

Testimony of Sheila Hegy to the D.C. Zoning Commission regarding Z.C. Case No. 10-32

Good evening Chairman Hood, Commissioners. I am Sheila Hegy. I live at 1919 38th Street, N.W., Burleith, in a home I purchased in 2005. George Oberlander's report mentions my block for its high percentage of student group houses. Forty-one percent of the houses on my block (9 of 22), including a house next door to me, are occupied by groups of Georgetown students. When I surveyed my block for the 2010 Burleith survey, graduate students occupied three of these houses. I am here to testify to adverse impacts resulting from the conversion to student group homes. I want to begin by noting that I did not anticipate these adverse impacts when I bought my home because I had lived without them in neighborhoods with students close to large university campuses in other cities. I enjoy living in diverse neighborhoods and want to emphasize that the issue for me is not home owners vs. renters or students per se. The issue is that relatively small row houses designed for single family occupancy (whether rented or owned) are carved up by investors to be occupied by six (or more) students as a result of Georgetown University's failure to provide sufficient housing for its students. These group homes, and yards, tend not to be well maintained and cause other adverse impacts such as overflowing garbage and sleep-disturbing noise. I worry that the blighted appearance of so many houses will make it difficult for me to sell my home. I am also concerned about the dangers posed by cramming so many students into these relatively small houses. On two occasions, occupants of the house next door told me that eight students were living there, not the maximum six that I understand DC law permits. Noise can come from any of the nine group houses on my block, or from those across the alleys on T or 37th Streets. During the fall and spring semesters this year, the students next door were relatively quiet, but I cannot count on this being the case from one term to another. I have already noticed more noise since the summer students moved in this year. In past years, I have called 911 to report very loud parties on two occasions and was about to do so several other times when I heard the police arriving, apparently in response to someone else's call. The fact that the houses are row houses, exacerbates the noise problem. I have been awakened in the wee hours (as recently as ten days ago) by students simply having a conversation in their back yard. I often simply tolerate the noise because I am reluctant to disturb any person's social event. But when noise is loud enough to prevent sleeping, especially on a night during the work week, it is an adverse impact, whether intended or not. These adverse impacts are a direct result of Georgetown University's failure to house substantially more of its students on campus or in satellite locations outside zip code 20007. The 2010-2020 Campus Plan will only further exacerbate these serious adverse impacts. I urge you to deny approval of the plan. Thank you.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia

CASE NO.

10-32

EXHIBIT NO.

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