

The Nevins Group
ARCHITECTURE2208 Foxboro Place NW
Washington DC 20007
202 337 9725Ms. Carol Mitten
Chair, DC Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW Suite 210 South
Washington, DC 20001

June 28, 2007

RE: ZC No. 07-12
The George Washington University GW/Mt. Vernon Campus:
Pelham Replacement Project

RECEIVED

2007 JUL -2 AM 9:49
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING

Dear Ms. Mitten and Commission Members:

I had the opportunity to peruse the schematic plans for the above referenced project, and I must say that as an architect, I am appalled. The plans do not incorporate the energy conservation and environmental sustainability aspects of the LEED standards which were recently enacted with District of Columbia Green Building Act 2006, and worse yet, the proposal is an insult to the green campus that was Mt. Vernon College.

While the LEED standard is not mandatory, District law says that priority consideration should be given to buildings that do comply. Accordingly, I urge that the Zoning Commission make its approval of this project conditional upon full compliance with these standards.

The George Washington University (GW) prides itself as having now achieved national stature. As such it has a responsibility to set a good example to the students it is paid to educate and to the community at large. It should teach by good example as well as in the classroom.

The University proposes to demolish a dormitory, Pelham Hall, of approximately 32,000 square feet that currently houses fewer than 100 students and replace it with a new building three times that size -- approximately 92,000 square feet to accommodate 300 students. In addition to housing these students, the new structure would contain several meeting rooms, a food service operation, and a theater/conference hall. If the university is allowed to proceed with its present plans, it will be replacing an existing structure with one that is totally out of scale with the Mt. Vernon site. The design, as currently drafted, is a massive brick structure which does not incorporate any passive solar or energy conservation measures. The design of the replacement structure is aesthetically and environmentally grim! It proposes immense brick walls broken up with small windows. The proposed building looks more like a convention center than a dormitory, which indeed it might be when it is not in use as a dormitory.

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ZONING COMMISSION
District of ColumbiaCASE NO. 07-12
EXHIBIT NO. 19
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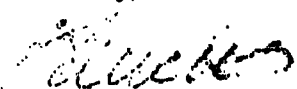
It appears that GW plans to relieve its inadequate dormitory space in Foggy Bottom by constructing new buildings that are totally out of scale with the Mt. Vernon campus. These buildings are significantly in excess of the size of the new buildings the school outlined in its current ten year campus plan. One can only assume that the revisions to the plan requested by this application is the beginning of what will be ongoing requests to build larger and more environmentally inappropriate structures at this site.

The university has a responsibility to enhance, not destroy, the beautiful Mt. Vernon campus it inherited. The original Mt. Vernon College buildings were carefully designed structures before GW took over. The university has already built Summers Hall along Foxhall Road, providing a glimpse of what is now to follow. Summers Hall gives little consideration to the quality of the Foxhall Road exposure or its immediate neighborhood. It showed the same disregard and contempt of its new neighborhood on Foxhall Road as GW demonstrated for years in Foggy Bottom. Summers Hall is an eyesore, a huge brick barrier with unscreened mechanical equipment clearly visible from the public roadway. The landscaping that was required as part of the campus plan was never installed. The issue here and now is whether the University will continue to receive the requisite governmental approvals to build with impunity environmentally irresponsible and energy squandering structures, this latest one in the face of the District's Green building priority legislation.

A structure of this magnitude should be required to be built with sensitivity to its surroundings on all visible sides and to maximum state-of-the-art energy conservation and sustainable environmental features. If the building's owner elects not to do this as a matter of good public policy and design, then it should be required by governmental fiat. By way of example, Sidwell Friends School, in stark contrast to GW, chose to do a renovation and addition to an existing high school academic building recently that has LEED platinum accreditation. It is not only attractive, but environmentally sustainable and economical. This building demonstrates environmental responsibility and how to accomplish it. Shouldn't GW be required to live up to the same standard of environmental responsibility as a condition for approval of their request for modification of their ten year campus plan?

I respectfully request that approval of this application is made conditional upon conformance to the District of Columbia's Green Act 2006 and a revised design that enhances its setting instead of bricking it over with a massive structure.

Sincerely,



Sherry Nevins AIA, LEED

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FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL

Date: July 2, 2007

To: Name/Company	Fax No.	Phone No.
D.C. Zoning Commission Attention: Donna	727-6072	727-0789

From: Stephen K. Gardner
Phone: (202) 496-7661
Re: Z.C. Case 07-12
George Washington University - Mount Vernon Campus

Number of Pages (including cover):

COMMENTS

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