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Washington, D.C. 20007
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16 May 2003

Carol J. Mitten, Chair
Zoning Commission
D.C. Office of Zoning
441 4th Street, N.W.
Suite 210 South
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Chairman Mitten,

As a member of the Georgetown Waterfront Park Design Committee, I am writing to support Georgetown University's request for a variance that would allow them to proceed with the construction their proposed boathouse west of the Washington Canoe Club. I base this support on a general need as well as the specific design proposal.

The general need for additional boat storage capacity in this area of the Potomac is well established - the extraordinary growth of rowing activity over the past ten or fifteen years, by both high school and Title IX women's teams, has made the Thompson facility inadequate. The situation is about to be further exacerbated by the construction of a new Swedish Embassy on the site of the current outdoor boat storage area just east of Washington Harbor.

To address this problem, the National Park Service has proposed a boathouse zone from 34th street to a point 1100 feet upstream From Key bridge as potential sites for new boathouses. In addition to the Georgetown University boathouse, this zone would accommodate a proposed boathouse for George Washington University, a concession operated facility for privately owned single and double shells, Jacks Canoe Rental and the existing Washington Canoe Club and Potomac Boat Club.

This "boathouse Row" would enhance the ambience of the Georgetown waterfront by reinforcing the century-old tradition of rowing and canoeing in this historical location. In addition, relocating Georgetown and George Washington University crews to their own facilities would allow Thompson's to be developed for the area's high school teams and alleviate their critical problem of inadequate boat storage.

Frank Schlesinger FAIA

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.288

I would like to address some of the objections to the specific design proposal that have appeared in the Washington press:

" It is grotesque in terms of its'size".
At 292', the proposed boathouse is 50' longer then Thompsons, not an unusual size for this kind of facility. Furthermore, unlike Thompsons, it is not a monolith but is arranged in three wings to reduce its scale and apparent size.

"- docks extend 70' into the water – would restrict boat traffic".
Ramps are required to extend into the water to allow proper slope to docks and allow for changing water levels. The river at this point is over a quarter of mile wide. 1300 feet should allow adequate maneuvering space in front of the dock.

"- would obstruct the view of the Key Bridge from portions of the C&O Canal towpath".
Because of the dense vegetation along both the towpath and the Capital Crescent Trail, views of the river exist only during the winter from November to April in any event. During these months, spaces between the side wings and the central roof will allow limited views.

"- the boathouse would have to use the trail as a road to get to it".
The Capital Crescent Trail will not be used as access either before or after construction. A separate 10' wide access will be provided for emergency access and service. Vehicular access by staff or students will not be allowed.

Muse Architects has a national reputation for basing their work on a sensitive response to site and contextual conditions. That skill is amply illustrated in the design proposal before you. I urge you to allow this deserving project to move forward.

Respectfully submitted,

and its architectural merit has been attested to by its approval by OCB & CFA

Frank Schlesinger FAIA