

May 14, 2011

D.C. Zoning Commission,
Suite 210, 441 4th Street, N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20001

2011.05.16 07:08:26

RE: Opposition to Georgetown University Campus Plan 2010-2020, Case No. 10-32

Dear Zoning Commissioners:

I am Cheryl Tlam and I live in a detached home at 4527 Q Street NW, near Glover Archbold Park. We bought our small home in 1986 when my husband was a new foreign service officer. We have kept and improved our home (and I hope our neighborhood) between assignments overseas, always returning to our home with anticipation and pleasure. Around 2002, we appeared before you to get a 200 sq ft addition approved for the back of our 1400 sq ft home to make it large enough to stay in with growing children. At the time, we could tell the Board was somewhat amused at the amount of work we were going through to get a tiny addition approved. What you have now to consider is much more serious and I thank you for your service, then and now.

I am writing to express our strong opposition to Georgetown University's Proposed roadway along the very rim of Glover Archbold Park. I don't live adjacent to Glover Archbold Park and my home's value would in no way be directly affected by the proposed loop road but one of the things we most enjoy about this area is its history and proximity to wonderful parklands. Thomas Jefferson reportedly enjoyed playing violin on an upper balcony of Henry Foxall's summer home where Foxhall Village now stands. In the early 1800s when there were fewer trees, that site could probably have been seen from where I write this letter. Foxall's cannon factory at the mouth of Foundry Branch produced the cannons that are credited with winning the War of 1812 for our nation. Foundry Branch is not an insignificant little gully; it is part of the National Park system and a treasure. Rachel Carson bird watched there. I bird watch there. The park makes a fine in-city loop hike from the C and O Canal towpath, through Glover Archbold Park for a mile or two up as far as a park spur that connects to Battery Kemble Park, through which you can hike to connect to MacArthur Boulevard, across the bike path bridge to the Canal and on around. Following these wonderful trails, one can walk for over two hours crossing only a few roads, all within the creek ravines of the Glover-Archbold and Battery Kemble portions of the Rock Creek Park system. I am humbled by the enormous gift that these parklands were to our city, and by the heroic efforts of community groups through the decades to preserve them. I don't want to be the generation that drops the baton.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO.

10-32

EXHIBIT NO.

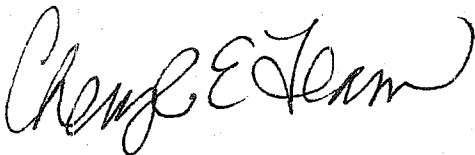
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The proposed "loop road" would be along the very rim of a fragile slope. I simply cannot imagine that such a road could be constructed to support constant traffic by heavy buses without major construction, retaining walls, storm water diversion structures and excavation. Though the University avers that the site is entirely on its property, it is impossible to imagine that such a major construction project on a constricted site would not spill into the park during construction; and if not built with sufficient supporting structure initially, it would literally fall into the park later as the current road has done several times. Construction is messy and invasive, but if very carefully done, time would heal most of the scars, assuming a huge retaining wall structure is not needed. That is a big "if" based on past experience and lack of details from GU.

But when a major roadway with bus traffic is added along one edge of a quiet park, permanent changes starts that are nearly impossible to halt. For all practical purposes, such a roadway destroys the park as a place of quiet refuge from traffic, noise, roads and cement. This loop road would dramatically degrade the experience of the park for the entire stretch of Glover Archbold Park from Reservoir Road to Canal Road. No one goes to a park to walk below a roadway with constant bus traffic; the changes in effect take over the park. By way of example, a private landowner adjacent to Battery Kemble Park put up a large retaining wall on his steeply sloping property. The wall loomed over portions of Battery Kemble Park ruining that entire area of the Park as pleasant parkland. I would not like to see something like that degrading Glover Archbold Park and making the park an unpleasant place to walk.

It is my understanding that there are limits to building heights along the west side of GU's campus, in place to preserve the character of the Park. I believe a new road should be considered to also be an inappropriate "neighbor" to this park. We have huge concerns about future hospital construction and development of the western portions of GU's campus, which has remained mostly sports facilities until now. If the loop road is constructed and the hospital expands further to the south and west, at some point, GU will next be asking for the loop road to be approved for ambulance and hospital traffic and insisting that any earlier concessions that it would not be used as such don't apply since the road is entirely on its property. We understand how Georgetowners would like a respite from GU traffic by rerouting it elsewhere (anywhere elsewhere) but pushing it to the rim of the park is not a good solution. If another road is in fact needed (which I am not willing to concede—public buses as well as GUTS buses already service the hospital), such a road should certainly be sited to protect both the Park and the neighborhoods.

Sincerely,



Cheryl Tlam

4527 Q Street NW

Washington, DC 20007

202-450-2366

tlam.foster@gmail.com