

**TESTIMONY OF
PAUL K. BROOKS
BEFORE THE
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ZONING COMMISSION**

**GWU – CAMPUS PLAN & PUD
CASE NUMBER: 06 – 11 & 06 – 12**

SEPTEMBER 25, 2006

**ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia**

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Madam Chairperson and members of the Zoning Commission, I am Paul Brooks and am before you this evening to testify in support of the proposed Campus Plan of George Washington University for its Foggy Bottom campus. Presently, I reside in the State of Maryland, one block from the District of Columbia boundary along Western Avenue. But I am a native Washingtonian, raised in Brookland, and have resided in the District of Columbia for almost 30 years. In addition, I am a graduate of an inner city high school and three of the universities located in the District of Columbia.

I am an attorney who has practiced law in the District of Columbia for over twenty-five years. During this career, I recently had the opportunity for two years to serve as Counsel to Catholic University's President for Government and Community Activities. I appreciate this opportunity to present my views to the Commission on two fundamental, but often times overlooked, regulatory matters which relate to the proposed GWU campus plan: (1) inclusionary priorities employed by GWU to insure participation by all cooperating neighbors and other interested persons and organizations; and (2) the climate in which all interested parties act in true partnership in achieving private and public goals in the regulation of land use and development in the District of Columbia.

(1) GWU CREATED AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS CAMPUS PLAN

Public access and participation throughout the formulation of campus plans are vitally important to achieve inclusive communities, address issues of social equity, maximize environmental and other aesthetic benefits and produce positive and balanced

economic results. Equally important, zoning regulation serves to protect and improve land use and development for the betterment of the public condition.

GWU has stepped up and vigorously engaged public and private persons and groups interested in its campus plan. GWU has been pro-active in engaging the public in a wide array of media and forums with respect to planning goals and strategies. In addition, GWU has attempted to capture all views, complaints and criticisms and to document its responses to each specific public comment. GWU has offered to meet and actually met with anyone and everyone who has desired to collaborate with GWU in fitting the panoply of public and private rights and needs into its proposed campus plan before the Zoning Commission.

It is difficult, if not possible, to find fault with the diligence and determination of GWU in reaching all possible segments of the community. It is notable that GWU's efforts in communicating with the public were initiated early on in the planning process and were sustained throughout the time-consuming and detail-driven analyses, dialogue and collaborative work to develop a campus plan. GWU permitted a wide range of formal and informal opportunities and flexible mechanisms for interested parties to become personally acquainted with University plans and to insure that GWU accounts for its professed intentions.

In all segments of government and business, a basic measurement for accountability is the level of transparency. The procedures and practices governing the GWU campus planning process has provided for active and meaningful public participation. Despite differences in perspectives, viewpoints and personal preferences, it

is evident that the openness and candor encouraged by GWU in its interactions with all parties leave no doubt as to the credibility and completeness of its campus plan.

(2) GWU'S CAMPUS PLAN REFLECTS COMMON GROUND ACHIEVED WITH PARTIES TO THE CAMPUS PLANNING PROCESS

Real estate is a precious resource. And decisions affecting the use and development of space have substantial impact on those who claim D.C. as home and assert to work for the betterment of our city.

It is necessary and appropriate to determine whether and how GWU has been a true partner with its Foggy Bottom neighbors and other interested public and private parties seeking to achieve the laudable goals of effective campus plan. As discussed above, the considerable resources and mechanisms utilized during the development of GWU's campus plan are the exemplar in university planning customized and directed to its community, constituencies and responsibilities for higher education.

GWU should be held accountable to deal with potential problems which might take place because of contemplated activities and operations under its proposed campus plan. However, it is unfair to saddle GWU or any other university with resolving matters of public responsibility deemed to be important to certain citizens or groups. Neither GWU nor any other university can be taken advantage of in resolving needs and demands common to an area and largely within the domain of the public sector.

GWU embraces the pluralism of Foggy Bottom. Its campus plan takes serious measures to address environmental and aesthetic considerations surrounding contemplated expansion and other development activities in Foggy Bottom. But within the confines of Foggy Bottom, there are many "neighbors"—the unique diversity of

residents, commercial enterprises and a public imprint throughout this very unique area.

GWU's campus plan recognizes best efforts and commitments of GWU, D.C.

governmental interests and Foggy Bottom neighbors to achieve common ground by these interested parties over a period of time.

It is imperative for the Zoning Commission not to be distracted by special interests who may have an economic stake or private motivation for maintaining the status quo, and raise straw arguments in an attempt to thwart approval of the GWU campus plan.