

Oral Testimony
Brandel France de Bravo, Burleith Resident
Presented June 6, 2010

Re: Case No. 10-32, Georgetown University Campus Plan

Thank you Chairman Hood and members of the Zoning Commission for allowing me to testify.

I am Brandel France de Bravo, a native Washingtonian who grew up in Georgetown. When I moved back to Washington, D.C. eleven years ago with my husband and daughter, I made my home in Burleith. Having resided in this area on and off for nearly 50 years, I know it well and don't need to be told repeatedly and patronizingly by students that the University has been here since 1789—as though I had settled next to a river that floods annually and should have known better.

People like me choose to live in Burleith and Georgetown because we want an historic neighborhood, close to everything, including the university. Few of us, however, would have purchased homes here had we known the university would continue to expand enrollment by flushing students into the surrounding neighborhoods.

The ratio of students to non students has changed dramatically over the years, making some blocks untenable for family or retiree living. My mother still lives in Georgetown, just 6 blocks from me, and in her patio every week, we find frying pans, used condoms, beer cans, and other party detritus from the house next door.

As DC residents, we pay very steep taxes, while GU pays none. Defenders of the campus plan say the university creates jobs. It would be interesting to know what percentage of GU employees are, in fact, DC residents. Equally interesting would be to know how many GU employees live cheek by jowl with GU students the way we do.

Like all the other Burleith residents I know, I fully support the BCA's position and agree with the Office of Planning's recommendation that GU house 100% if its undergraduates. If it did this, the university would create many more jobs for DC residents who could construct, maintain and supervise properties. Sadly, flooding the community with students only makes work for the police, DPW, AND DCRA

Shouldn't a school known for training our future diplomats be leading the way in finding peaceful resolutions to its town-gown war? And if Georgetown really were a world class university, shouldn't it be rushing to show that it can build affordable, LEED platinum, cutting-edge eco dorms? If GU really cared about its students, wouldn't it stop feeding them to the sharks—slum landlords who don't adhere to building and zoning codes, endangering the lives of students?

Making GU responsible for housing its undergraduate is the only way to restore harmony and balance to our community, which has tipped from a vibrant mix of families, students, and older residents to... a stop on the Kegbus route. Houses once occupied for years, and

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even decades, by tax-paying owners are now being rented out to 6 or more students, who vacate every spring, to be replaced by sub-letters in the summer and then a new batch of students in the fall.

This change has devastated our community and hits the city where it hurts most: its coffers. It's pretty clear that GU is the only party benefitting from the current arrangement, which enables it to continue its poorly planned, underfinanced, and reactive growth, with no regard for the impact on its neighbors.

The university is like an addict, and once more it's "jonesing" for a cheap solution to its growth problems. I'm tired of hearing that GU doesn't have the resources or space to build dorms while it's able to build a new athletic training facility, a new business school, and establish a campus in Qatar.

GU has had since 1789 to build its endowment and plan its expansion. It's time that the university got it right.