02-30

5819 Sherier Place NW
Washington DC 20016
4 May 2003

Ms. Carol Mitten, Chair
DC Zoning Commission
441 4th St. NW #210
Washington DC 20001

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Dear Ms. Mitten and fellow Commissioners:

I write to register the strongest protest possible against a land grab proposed by Georgetown University. This effort takes the form of a seemingly simple proposal to build a boathouse upstream of Key Bridge. However, this proposed structure would occupy unzoned land that is part of the C&O Canal National Historical Park, between the Capital Crescent Trail (CCT) and the Potomac River. It would be a terrible idea to allow Georgetown to ruin the atmosphere of this section of the river by erecting a massive -- 300 feet long, 60 feet high, and 60 feet wide – building.

Not only would the university's structure block the view of Key Bridge and the river from part of the canal towpath, but the arrangement would force the Capital Crescent Trail to serve as a conduit for a steady stream of vehicles required to build and service the boathouse, which also could include docks extending 85 feet into the Potomac -- itself another intrusion. Despite the apparently benign nature of a boathouse, it would be wrong to allow construction of this one, whose erection and maintenance would do irreparable damage to the riverine environment and patterns of community that have emerged along the river upstream of Key Bridge.

History has seen this area go from untrammeled natural habitat to industrial zone to recreational space. To build a boathouse on this parkland would reverse this arc, setting an unwholesome and unwelcome precedent by reprising the transmogrification that the riverside underwent in the 19th century, when it was a site for factories, railroad lines, abattoirs, cattle yards, and other uses that subordinated the natural riverscape to the purposes of profit – a status that, mercifully, did not last long enough or dig deeply enough to prevent the riverside from regaining a measure of its natural balance, as other American rivers flowing through other American cities have done in recent decades.

However, this recovery is a fragile one, and easily could be undone. Say no to Georgetown.

Sincerely,

Michael Dolan
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ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 122

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.122