

Sam Salkin Testimony to DC Zoning Commission

Good Evening. My name is Sam Salkin. I'm a junior from Atlanta, Georgia—majoring in Geography. Tonight, I come before this commission to speak in favor of GW's 20-year campus plan.

As a student of Geography and more specifically Urban Geography, the development of the Campus Plan and Square 54 have been of particular interest to me since I started at GW in the Fall of 2004. After seeing many presentations of this plan, I believe that GW is embarking upon a major upgrade that stands to benefit its campus, Foggy Bottom and even the entire District of Columbia. Interestingly, I feel that the potential this plan possesses can best be explained through lessons I have learned in my Geography lectures.

One of the most exciting parts of this plan for me is the University's commitment to employing principles of smart growth and transit-oriented development. While taking Urban Geography during my sophomore year, a large portion of the semester was spent talking about the emergence of "edge cities," suburbs experiencing unrestricted growth that siphon jobs and revenue from traditional cities. Instead of a typical dynamic where suburbanites commute from suburbs to city, "edge cities" force people to commute from suburb to suburb or even from the city to the suburbs. Interestingly enough, one of the classic examples of an edge city, Tysons Corner, is a mere 10 miles from GW's campus.

Through creating an urban town center on Square 54, the University is committing to developing a high-density area that will benefit the Foggy Bottom community and the District of Columbia. Property values will increase, the tax base will improve and Foggy Bottom will not only become the academic nexus of the District, but also a model for how to create neighborhoods that improve quality of life but also help to combat sprawl and create a culture of using mass transit. The Foggy Bottom Streetscape plan also serves as a commitment to creating a visually pleasing and inviting neighborhood for the rest of the DC area to enjoy.

The University's decision to create this type of space should also serve as a model to residents of DC. In a city known for backroom deals made by a few men in suits, the planning process has been inclusive of both the GW and Foggy Bottom communities. For the past two years, GW has engaged in discussions with local businesses, places of worship, residents and students to identify how best to develop GW's campus and Square 54. Furthermore, through GW's Office of Foggy Bottom and West End Affairs, continued dialogue continues between the community and GW over any concerns that may exist among Foggy Bottomites.

There is no question that GW's plan for its campus will drastically improve the facilities and prestige of the University. Through adding a science research center, more student housing and improving existing amenities, GW is poised to improve both in academics and reputation. Myself and all the students, alumni and GW employees in this room stand to see our degrees and resumes become more valuable. For the commission,

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Bottom stands to see an intellectual community of students at GW that it has never enjoyed before.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today and I strongly encourage the commission to approve the GW Campus Plan as well as the plan for Square 54.