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OFFICE OF ZONING
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

9 July 2000

Ms. Shelia Cross-Reid
Director, Board of Zoning Adjustment
Suite 210
441 Fourth Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Ms. Gross-Reid:

Given my experiences as a Burleith owner-resident at 3603 R Street N.W. since 1973, I fully support the Burleith Citizens Association opposition to the Georgetown University Ten Year Plan. Any increase in undergraduate student enrollment without on-campus housing facilities will once again be a disaster for a once-closely-knit community just beginning to recover from the consequences of off-campus undergraduate housing. Accommodating increased graduate student enrollment will also impact negatively on this community, decreasing the availability of housing for families.

As early as 1973 – 1975 late – night, early -morning binge drinking, drug using parties and unsanitary practices at 3607 R Street N.W. – a rental house occupied by a Georgetown University undergraduate drop-out, some of his student friends, and a Cocoran student – so disrupted my life and the lives of my neighbors at 3605 that the 2nd District police frequently arrested the occupants, who were fined, and unrepentant. Ultimately we took the occupants to court; their lease was not renewed. This was an early warning of unpleasantries to come.

In the early 1980's Georgetown alumni – at that time resident in the 3700 block of R – startred buying up Burleith houses and renting them to Georgetown University undergraduates. Thus began community experience of the late-night/early morning binges with loud music, the early morning street disturbances, the overflowing trash cans and littered alleys, the uncared-for lawns, and the cars parked in the alleys, blocking traffic. Rents for student houses were and still are exhorbitant. The rule limiting occupancy to six unrelated persons was consistently violated; eight to ten students shared houses built for small families. Basements also were illegally occupied. At that time there was but one inspector. I recall him telling me that he seldom could gain admission to the student rental houses and that when he did the students would assure him that the additional four or five residents were "guests".

Student rental houses in the 3600 blocks of R and S Streets, the 3500 block of S (which unfortunately I could hear) and in the alley behind the houses on the east side of 37th Street were for the most part noisy, unkempt, and unsanitary. (There is one lone exception in the 3601 block of S.)

Families with young children were discouraged from buying in Burleith. Community spirit suffered. Only in the last year, fueled perhaps by promised strict enforcement of occupancy rules and high real estate prices, have families with young children returned to Burleith and community spirit been somewhat revitalized.

Georgetown University has in recent years been somewhat sensitive to community problems with student behavior. But there are overwhelming limits to what a university can do about off-campus behavior– it cannot act in lieu of parents; it cannot impose penalties effective in today's environment. The one effective university action is housing out-of D.C. undergraduates on campus and limiting the number of graduate students seeking commuity housing.

The preservation of communities ensures the health of the city – the preservation of Burleith is important not only to its owner-residents but to the District. I hope that the Zoning Commission will act to protect us.

Sincerely

Janice H. Hopper
Ph,D. Sociology

CASE No. 16566 BZA
EXHIBIT No. 78

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16566
EXHIBIT NO.78