

Kirsten Gilbert
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July 2, 2007

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

Re: Case 07-12, The George Washington University Mount Vernon Campus - Pelham
Replacement Project

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Kirsten Gilbert and I am a rising junior at The George Washington University, majoring in International Affairs with a concentration in Asian Studies and a minor in Religion. I lived on the Mount Vernon Campus my freshman year in Somers Hall and participated in the Women's Leadership Program. I've also been employed by Mount Vernon Campus Life and the Office of the Associate Vice President and Dean of Freshman since my freshman year, including two summer jobs. My life on Mount Vernon has defined my experience at GW and I cannot imagine repeating my college experience without "the Vern." To give some background for my deep affection for the campus, I'll begin by describing all that Mount Vernon has given me since I came to GW.

When touring Washington DC my junior year of high school, I was torn between the three main universities in the district until a special program at GW was recommended- The Women's Leadership Program (WLP). I instantly fell in love with the concept of twenty young women embarking on their college years together- living, studying, and growing together. During those first two semesters at GW, I met women who will be a part of my life for as far as I can foresee. After we completed the rigorous academic year, a sense of pride and kinship remained, holding us together with an irreplaceable bond that lasts to this day. In its beautiful grounds, the legacy of the Mount Vernon Women's College and Seminary continues to live in the hearts of people like me who live and learn at Mount Vernon, continuing the dream of Elizabeth Somers.

Outside the world of the WLP, the students who live at the Vern develop a closer bond than the average GW freshman. Referred to as "Vernies" or "Vernites" we see each other at Foggy Bottom, the Vern, and beyond, carrying with us a shared sense of community that is lacking in general GW population. My friends on the Vern became my family. My roommate and I hosted an early Thanksgiving dinner in our room, crowding 15 people around a potluck style feast. During the holidays we held a Secret Santa gift exchange and an Easter Dinner in the spring. Never have I felt so connected with a group of people until I came to the campus. My fondest memories at GW take place on the Quad- pick up volleyball games, snowball wars, sledding, sunbathing during reading

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days, and the infamous water balloon fight. Even the shuttle helps unite all the residents of the campus with late night rides to Gelman to finish a paper due at 8am.

Yet Mount Vernon is definitely lacking in some aspects, particularly dining facilities. Although Ames provides full service to students, the style of cuisine becomes monotonous after a few weeks. Although venturing off campus is a great alternative and the Palisades Community has several of my favorite restaurants in the District, student life is not conducive to long meal breaks. An additional dining hall at Mount Vernon would greatly improve student life and morale. The greatest complaint students have about living on the Vern is the lack of food choices, especially compared to the variety available on Foggy Bottom. Personally, I quit eating at Ames regularly by the end of my freshman year to avoid eating more fried food.

Despite these difficulties, Mount Vernon and the bonds made living on the campus will forever define my college years. There are few instances at GW that students will meet a complete stranger and have an instant connection. Yet, if I introduce myself to a fellow Vernie- past or present- that bond exists.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kirsten Gilbert". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial 'K'.

Kirsten Gilbert

The George Washington University Class of 2009