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June 4, 2003

D.C. ZONING COMMISSION
2003 JUN -4 PM 4:30

The District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441-4th Street, N.W.
Suite 210 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Re: The Georgetown University Boathouse Application
Case No. 0330/0331

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to express my support for two things, the application of the Georgetown University for appropriate zoning for its boathouse site, and for a deliberative process that is based upon fact and reason, not polemics and misdirection. It is an abuse of your process and our rights as citizens when a vocal minority decides that hysteria and hyperbole should be a part of the decision making process. People who find the Georgetown University boathouse plan a surprise are completely ignorant of what has been happening on the Georgetown waterfront for the past twenty years. People who would have us believe that a boathouse will block views or destroy parkland deny history and reality. The C & O Canal and the Potomac River are hundreds of miles long. To suggest that a boathouse will have any impact on river views is to suggest that you can hide an elephant behind the eyelash of a gnat.

The history of this part of the river is quite interesting. I am enclosing two photographs taken at the time of the Civil War looking north from the Aqueduct Bridge. The first shows what appears to be a mill where the Washington Canoe Club now stands and another mill a quarter of a mile farther north, with a long trestle or wharf extending past all of these buildings. Georgetown University sits on the hill above the second mill. The second photograph looks farther north to the area where Foxhall Road comes down towards the river and shows a very substantial development. This was the area where Henry Foxhall built his Ordnance Factory in 1797, and where Oliver Perry got the

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cannon for the ships he used in the Battle of Lake Erie when he defeated the British during the War of 1812. This factory was also a target when the British invaded Washington in August of 1814. Clearly, the river's edge for a mile north of Georgetown has been actively used for business and commerce since the birth of the City. The notion that we might continue to use a portion of it is consistent with human endeavor.

The third photograph I enclose is one taken in 1920 when the present Key Bridge was under construction. The Potomac Boat Club is partially obscured by the Aqueduct Bridge, and we see a quarter mile of boathouses leading down to the river north of the bridge. The entire space between the Washington Canoe Club and the bridge is filled up with boathouses and boat ramps, and there are smaller facilities running north. Dempsey's Boathouse was a popular destination south of the Canoe Club before this picture was taken. Clearly, the Georgetown waterfront was a very popular place for District residents to go down to the water in times past. We also know that rowing on the upper Potomac has been a part of our heritage since just after the Civil War.

Georgetown University has been interested in building a boathouse on the river for its rowing program for twenty years, and its interest has matured as planning for the Georgetown waterfront progressed. In 1984, the National Park Service, in cooperation with the District of Columbia, began a public planning process to study the future of the Georgetown waterfront. This effort resulted in a plan published in 1987 for the development of park and recreational space on the waterfront as land was taken out of industrial use. A part of that plan was a clearly designated "boathouse zone" running from north of the Washington Canoe Club down to and including the area designated for a floating restaurant. The plan for waterfront improvement including new boathouses has been on the table for over 15 years. Georgetown University, after years of work, was able to reach an agreement with the Park Service on a plan for its boathouse nearly five years ago. This plan has been the subject of public reporting and discussion for that entire period. More recently, in attempting to quantify the current use of the waterfront by rowers to help guide planning for boathouse use, a detailed study was produced by The George Washington University and the High School Rowing Coalition developing current information on the sites in the "boathouse zone" and the needs of the rowing community today. This information has been taken into account in the recent work to update planning on the Georgetown Waterfront by the National Park Service with Wallace, Roberts and Todd, a continuation of the public planning process.

Historically, the Georgetown waterfront has enjoyed commercial use ranging from the Foxhall and Duvall Foundries, to tobacco wharves, to the mills of recent memory, for over two hundred years. Zoning for much of the 20th century was industrial. In the late 1970's, recognizing that the future held prospects for residential development, the Zoning Commission adopted the Waterfront (W) zones to encourage mixed use, which is the basis for much of the new development that makes Georgetown so exciting and alive today. Boathouses belong on the waterfront. What better place is there for people to go down to the water than where they live. Georgetown University has labored long and hard to achieve the goal of a boathouse on the Potomac River in Georgetown, and they have chosen to do it in concert with the planning efforts of the past two decades. The application of zoning to their intended site is one of the last steps in the process which they have been diligently following to complete this goal. I support and encourage the Zoning Commission in its action today to validate the efforts of the Park Service and the City in furthering the use and vitality of this important part of our City.

Sincerely,

Richard W. Carr





