

**Testimony of Ann Haas
Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D
to the District of Columbia Zoning Commission
regarding the
2010 Campus Plan of Georgetown University
Case Number 10-32, May 16, 2011**

Good evening, Chairman Hood and members of the District of Columbia Zoning Commission.

My name is Ann Haas. I am here on behalf of Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D, which extends on Canal Road to the Maryland State line and includes the Palisades, Wesley Heights, American University, New Mexico Avenue, Cathedral Avenue, and Spring Valley.

I represent Foxhall Village, Colony Hill, and the Georgetown Reservoir area. My single member district is separated from Georgetown University by Glover Archbold Park, treasured neighborhood green space. We value its visual serenity and its proximity for respite—a quiet, wooded setting. It is popular for jogging, walking, and birding and, in the snow, for sledding.

Our communities are facing development pressures including ten-year plans of American University and Georgetown University. On March 2, 2011, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 3D voted 8-0-0 to oppose Georgetown University's 2010 campus plan because of conditions likely to become objectionable—noise, traffic, and number of students.

The Loop Road and GUTS Buses—Noise and Traffic

Continuously running GUTS buses on the “loop road” would visually intrude on the park and introduce biodiesel engine noise and exhaust where there are none. The road is being built on a slope that has collapsed twice since 2007, dumping sediment into Glover Archbold Park and the Potomac River. The District's Department of the Environment recently fined the university \$30,000 for failing to prepare a soil erosion plan following emergency slope stabilization.

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Foxhall Village is keenly aware of the university's business just across from the park. Noise goes through the park to backyards and patios.

Initially, Georgetown University intends to route 233 GUTS buses each weekday to Canal Road and the "loop road." In the morning, that would be a bus every 2-1/2 minutes. In 2010, GUTS buses transported 2 million riders, double the number 10 years earlier. Ridership is not likely to decline with 1000 more students.

While the university has yet to offer an alternative to this road, Council Member Mary Cheh has identified two possibilities, including a turn-around at the Lombardi Cancer Center. The loop road is neither necessary nor without consequences—that is, "objectionable conditions" for neighbors and the park.

Hospital and Kehoe Field— Viewscape, Traffic, and Noise

A 160,000 square-foot building on Kehoe Field would add a significant element to the view from the parkland and is likely to generate noise and traffic. Rather than proposing reductions in the use of its land base designed to mitigate impacts on the community, the university's plans threaten more intense uses.

If the hospital is sited along the western perimeter of the campus, the proposed road is likely to serve as the major access route—with constant traffic.

The Scenic Easement and the "Loop Road"

In 1990 and 2000, anticipating a land transfer in order to enlarge the Canal Road entrance to the campus—"to accommodate GU's building program," the National Park Service and Georgetown University obtained real estate appraisals. "The university desires this [Canal Road] parcel," the university's appraisal said. It concluded that because of slopes between 14 percent and 30 percent—the property was not suitable for building. "Buffers and open space are the best use." The appraisal provided for a scenic easement whose purpose was "to protect the *scenic value* of Glover Archbold Park and the Potomac Palisades."

In 2003 Georgetown University obtained land from the National Park Service on Canal Road in a \$7 million Federal Highway Administration “demonstration project” to create an expanded intersection. In exchange, the university granted the National Park Service a scenic easement on 2-1/2 acres of the campus as open space in perpetuity. That was the university’s cost-share.

The scenic easement provides that no road may be built linking north and south entrances to the campus “other than a gated road for service vehicles.” Typically, service vehicles are used for maintenance purposes such as lawn-mowing and trash pick-up.

Despite the clear intention to limit the use of any road in the scenic easement, the university now contends that GUTS buses are service vehicles. Routing buses in view of the easement—or contiguous with it—would not protect the scenic value of Glover Archbold Park and the Potomac Palisades.

The easement also requires the university to obtain permission from the National Park Service to remove trees larger than 6 inches in diameter at 4-1/2 feet above ground. Now the university seeks to claim land in the easement area *and* on National Park Service property for storm water management facilities, pledging to “minimize any slope changes and loss of trees and to provide appropriate screening.” While expressing the conviction that the *scenic easement* does not constrain land uses in the area or contiguous with it, the university proposes to re-contour National Park Service property and remove trees.

Conclusion

Enlarging the Canal Road entrance has given life to the thought that “if you build it, they will come.” We are looking at that same possibility on a steep slope overlooking Glover Archbold Park.

Foxhall Village and the park are threatened by the prospects of a perpetual bus route that defies the spirit if not the letter of the agreement by which the university obtained National Park Service land and Federal Highway Administration funding.

Glover Archbold Park has faced development pressures—including the “Three Sisters Bridge” proposal that would have routed a highway the length of the park to connect with a bridge over the Potomac River. A 1971 court decision characterized the park as having had an “insecure existence.” The decision expressed concern about “converting park land to highway use” and applauded Anne Archbold's dedication to the “preservation of that public park from encroachment” and preventing the “wanton destruction of Glover Archbold Parkway.” Today we need that same dedication. Protecting a public trust will help prevent objectionable conditions for neighbors

We want the university to do the right thing. This is an ethical issue, not just a legal one. We want Georgetown University to be the kind of citizen that it is dedicated to producing. Decisions like the one to be made on the issues being considered today will have profound effects on our community.