

June 29, 2007

Carol Mitten
Chair, Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW, Suite 200 South
Washington DC 20001

Dear Ms. Mitten and members of the Zoning Commission:

I write in support of Case 7-12, George Washington University's Pelham Replacement Project.

In the fall of August 2005, I came to Washington, DC, to take a position as Assistant Professor of Writing with the University Writing Program at George Washington University. This marked a major milestone in a second career that began when I completed my PhD at Penn State in 2002. Before that I had owned and operated a bookstore in State College, the small Central Pennsylvania city in which Penn State is located, for nearly twenty years.

My association with the Mount Vernon College campus began with my first semester at George Washington University. I was assigned an office in its Academic Building, and I have taught all of my courses—the bones of college writing and critical thinking fleshed out in environmental topics or themes—in classrooms on the floors above my office.

From my very first semester at George Washington University, I was also involved in shaping students' college experience outside their Mount Vernon classrooms. Working with Mount Vernon Campus Life and the offices of our two deans, Rachelle Heller (Dean of Academic Affairs) and Frederic Siegel (Dean of Freshmen), I have brought authors and performers to our campus for special events. Next year, I will take this extracurricular activity a step further when I become faculty guide for the three freshman dorms that make up the Science Village at Mount Vernon; I am already planning events and activities for the fall.

The Mount Vernon College Campus plays an important but challenging role for George Washington University, a role that will be greatly facilitated by the proposed replacement for Pelham Hall. GW's Foggy Bottom campus, quite naturally, feels much more like the business or professional district of a city than like a college campus. The Mount Vernon acreage certainly feels like a college campus, but it houses only a modest number of students and is itself divided up in ways that diminish its integrity. Although most of our students appreciate the enormous opportunities that GW's downtown Washington location affords them, many still want the experience of a traditional college campus.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
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CASE NO. 07-12

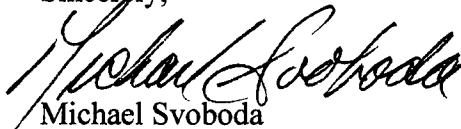
EXHIBIT NO. 28

The proposed replacement for Pelham will address several of these shortcomings. First, it increases the number of students residing on Mount Vernon campus, which increases its importance relative to Foggy Bottom. Second, it adds resource spaces—meeting rooms, student theatre rehearsal and performance spaces, a fitness center, another dining hall—that will increase the use of the Mount Vernon campus even by students who will not reside here. Third, the new building will place these residential and resource spaces closer, both physically and visually, to the main buildings, quadrangle and thoroughfares of the Mount Vernon campus. Finally, the design of the new building will make it more of a piece with the campus than the (post)modernist angularity of the original Pelham. The new Pelham building will thus pull the different elements of Mount Vernon into a greater harmony with each other and thereby raise Mount Vernon's profile as an integral part of a student life at George Washington University.

Two final notes: First, as a resident of Glover Park who walks to his campus office each morning through Glover Archibald Park woods, I am aware of and engaged with the environmental issues of our day and with the particular ecologies of our region. I am pleased that the university has considered LEED standards in designing the new building; I am also convinced it will fit in gracefully with the campus and its neighborhood. Second, as someone who avails himself of the variety of cultural events Washington has to offer, I welcome the opportunity to use the additional resources of the new Pelham building to create such events for our neighbors.

For all of these reasons I hope the Zoning Commission will support George Washington University's Pelham Replacement Project (Case 7-12). If in response to this letter you have any questions, I would be happy to answer them by email (msvoboda@gwu.edu) or by phone (202-242-6595).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Svoboda", written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name "Michael Svoboda".

Michael Svoboda