

May 30, 2011

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

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

Dear Zoning Commissioners:

My name is Jee Jee Kim, and I live in Georgetown at 1932 37th Street NW Washington, DC 20007 with the Kim family. We have owned this property since 1995. I am writing to express my strong opposition to Georgetown University's Proposed Campus Plan. In the early 2000s, we noticed our quiet street had become increasingly noisy. Both of the homeowners in the townhouses flanking our Burleith home decided to either sell, move out, or rent to tenants. These usually included at least some Georgetown students. Well, that sounds just fine.

Except that it wasn't. It isn't.

The once reasonably quiet corner of our block was suddenly swarming with rowdy, daily barbecuing, beer swilling renters. Yes, swarming. This is not hyperbole when the number of dwellers exceeds the legal limit of four to a townhouse¹, and those dwellers invite their friends, who bring cars that congest the alleyway. On any given night one can hear yelling across her driveway, or the echoes of screams from up to three streets away. This sums up the primary issue: noise.

Neighbor from left side house: "HEY! ERIC! ERIC! ...ERIC! DO YOU WANT US TO BRING THE EXTRA BEER OVER NOW?" (three dogs howl and bark).

Neighbor from right side house: "UH, YEAH! COME ON OVER GUYS THE BURGERS ARE DONE! WE ARE GONNA GET *expletive*-FACED TONIGHT (many voices guffawing)!"

I cannot tell you how often I have suffered the frustration of asking these renters to quiet their voices, radios, and dogs (often roaming the alleyway without leashes). The noise occurs regardless of the hour of day or night when I try to work at my desk, eat breakfast with a newspaper, or get some sleep before a final exam. When asked to be quiet, our neighbors have responded with silent stares, arguments, and smirks. Yet their unapologetic posture did not prepare me for the offensive remarks they have made about my mother and me.

I was shocked to have witnessed some of the residents next door (at 1934) loudly disparaging my mother, Pascale Kim, in whose home I reside, on their porch on the

¹ Five or more making the rental property a business, with all its DC-government stipulations.

2011 MAY 31 PM 1:36
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO. 10-32
EXHIBIT NO. 166

evening of October 30 at around 9 pm. I distinctly overheard them referring to her asking them to quiet down on the morning of October 30 at 9:30 am, and then very audibly say, "She's a whore." Their voices carried clearly to my basement bedroom, which faces the alley and is adjacent to their back porch. Their language could easily have reached her ears, as her upstairs bedroom also faces the alley and thus unfortunately, their often populated porch.

A word about my mother: she is 67 years old, friendly and sympathetic, and very patient. She lent the residents at 1934 her tools and accommodated their needs by moving her car in the past, welcoming them to the neighborhood. Our exasperation with their loud voices is the result of months of politely and finally, bluntly, asking these neighbors to quiet down. Before the noise ordinance law was issued, she and I were often kept awake all night by their gatherings outside. After the passage of the ordinance, we have had to repeatedly ask the neighbors to observe the new law, and have found it necessary to call in law enforcement as frequently as once weekly or more. This has become particularly disturbing when we catch colds or otherwise need to rest.

On another occasion their comments have been about people of color. As a mixed race person, I am disturbed to know that the tenants next door have so little respect for others. Specifically, I find it offensive to overhear such racist remarks as, "He was a black guy, and he just didn't look like he belonged in this neighborhood" (September, 2010). On another occasion, I opened my door to let our cat out and overheard the same residents at 1934 saying, "Ching Chang Ching Chang Chong" (May 2011). I said nothing, closed the door, and 10 minutes later opened it again to let the same cat out (he came back in through his cat door), again hearing, "Ching Chang Ching Chang Chong." Again, I said nothing, and closed the door. I was ill prepared for these encounters, and was unable to capture them on film, the moment having passed. What strikes me about the 1934 tenants (all white males) is that one of their roommates is a woman from China. I would like renters and homeowners in Burleith to know that Burleith citizens expect to welcome those of all races as neighbors.

