for senior citizens during the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday, donating time and money to Miriam's Kitchen or supporting local events, I have witnessed first-hand how many GW students have made it a point to make a positive impact on their surrounding neighborhood. By taking advantage of this constant youthful renaissance, the residents of Foggy Bottom are able to further utilize the cultural and diverse aspects of their community to consistently improve and promote the neighborhood. Therefore, it is in the interest of Foggy Bottom and the District of Columbia as a whole for your commission to approve this plan. The proposed campus plan, which would provide up to 1,000 additional on-campus beds, gives GW students the opportunity to stay connected to their campus and become a part of their surrounding community.

Second, it is my belief that ensuring that as GW students are able to stay on GW's campus is key to further advancing opportunities for both GW and the Foggy Bottom neighborhood. The more GW students are near the heart of campus life and invested in their university, the more the surrounding area benefits. A recent *Washington Post* article, entitled "Way-Out-of-the-Norm Dorm" and written by Susan Kinzie, illustrates this point. According to this article, the Towers at University Town Center, a privately developed, 910-bed student housing facility, is located in Hyattsville, Maryland. This complex, which is surrounded by 56 acres of shops, movie theaters, and office space, houses college students from more than eight area universities, including American, University of Maryland-College Park, and GW. Although some students may be enticed by such glitz and glamour, I was struck by a statement given in the article by Alyssa Evans, a freshman at the University of Maryland and resident of this new apartment complex. She wondered aloud whether she would feel disconnected from campus and followed that statement by saying, "Being in a dorm is part of the whole college experience." Ms. Evans' comments only confirmed what researchers have said for years: college students tend to be more involved and more likely to stay in school if they are located on campus. With bulging college enrollments caused by population growth and increased need for a college degree, it is imperative that you approve GW's campus plan. There are inherent benefits for students as well as the surrounding community.

This logic brings us to the third and final reason for supporting this proposal. The campus plan allows students to live on campus, and get involved in the community, in turn leading many students to become tax-paying residents of the Foggy Bottom neighborhood upon graduation. In addition, GW's integrated development strategy provides for new business development and an enhanced tax base for Foggy Bottom and the entire District of Columbia. No example highlights this fact more than the campus plan's proposal for Square 54. Square 54 is the site of the old GW hospital located across 23rd Street from the new GW hospital. This proposal allows for the mixed-use commercial development of Square 54, providing for a vibrant "town center" and a key resource of non-enrollment driven revenue to support the university's core academic research. Overall, the campus plan enables former and current GW students to provide a strong tax base for Foggy Bottom to use to continue to thrive and allows GW to further its status as a top university.

In summary, GW and the Foggy Bottom community both benefit from the meeting of students and residents. As a result, GW students become a potent part of the community, stay on campus and thus engaged; at the same time, revenue streams for the university and the community are increased. The implementation of GW's *Grow Up, Not Out* development strategy, as articulated in the Foggy Bottom Campus Plan: 2006-2025 and informed by the open and inclusive community-based planning process, will result in shared and lasting benefits for the Community, the District and the University.