RONALD EICHNER
3914 LEGATION STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC
20015

D.C. ZONING COMMISSION
2002 DEC -3 AM 11:16

DC ZONING COMMISSION
CAROL MITTEN, CHAIR
441 4TH STREET, NW
WASHINGTON, DC 20001

RE: CASE 02-30, GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY BOATHOUSE

Dear Members of the Commission:

I would like to register my support of Georgetown University's request for a zoning determination that would permit them to build the boathouse that they have been planning along the Potomac River on Tract 102-114.

As an urban planner who devoted many years looking for innovative ways to integrate Federal and local interests to the benefit of all who use central Washington, DC, I have seen that the most successful urban areas -- including parks -- are those that feature a mix of uses. To be sure, all uses do not mix well everywhere, but clearly, a mix of recreational uses is appropriate and desirable for an urban park. Do the paddleboats diminish our experience of the Jefferson Memorial? Is the National Zoo inappropriate in "natural" Rock Creek Park? Of course not. These uses enrich urban life whether you participate or not. Plans to include facilities that encourage rowing on the Potomac are not merely for the rowing community. The very presence of the activity enhances everyone's experience of the riverfront as a lively part of our City's life. I believe that the Office of Planning's recently unveiled vision for the future of the Potomac waterfront has diversity of use at its core.

The National Park Service has worked for a long time with a wide range of 'stakeholders' to develop a comprehensive plan for the waterfront. The Georgetown University boathouse is an integral part of that overall plan. Planning in sensitive areas such as the Georgetown waterfront always means carefully balancing many conflicting requirements. Take away one piece and it all falls apart. Without the Georgetown University boathouse as it is envisioned, important parts of the rest of this plan will not hold together and the public interest would not be served. Not only would the entire rowing community suffer but other members of the public would also be impacted if boathouse space must be relocated where it would be more intrusive on other waterfront uses.

As an avid bicyclist and user of the Capital Crescent Trail, I would like to note that this seems to be an appropriate trail-side use. In fact, it seems to be an extension of similar, existing, uses. I find the presence of the existing boathouses and Fletchers to be an unobtrusive and pleasant aspect of my many rides on the Trail.

As the parent of a member off the Sidwell Friends Crew Team, I want to underscore that the creation of a boathouse for Georgetown will have an impact on the City's high school rowers. Planned changes on the waterfront between the Creek and Washington Harbour will displace high school facilities, and have a potentially devastating impact on some high school rowing programs. Please understand that for high schoolers, the accessibility and convenience of the Georgetown waterfront makes it the only feasible site

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30
Exhibit 248

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.248

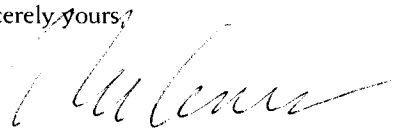
for rowing in the early morning and late afternoon. As you know, the construction of the Georgetown Boathouse will result in space being freed-up in Thompson's for the high school teams.

Historically, I am told that at one time there were as many as six boathouses along the Georgetown stretch of the Potomac River. Over the last two decades, the sport of rowing has enjoyed a resurgence that, interestingly, parallels the renaissance in our urban areas. High school participation along this stretch of the Potomac has more than quadrupled in this time, and college and adult participation has also grown dramatically. Men and women participate in nearly equal numbers at all these levels. It has been estimated that 1500-2000 people participate actively here. Rowing accounts for more people-hours of recreational river use per year in this location than any other activity. Obviously, the only place that you can put boathouses is along the river. Use of land for boathouses along the river is therefore both appropriate and in the public interest.

As a resident and a second generation Washingtonian, I care passionately about this City and I find many of the changes that have taken place in my lifetime to be quite rewarding – the Mall has been restored, life has come back to Pennsylvania Avenue and Seventh Street, the Georgetown waterfront is no longer an industrial wasteland, Metro is bringing a new energy to neighborhood centers -- all for the good. And still, I hear people talk about the need to "improve the City's image" through expensive and questionable efforts like auto races on city streets or building a flashy new baseball stadium. I say: save the money and the gas and come down to the Potomac at dawn when the high school teams are on the water. The physical beauty of the misty river and the joy of seeing area children downtown, making full use of their energies and this regional resource is, well, "awesome." If you have ever seen morning rowers on the Charles in Cambridge, or the boathouses lining the Schuylkill in Philadelphia with their little lights at dusk, you understand how lasting some images of a city can be.

I urge the Commission to approve this request for rezoning to permit Georgetown University to build a boathouse according to the plan that they and many others have worked out.

Sincerely yours,



Ronald Eichner
29 May 2003