I also need to point out that as a graduate student among many other students in the area, the audible distraction of frequent carousal becomes more than a nuisance; it is an obstacle for those of us trying to accomplish work and study. While their behavior over the spring, summer, and fall of 2010 has become increasingly overtly rude to our household (ignoring our pleas for peace and quiet), they have also been completely dismissive of respectful neighborly conduct toward other families on our block regarding noise control. The neighbors on the other side of them who recently moved away have two small children, and cited "noise" as one of the main reasons for deciding to leave. As they are on the end of the row, their decision takes the frequent, weekday and weekend parties into consideration. They have had to specifically request that residents at 1934 *not* throw parties on weekdays while they are trying to sell their home.

On the other side of our home, we also have the pleasure of rude, unapologetic renters. The all-female household includes at least one Georgetown student, with whom we have taken no issue. However, at least two of the women at 1930 have made deliberate

efforts to antagonize us with their noise, at least once a day, every day. Specifically, raucous yelling, loud stereo and radio music from indoors and outside, and high-pitched whining and barking dogs comprise the noise from this household. They have befriended the tenants at 1934, and to our great disappointment, get together several days a week, compounding the noise as a larger group. Most upsetting is their ignoring our requests to stop what ranges from highly audible 3 am conversations to 9 am parties, and with an indifference that clearly communicates their lack of concern for disturbing those around them. As a pianist, I am appalled by their inconsideration. I make a point of practicing no more than four days per week, after noon or around 6 pm, and stop practicing by 10 pm (though usually earlier). Only once in my 16 years as a resident of Burleith have I been asked to cease practicing by a neighbor, and I was contrite and respectful of that request. Renters at 1930 recently (in May 2011) called police officers to my home while I practiced at 6:20 pm. The officers specifically told me that they heard me as they approached my house, that I was in no way loud or disturbing, and that I should continue to practice. The neighbor's decision to occupy these officers was spiteful, petty, and immature. As a result of having dealt with these dreadful renters, I am well acquainted with D.C. Law-161, which states:

Noise disturbance – any sound which is loud and raucous or loud and unseemly and unreasonably disturbs the peace and quiet of a reasonable person of ordinary sensibilities in the vicinity thereof, unless the making and continuing of the noise is necessary for the protection or preservation of the health, safety, life, or limb or some person...related to the impact of the noise on the health, safety, welfare, peace, and quiet of the community.

We at 1932 have patiently withstood the deteriorating quality of our home environment for years, and are unwilling to stand by while these issues continue to escalate. With this statement I am including an incomplete documentation of some of the episodes we have dealt with concerning the renters next door to us on either side. My records are as accurate as possible, given that I am not always prepared to capture the neighbors' behavior on tape or paper. I am also including some video footage of a renter at 1934 (and a Georgetown student) arguing with me, and telling me that the noise ordinance is "absurd." That I should have to personally educate each renter about what the law entails is a burden, but the frequency of my having to remind him or her has become intolerable.

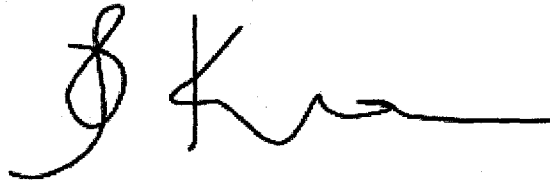
Finally, I am including photographs of the neighbor's garbage from 1934 thrown into our yard, and the neighbor's garbage from 1930, which does not fit in its container. In the past, we also found gum and cigarette butts strewn through our yard, thrown down from the porches of 1930 and 1934. The women at 1930 have been issued citations for dumping paint and piling garbage. This became an issue for our household when our pets stepped in the paint and walked through our home and on our furniture. We have been mistakenly ticketed for the overflowing garbage of the tenants at 1934, and spent much of our free time over a week attempting to fix the problem.

We feel that were Georgetown to continue with its campus plan, we can expect these

problems to be compounded by even more overcrowded, unsanitary, and noisy neighbors. We are not faulting every Georgetown student for such misconduct, and recognize that many of the problem tenants next door are not students at all. However, some of them are, and that makes the university's expansion a major concern to us as homeowners. We do not want to be pushed out of what is a vibrant and lovely neighborhood by daily patio parties and bigoted comments from renters. The tranquility and comfort of our home life continues to be imperiled by them with each passing season.

I believe that the facts stated in this statement are true. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jee Jee Kim', with a stylized, flowing script.

Jee Jee Kim
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