

From: wksla@aol.com <wksla@aol.com>

To: wksla@aol.com

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

Date: Mon, Jun 20, 2011 4:01 pm

June 20, 2011

D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th Street NW, Suite 210
Washington, DC 20001

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

Dear Zoning Commissioners:

The Friends of Glover Archbold Park and the GAP Watershed Group opposes Georgetown University's proposal to build a loop road overlooking Glover Archbold Park as part of their 2010 campus plan.

The Friends of Glover Archbold Park has been organizing park/wetland cleanups, invasive plant removals, bird walks and storm drain markings for many years. We have partnered with the National Park Service, the Center for Urban Ecology, the District's Department of Environment, the Alice Ferguson Foundation, the Audubon Naturalist Society, Georgetown University's Eco Action, American University's Eco Sense, George Washington University's Green GW and FoRCE. We recently formed the GAP Watershed Group to address issues that occur outside the park which impact Foundry Branch and Glover Archbold Park. Last year more than 80 volunteers helped cleanup one of the designated wetlands in Glover Archbold. This year, sixty eighth graders from Saint Albans School organized a garlic mustard pull and became Stream Team Monitors. Our long term goals include installing "green streets" on the edge of the park and daylighting Foundry Branch.

We are especially concerned that Georgetown University plans to build the proposed loop road on the old service road that collapsed twice in the past four years, dumping rubble and sediments into Glover Archbold Park and Foundry Branch. This was supposed to be an engineered slope in a scenic easement.

There are now signs of the steep engineered slope failing in a third location.

Where will the GUTS buses go when the slope fails again. What is Georgetown University's Plan B?

We have worked with several Georgetown University faculty members who use Glover Archbold Park as their outdoor classroom. They also oppose the proposed loop road. We would like to invite you to see one of the last remaining natural areas on the Georgetown University campus, near the observatory, adjacent to Glover Archbold Park. This natural area will be destroyed if the proposed loop road is

approved and built - the mature trees will be cut down and the slope will be extensively regraded. The noise, traffic and exhaust fumes from the GUTS buses will negatively impact the Glover Archbold Park visitor's experience.

As a landscape architect with more than 25 years experience working with some of the top firms and architects in the area, I know there are several viable alternatives that are less expensive and more sustainable than the proposed loop road. The least expensive alternative is a bus turnaround in front of the Lombardi Cancer Center. In the 2010 campus plan, Georgetown University proposes to move the large concrete retaining wall on the west side of West Drive. By simply building this retaining wall another 20-30 feet to the west, a bus turnaround with a 40 foot turning radius is possible. This environmentally friendly bus turnaround could incorporate permeable paving, rain gardens, native plantings and parking for 8-10 cancer patients. Another alternative is a clockwise loop road, which would better serve the Georgetown University community. This route could use existing infrastructure - go up West Road, turn right at the Lombardi Cancer Center and go down Tondorf Drive. GUTS bus riders would have just 400-600 feet to walk to bus stops on Tondorf Drive, as opposed to 1,000-1,200 feet to bus stops on West Road in Georgetown University's current proposal.

The District's Comprehensive Plan recommends protecting these narrow green ribbons of parkland and stream valley parks. Glover Archbold Park shares a unique history - Rachel Carson brought her students here in the 1950s when she was writing *Silent Spring*, a major turning point in the environmental movement. We like to invite our volunteers to walk in Rachel Carson's footsteps. We invite you to do the same and oppose the loop road. The proposed loop road is a step in the wrong direction.

We ask the members of the Zoning Commission to oppose Georgetown University's proposed loop road and to ask Georgetown University to consider more sustainable alternatives.

Respectfully,



Kent Slowinski
GAP Watershed Group
Friends of Glover Archbold Park

The Washington Post



Thunderstorm 86/70 • Tomorrow: Thunderstorm 89/73 • DETAILS, C12

SUNDAY, JUNE 19, 2011

W36

The Washington Post

SUNDAY, JUNE 19, 2011

Local OPINIONS

WRITE FOR US

Local Opinions, a place for commentary about where we live, is looking for submissions of 300 to 500 words on timely local topics. Submissions must include name, e-mail address, street address and phone number, and they will be edited for brevity and clarity. To submit your article, please go to washingtonpost.com/localopinions.



