

Testimony of Michael J. Meaney
President, Georgetown University Student Association

Before the DC Zoning Commission
On Georgetown University's 2010-2020 Campus Plan
May 12, 2010

Good evening Mr. Chairman and members of the Commission, I'd first like to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight with regard to Georgetown's campus plan. My name is Mike Meaney and I am President of the Georgetown University Student Association. I am a rising senior in the School of Foreign Service. After studying abroad in Mexico City during the fall semester, I lived in an on-campus apartment this year spring. Next year, I will be living in an off-campus townhouse on 35th and Prospect St.

On behalf of the student association, I want to state my whole hearted support of the proposed campus plan. Over 1,000 students have signed on in support of the campus plan. Approval of the campus plan was an important issue during my campaign. My running mate and I came out strongly in favor of the plan, and students were very receptive. We ultimately won election with 60% of the vote.

The campus plan is extraordinarily important to students. It proposes various projects that would greatly enhance student life on campus. The Student Center at New South is one of the most important projects. It is of great interest to students because of the increased student space it would provide. Expansion of Lauinger is another top priority for students, as it would greatly improve our ability to study and to pursue academic excellence. The renovation of Kehoe Field is another high priority for students as well, because it would better student's ability to participate in extracurricular activities on campus, and it would provide much needed facility improvements for student athletes.

Making the campus more pedestrian friendly in general and providing a green space along library walk are ideas we'd love to see come to fruition because they will make the campus a more livable space in which to walk around in, hang-out and meet fellow students.

None of this will be possible if the Office of Planning recommendations are adopted by the Zoning Commission and we strongly urge you to reject all of them.

Making the university build housing for 100% of its students will create a financial burden on the university that would inhibit anything else from getting done to improve student life for next 10 years. And, for what purpose – there's no guarantee that the housing will be lived in. Many, many juniors and seniors – myself included – want to live off campus. We view doing so as an important next step in their lives.

The urging by Burleith, Georgetown and the Office of Planning to remove students from quote/unquote "their" community smacks of prejudice. For the Office of Planning and the

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 10-32
EXHIBIT NO. 100

neighborhood community to think that housing all students on campus will solve all their problems concerning student noise and student conduct doesn't make sense. It seems as though the ultimate intention is to have all students trapped on campus, completely segregated from the Georgetown community and the DC area in general – which, I might add, Georgetown students contribute a great deal to.

The Office of Planning's report appears far too biased toward the community. To suggest that students are not equal members of the community by trying to deny our rights to live off campus is just wrong.

A better approach can and must be taken to resolve the tensions between Georgetown University and its neighbors. Upon taking office, I appointed a Secretary of Neighborhood Affairs, whose job it would be to work with community in a constructive way to start to resolve our differences. He attends community meetings and is our direct point of outreach to the neighborhood. And, it seems that the student association's commitment to resolving these issues is more sincere than the communities, as I have yet to be contacted by anyone in the community regarding student noise or conduct.

Georgetown has a right to make smart investments to improve student life and as a way to better compete as an academic institution. Yes, there exist real issues between Georgetown University and its neighbors, issues that should be worked through in a constructive a realistic way. But stopping the progress of the campus plan – and in doing so, holding student life at Georgetown hostage – is not best way to do so.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak tonight.