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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 06-11

EXHIBIT NO. 1

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Student Association, Columbian College of Arts and Sciences, Graduate Representative.

I am here to voice my opposition to the Foggy Bottom Campus Plan: 2006-2025. This plan is hurried, far from comprehensive, and has little relevance to university and neighborhood reality. The plan is result of what I call blind economics – a desire to suck as much profit from GW’s greatest asset, its geography, and blind to many of the true costs of its single-minded and thoughtless planning. I find it offensive that the university has invoked the L’Enfant plan – with its democratic ideals – to sell this real-estate development plan. The University seems more willing to litigate its idea of a plan than to actually spend the time planning comprehensively and truly including all stakeholders.

GW’s testimony referred to L’Enfant’s plan for the 23rd Street corridor and sightline. In addition to keeping building height to 90 feet, rather than 110, I would like to know how this plan, as well as previous GW development on 23rd Street, have respected the corridor. I remember quite well GWs attempt – in the development of the Lerner Health and Wellness Center – to build a brick wall right up to Saint Mary’s Church blocking the sunlight from its beloved stain glass windows. That wasn’t respectful of anything but the bottom line.

L’Enfant’s plan was concerned with open spaces. The open space component of this plan is nothing more than eye-wash, diverting attention from the true purpose of the plan – open space exploitation. This plan seeks to make economic use of as much developable open space as possible through the guise of “grow up, not out.” I could point to a number of examples if you would like. The enclosing of University Yard – 102A – tops my list.

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To call this plan smart growth, and then not be able to respond to Commissioner Turnbull's question about sustainability with anything more than a declaration that this was Transit Oriented Development (TOD), is proof of how little comprehensive thought went into the plan. This plan is anything but smart. And just because you build on top of a Metro station does not make the development TOD. I challenge any of GW's witnesses to give me a definition of sustainability.

As a student of geography I was personally offended by the maps the University used to show intersection Levels of Service (LOS). When Commissioner Hood noted that they were misleading, he got the run around by this so-called transportation specialist. You sir, were consciously misleading, even purposely lying, when you classified LOS A-D in the same category and then classified LOS F in its own.

The University has promised to minimize traffic disruption through the build out of this plan. If their plan to minimize disruption is anything like it was this summer when they closed the sidewalk and one lane of traffic, on a major thoroughfare, to do a simple job on the facade of Thurston Hall, I predict 20 years of headache with the major construction and demolition called for and not properly addressed in this plan. I challenge the University to find one "slug" commuter, who lines up daily on 19th Street between E&F, who would state their commute was not severely inconvenienced.

The president of the university was recently quoted as saying "the University is a major real estate developer that teaches some classes on the side." I would like Mr. Trachtenberg or Mr. Katz to convince me that GW hasn't completely lost sight of its academic mission under their tenure. It has certainly lost control of its budget under their leadership. I would like Mr. Katz to answer me why University debt has grown immensely in my 5 years at the University while existing academic facilities have continued to deteriorate – Corcoran Hall which houses the Chemistry Department and the Engineering school's Davis-Hodgkins House are two prime examples– and student to

teacher ratio has grown to a point where the quality of education is negatively effected. It's important to take care of what you have before you ask for more.

My peers mentioned many aspects of the plan they were excited about, however, they failed to mention how many of those components came about. The best parts of this plan have been the result of University engagement with the student body. Unfortunately, this engagement began very late in the process, has been severely limited, and was intended not to seek student input, but rather to seek their unquestioning support.

I urge the commission to reject GW's proposal. There are 4 years remaining on the current plan. This time should be spent working on a truly comprehensive plan. Why does the University want to rush this process when many good ideas have been the result of it?

Thank you for your consideration.