NEAL FITZPATRICK AND KENT SLOWINSKI WASHINGTON

How neighbors put the squeeze on D.C.'s national parks

When we speak of natural places in Washington — havens for wildlife, sanctuaries of ecological integrity, destinations for people seeking a calm retreat — we are usually referring to our national parklands. Rock Creek Park, the C&O Canal and Kenilworth Aquatic Gardens are among the cherished places that generations of Washingtonians have visited to enjoy nature and find relief from noise and concrete. While the city does have numerous additional neighborhood parks, most of them are maintained by the D.C. government for recreation and other high-intensity uses.

But encroachment on the national parks' corridors of land and water is an ever-present danger in an urban setting like Washington. Institutions, commercial interests and homeowners all contribute to a steady loss of land and diminishment of these parks' integrity. To make matters worse, an understaffed National Park Service can't adequately police and defend these properties.

The latest threat comes from a plan by Georgetown University to run shuttle buses along the steep, western boundary of its campus abutting Glover Archbold Park, which is an arm of Rock Creek Park. The university projects running 233 buses daily, Monday through Friday, which could bring the vehicles along the park about 20 times an hour — a bus every 2½ minutes. So much for peace and tranquility in Glover Archbold.

With this plan, Georgetown is insisting on using a service road that twice has collapsed into the park because of faulty engineering, dumping sediment into Poudre Branch and the Potomac River. The road is showing signs of failing again, but university officials say an



COURTESY RACHEL CARSON COUNCIL

Conservationist Rachel Carson, center, and others tour D.C.'s Glover Archbold Park in 1962.

alternate internal loop road that would better serve the student community or a bus turnaround near the Lombardi Cancer Center will not work. The National Park Service, while unhappy, isn't contesting Georgetown's proposal.

The significance of Glover Archbold is well-known to naturalists. It was the site of a long-term bird breeding census spearheaded by environmentalist Rachel Carson while she was a resident of the Washington area.

But Glover Archbold is just the latest example. Other national parklands already have been seriously compromised. About 10 years ago, a developer began work on a nine-story apartment complex at the corner of Connecticut Avenue and Tilden Street, bordering the Melvin Hazen tributary of Rock Creek Park. Despite this highly vi-

sual imposition, and the disturbance of the stream's headwaters, the D.C. government required nothing from this developer to compensate for the damage done.

The past decade also has seen the spread of cellphone towers into Washington's national parks. This blight on the skyline and danger to birds is an unfortunate federal mandate that can't be overturned without an unlikely congressional policy reversal. Another threat from a federal initiative lies in the planned expansion of the Department of Homeland Security on Nebraska Avenue, next to headwaters of Poudre Branch in national parkland.

In all, Rock Creek Park officials estimate that there have been 90 instances of encroachment, big and small, throughout the properties in the 2,000 acres these officials over-

see. These include homeowners "borrowing" parkland for swimming pools or home additions — not to mention the constant dumping of trash and yard waste into stream valley ravines. Federal and city officials had to go to court in 2009 to get one homeowner to remove a 400-foot-long wall on the edge of Battery Kemble Park, another Park Service property.

In another boundary dispute, negotiations continue about a particularly invasive plan that would have cut down 60 mature trees, and destroyed breeding pools for amphibians to build 11 houses by Rock Creek Park, on the Montgomery County line near East-West Highway. Though the original clear-cut proposal has been headed off by a residents group and the Park Service, the property owners haven't publicly abandoned their goal of building on the edge of the park.

The public should keep these cases in mind as Georgetown University prepares its "in your face" bus loop abutting Glover Archbold Park, and recall that the university also wants to muscle its way into C&O Canal National Historical Park by building a giant boathouse on the Capital Crescent Trail, just west of Key Bridge. That's also National Park Service property.

On Monday night, the D.C. zoning commission will hold its final hearing on Georgetown University's plan. The National Park Service must be more vigilant and work with concerned neighbors and elected officials to defend our national park sanctuaries in the District.

Neal Fitzpatrick is executive director of the Audubon Naturalist Society. Kent Slowinski is the advisory neighborhood commissioner for Wesley Heights.