

June 6, 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

My name is Marie-Louise Caravatti. I am a Georgetown University graduate and I live at 1405-1407 35th Street N.W. I have lived in this property since 1999, but prior to that I lived at 3425 O Street, N.W., an adjoining property owned by my late husband. I moved there in 1976 and have seen how this part of Georgetown has changed for the worse over the years. I strongly oppose Georgetown University's Proposed Campus Plan.

I have personally witnessed the rental tsunami make its way down the 3500 and 3600 blocks of O Street. When I first moved to the area in 1976 all the homes on these blocks, as well as most of the houses on adjoining blocks were owner-occupied. The houses were well-tended, with flowers in window and tree boxes, garbage cans were never in view except on collection mornings and the area was clean and quiet, with strong neighborhood ties.

In the mid-eighties students started to move off campus, certain houses became established as party houses and residents were increasingly subjected to noise and public intoxication during times when they were trying to get some sleep for the next day's work, trash violations, poorly maintained houses, and, increasingly, traffic and parking problems.

As more homes became student rentals, residents - including a former president of the Georgetown Citizens' Association and Georgetown University professors - moved away, unable to contend with the increasing noise and clashing lifestyles. Today the houses on the 35th and 36th blocks of O Street have all become student rentals.

My very worst experience with Georgetown student renters was when I brought my late husband home from hospital for hospice care and had to listen to loud drunken yelling and screaming coming from a party at 3429 O Street, whose patio abuts mine and is 7 feet away from my home. As sole caregiver I could not leave in the middle of the night to ask a group of inebriated students to quiet down, and quite honestly I was too distraught to take them on.

The students had a hot tub on the patio and partied almost every night. This property has been a near-constant source of disturbance over the years. I have had to have rat exterminators to deal with the effects of improper garbage handling. One morning I was greeted with the sight of a dying rat on my front door as I was leaving for work. The very capable and responsive DC exterminator who had treated the entire 3400 block of O Street told me that the house had been infested with rats.

I am attaching a letter that I wrote to Dean Todd Olson on February 4, asking Georgetown University's help in dealing with drunken parties there, capped with what can only be described as a "synchronized peeing" competition between three students on the patio one afternoon. I have yet to receive a response from anyone at Georgetown University.

The real estate agent who bought my O Street home, as an in-town residence proceeded to rent it to four students who expressed total disdain for the neighbors. Their immediate next-door neighbor was driven to take legal action because he was unable to live with the constant noise. I testified at his trial about incredibly loud parties and a giant satellite dish that the students placed on my new adjoining home's fence, smack in the middle of my living-room window. I asked them to remove it repeatedly for about a

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year and was given the most implausible excuses. It was only when I threatened to join the neighbor's lawsuit that the satellite dish was taken down instantly.

These kinds of problems are not rare and infrequent as Georgetown University contends. They go back at least 25 years and have steadily intensified. 3422 O Street across the street from my then-home was one of the first to cause major problems, with large numbers of student residents who partied constantly. The property was so ill-maintained that one morning one of the students fell through the rusted front steps and broke an ankle. My husband and I told him to report the landlord, but the student was scared to do so. The neighbors were finally able to have the landlord fined for code, garbage and excessive renter violations, but it took us years. The apartments above what used to be Sugar's and is now Saxby's at the intersection of 35th and O, became another party-central, with music blaring from open windows and endless, loud socializing with streams of students walking down O Street from the main campus gates, accompanied by excessive alcohol consumption. Drunken fights sometimes spilled onto the street.

I cannot recount how many times over the past 25 years I have had to go to work bleary-eyed, having been kept awake by loud student partying. I have sometimes reported it, but many times it was impossible, as the time I had to leave the next morning on a 14-hour flight for an energy conference I was organizing and speaking at in South Africa.

Calling Georgetown's hotline is simply another exercise in frustration. The last time I telephoned to complain about a loud party late at night I was asked for the exact house address, not the intersection, before they would send a SNAP car, which would have required me to get dressed and walk out onto the streets in the middle of the night. A complaint about garbage strewn all around nearby student houses was followed the next day by someone entering my front yard and vomiting in the entrance. It is an uncanny coincidence that after registering complaints one often experiences acts of vandalism the very next day.

The increasing number of students living off campus also cuts down on resident parking, as more cars are registered per house, in addition to parking spaces taken up by students who drive to attend classes from other areas. I regularly see students arriving for evening classes parked in their cars outside my house, eating dinner in the vehicle before taking out their book bags and proceeding onto campus, two blocks away.

