

D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

June 2, 2011

To Whom It May Concern:

Unfortunately I am unable to be present in early June to present my testimony to the commission, but I appreciate knowing that you do read all the letters that are sent in to support the Burleith Citizen's Association case against Georgetown University's 2010 Campus Plan.

I am a Georgetown graduate and I have been living at 3618 T Street in Burleith for 13 years. I testified 10 years ago before the Board of Zoning Adjustment, about the same problems I am presenting today. And, even though GU promised to make things better ten years ago, nothing has changed, rather, things have gotten worse.

Each year, sometimes each semester, I get a different batch of students. Whether or not I can enjoy living in my neighborhood depends to a great extent on the behavior of the students in the homes on my street and the street behind me. Whether a particular batch of students are party animals or not, the homes they lease are always in bad shape, unkempt, weeds take over the bushes, lawns are rarely mowed, and the back alleys are a haven for rats. Students seem incapable of properly closing up their trash in a bag so it doesn't fall out and make the bins a stinking, sloppy, mess.

It seems we are increasingly being dominated by a transient group of residents who have no reason to invest in establishing good relationships, developing community roots, keeping houses and yards in decent shape, in short, being a sustainable part of the neighborhood. Our single family homes are slowly being transformed into group rental housing, resulting in a loss in the continuity of community that has defined the fabric of this neighborhood for decades.

I'm not suggesting that the students are intentionally trying to make our lives miserable. They are just unaware. They roam the streets in large, drunken groups. They hoot and screech and speak at volumes, needed to communicate with someone at the other end of the street rather than someone right next to them. The large gatherings in the back yards create a sense of surround sound of drinking games and party noise. This is a regular occurrence on weekend nights as well as during the week; the nicer the weather, the more numerous the parties, so you can't leave your window open on a lovely spring or fall evening. Locating the house and calling SNAP or the police (a complete waste of resources) to shut down a party is a long process that always results in a time-consuming, noisy departure, with the students being completely oblivious to their disruptiveness of their exit.

I had one experience - during the week - where I heard a very loud conversation in the early morning hours that just wouldn't go away. I finally went to the window and it turns out a couple students had decided to make themselves at home sitting on my patio chairs, right under my window - and of courses - talking and laughing very loudly like it was the middle of the day. This is what I mean by unaware, and thoughtless - it just would not occur to them that maybe someone lived in that house who was trying to sleep. Or if it did, they just did not care.

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District of Columbia

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In addition to these issues, we also have to deal with moving vans on our streets three times a year, when "Emergency No Parking" signs pop up at the last second, resulting in parking tickets when there is inadequate notice (72 hours) which ticketing officers are unaware of. It took me almost one full year to get rid of a \$75 ticket.

The university's policies of very strict anti-noise, anti-parties, anti-drinking policies, combined with expensive and insufficient on-campus housing (which I understand has no cooking facilities for students), forces many students off campus and in particular those students who want to party, drink and be noisy. It is completely unfair of GU to continue to benefit from increased tuition while encouraging there most unruly, inconsiderate students off campus. SNAP is ineffective and I don't feel it should be my responsibility to always be calling the police, wasting public resources to close down a loud party. And the fact is, most of the disturbances come from wandering students – which we cannot do anything about.

Some neighbors have supported the plan, saying all you need to do is talk to the students to let them know why their noise or trash is unpleasant, and eventually they learn to behave better. However, my job is not to train students to become grown ups and learn how to consider others around them. I already have a full time job and when I come home I don't want to spend my time trying to convince them that they need to keep the noise down etc. This is because it is not effective for the most part, and even if it was, I'd have to do this semester after semester, with each new batch of students. Also, with respect to those few neighbors who don't find students a problem, who have testified in support of the GU Plan, I would encourage you to inquire what connections they have with GU officials who are involved with, and have a great stake in promoting the plan. The testimony of friends of these officials should not be admissible in court.

Let me finish by saying I am not against all students. I've met some very fine young people in DC and throughout the world. I've lived in plenty of neighborhoods bordering universities with no problems. However, unlike other universities, Georgetown seems unable or unwilling to take the necessary steps to effectively address student misconduct and to provide adequate, reasonably priced student housing. As a result of this trend, I have been seriously considering selling my home. GU promised to make things better in 2000 - If anything, it's worse. Until they live up to their promises from 2000, I see no reason why we should believe any of their promises in 2010.

Thank you for listening to my case.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Francine', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Francine Steininger
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