TESTIMONY BEFORE THE D.C. ZONING COMMISSION
RE: GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY BOATHOUSE; Z.C. CASE #02-30
BY ROBERT H. BRAUNOHLER, A MEMBER OF THE
HIGH SCHOOL BOATHOUSE COALITION

Good evening members of the Commission, ladies and gentlemen. My name is Robert Braunohler, and I am testifying tonight in support of the Applicant. I am a parent of a daughter who rowed at Sidwell Friends School, and I have been involved for over five years as a volunteer in the effort to find a permanent home for the many high school rowing programs that rely on access to the Potomac River.

I am speaking tonight as a member of the High School Boathouse Coalition. The Coalition represents Washington, DC area schools that row on the Potomac River near Georgetown. Twelve high schools share Thompson's Boat Center with Georgetown University, George Washington University, six other college and club programs and over 200 recreational boaters. Most of the high school shells are stored outdoors to the west of Thompson's in a temporary compound. The planned construction of the new Swedish Embassy building will eliminate the temporary compound. Even in the absence of that threat, the requirement for non-motorized boat storage along the Georgetown Waterfront has long been recognized as a real and growing problem.

I would like to emphasize that the public process leading to this rezoning application started a long time ago. Since 1997, the High School Coalition has been working with the National Park Service (NPS), Georgetown University, George Washington University and the Georgetown Waterfront Commission in a series of public meetings to plan a new Georgetown Waterfront Park. These meetings included every individual or group that had expressed any interest in the future of the riverfront. The opponents of this rezoning were notably absent during that entire period.

The Waterfront Park planning process has just been concluded in a manner acceptable to all parties, including the Georgetown Citizens Association, the ANC, the Universities, the Georgetown Waterfront Commission, the NPS and the boating community. The recently-unveiled plan for the Georgetown Waterfront Park will create inviting green space where there is now pavement and parking, and it will rationally utilize the entire waterfront from Washington Harbor to the proposed Georgetown University Boathouse. The Waterfront Park will include new boathouses not only for Georgetown, but also for George Washington University and the community of recreational kayakers, canoeists and rowers. All three boathouses are critical to solving the long-term facilities problems of the institutional and recreational athletes who use the river most.

The Waterfront Park plan is the result of thousands of man-hours of volunteer time and effort, put forth by planning professionals and concerned citizens over six years, and it was preceded by more than ten years of groundwork by many of the same people. After all those years of questioning, negotiating and compromising in a public forum, it now appears that people who had chosen not to participate in hammering out this plan ar

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suddenly interested in trying to stop it. These parties did not complain when the subject property was one of four parcels approved by the National Capital Planning Commission as a boathouse site back in 1987. The opponents here tonight were notably silent when the Georgetown University boathouse design received enthusiastic approvals by the Commission of Fine Arts, the Old Georgetown Board and the ANC. If the Zoning Commission were to give any serious weight to the testimony of these opponents, it would make a mockery of the long hours that many dedicated people invested in the proper, open, public process that culminated in this application.

The opponents' goal of derailing this boathouse is, in effect, an attempt to undo the work of the Georgetown Waterfront Commission. Let me be clear: Opponents of this rezoning are opposing the Georgetown Waterfront Park. I invite them to ask themselves:

- Do they really want to force Georgetown University to build on its own land one mile upstream?
- Do they really want to hinder the conversion of ten acres of pavement into a green, vibrant public park?
- Do they really want to unravel six years of negotiated planning work by the Georgetown Waterfront Commission?

If the answers to these questions are "no," they should recognize the parochial nature of their actions and allow this proposal to go forward. The greater good of a functional, integrated, user-friendly public waterfront depends on it.

If ever there was an applicant that played by the rules, listened and responded to every valid concern and earned the trust and admiration of all parties to a public process, it has been Georgetown University in the case of this boathouse. I strongly urge the Zoning Commission to grant its approval to this rezoning and allow the first step to be taken in creating a new Georgetown Waterfront Park. Thank you.