The University's solution places the burden on the residents, the police, and other DC agencies. Not only is the District losing tax money, but its scarce resources are being used to deal with problems directly brought on by GU's actions, or lack thereof. Most residents generate at most two trash cans per house, but student-rented homes have anywhere from three to five cans in addition to several recycling bins that are permanently left out on the sidewalk, for any passerby to fling half-consumed food and beverages into. This ensures that our streets are permanently strewn with garbage and has contributed to the infestation of rats. Sanitation workers have far more trash to pick up in the same amount of time, and can be seen struggling to keep to their schedule. The DC Department of Health has had to send rodent control staff out to the neighborhood repeatedly to deal with the growing rat population.

In the late 1980s I worked with the ANC in the effort to get Georgetown University to extend its Code of Conduct to off-campus students. We had many meetings between University officials and neighbors, but the University resisted for years, citing costs and legal objections. Eventually, the University agreed to a watered-down code and a hotline.

As residents started to use the hotline we saw an increase in vandalism, coincidentally at the properties whose owners had made complaints. I had to give up on flower boxes because they were regularly emptied onto the pavement with plants ripped out. Others saw damage to vehicles parked on the street,

urination and trash on their property. When we went back to the University we were told we had to have proof that students were to blame. Obviously, since working adults are not about to stay up all night to catch perpetrators in the act, we suggested that the Campus Police drive around the neighborhood, and knock on the doors of loud student parties, but the University flatly rejected this, saying it was illegal for them to do so. It took us over 15 years to get the University to start what is now the SNAP program.

When we asked that more undergraduates be housed on campus, the University proceeded to convert properties in residential areas into student housing and re-define "campus housing." As the residents who live across the street from Magis Row can testify, this is no solution whatsoever to their problems.

It is only when new a new Campus Plan has to be submitted that there is a flurry of activity on the part of the university to enhance its off-campus student program. But over a 25 year period it has become clear that these measures are ineffectual

The University sees its higher calling as justification to discount any adverse impacts on its neighbors. Georgetown's current expansion plan rests on pushing more of its students out into the adjoining community and minimizing the harm that this does to the residents. But the time has come for Georgetown to develop a different business plan. I urge the Commission to reject the current campus plan and to tie *any* future enrollment increase to the creation of a satellite campus and satellite housing. The University owns other tax-exempt properties in DC, such as the Georgetown Law School, in areas that desperately need more development, and have nowhere near the population density of West Georgetown. In the long run this would actually benefit the University, because it would force it to develop an alternative to what is currently an unsustainable strategy.

While by no means a majority of the student body, unruly students have a disproportionate impact on the residential area. Therefore, the University must house 100% of its undergraduates on campus and strengthen sanctions against disorderly behavior in order to prevent further damage to an already over-stressed neighborhood.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Marie-Louise Caravatti

**MARIE-LOUISE CARAVATTI**  
1405-1407 35th Street, N.W. • Washington, D.C. 20007

Dr. Todd Olson  
Vice President for Student Affairs  
Georgetown University  
Washington, D.C. 20007

February 4, 2011

Dear Dean Olson,

I am writing to request immediate intervention with a group of your students living off-campus at 3429 O Street, N.W. We have a situation that is spiraling out of control and students who are engaging in ever-more inconsiderate and destructive behavior.

My home is adjacent to 3429 and unfortunately only seven feet away from their small patio, so that I have a full view of the property from mine, and obviously sound carries directly. The students have had a number of very loud parties in the past, including beer-chugging contests, but I refrained from lodging complaints and tried asking them to keep the noise down instead. But in the last week their irresponsible behavior has intensified, as has their drunkenness.

On Friday, January 28 there was a very loud party in the house with about twenty young men and women outside on the patio consuming alcohol, yelling and screaming at one another for several hours. The next morning I saw one young man urinating in the patio amidst the left over beer cans and cups. I had seen this happen before, but was too embarrassed for the young man to report it, although I was upset enough by it to talk to my neighbors. Shortly thereafter I heard loud yelling as drinking started up again with about ten young men in the patio. The party dispersed, but incredibly, I saw *three* young men urinating in various corners of the patio and laughing about it hysterically. I was so taken aback that I rapped on a window and the three of them took off into the house.

Last night there was another party that spilled onto the patio. It went on till about midnight with loud yells interspersed with repeated slamming of doors. This time a beer keg was out on the patio. There are houses all around 3429 with working adults and yet these young people are completely insouciant to the impact of these sophomoric antics on their neighbors.

Can you possibly wonder why Georgetown residents are against your campus plan?

The increased frequency of the partying, escalation in noise and disgraceful personal behavior on the part of these students warrants your immediate attention. I would like to know what action you will be taking.

Sincerely,



Dr. Marie-Louise Caravatti

Cc: Jeffrey Jones, ANC2E Commissioner