

CASE NO. 06-12

EXHIBIT NO. 126

Harold R. Benson
2475 Virginia Ave, NW Apt 629
Washington, DC 20037

September 23, 2006

DC Zoning Commission
4414 4th St, NW Suite 21
Washington, DC 20037

Re: Foggy Bottom Campus Plan 2006-2025

Dear Commissioners:

As a resident of Foggy Bottom since January 2000 and retired practitioner and university professor of architecture and city planning, I recommend that the Commission approves the proposed George Washington University (GWU) new planned unit development (PUD) application.

Before retiring I worked for the Community Division of Facilities Planning at ARAMCO, Dhahran, Saudi Arabia for thirteen years. Previously I had taught city planning at the University of New Mexico, the Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey and the University of Petroleum and Minerals in Dhahran Saudi Arabia

GWU should be encouraged in its pursuit of educational excellence with the least negative impact on the neighboring community. The comprehensive PUD process is a far better planning tool than the usual ad-hoc method used in the past. The PUD process is even more valuable, since GWU is making an additional request for its last large empty land parcel, Square 54, for an income producing, non-educational development.

I have been living part time in Italy where my wife and I direct a series of art and cultural workshops during the summer months. Unfortunately I have not been able to attend all the public meetings related to this plan, but have been impressed with the extraordinary effort of the DC Office of Planning (OP) and GWU to involve the citizens of this community in the planning process.

It is unfortunate that the Foggy Bottom Association and the Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A did not more actively participate in the recent ongoing discussions. While their lack of confidence with GWU from past experience with the development and compliance of the 2000 Master Plan is understandable, it is obvious that more involvement is now required. Their points of concern are mainly due to the recent aggressive expansion of the undergraduate student enrollments and the resulting GWU intrusion into the adjacent neighborhoods. The OP has fairly included Campus Plan conditions, which severely restrict GWU from continuing this rapid expansion on the Foggy Bottom Campus (FBC). The most important constraints are: requiring an independent yearly audit with mutual agreement between OP and GWU on the methodology to define and maintain the student enrollment cap; limiting the use of off-campus undergraduate student housing; limiting higher densities on the periphery with the historic preservation and streetscape plans; and prohibiting expansion outside of the existing boundaries. The PUD allows an increase only in building density but neither in population nor in traffic density. The proposed new Advisory Committee must become a functioning body to help ensure compliance with the proposed PUD, if it is adopted.

The planning process is a continuous effort and any plan should be reviewed and updated with changing conditions. It is likely that given the restrictions in this PUD and after careful economic analysis, GWU may find that another satellite campus will be more cost effective in the future than continued vertical expansion on the FBC.

OP and GWU must be congratulated on their efforts to provide a workable guide to the future of the Foggy Bottom Campus with the limited developable land within the existing boundaries.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Harold R. Benson