The Vorhes Studio

June 13, 2003

Carol Mitten, Chair
D.C. Zoning Commission
441 4th St. NW Suite 210
442 Washington, DC 20001

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D.C. ZONING COMMISSION

Dear Ms. Mitten,

I am a member of the Whitman High School Crew Booster Club, and an Industrial designer with several years in master landscape planning for the California State University system and other colleges in the Los Angeles area. I have also been a part of the High School Boathouse Coalition working to assure a place on the Potomac in Georgetown to house the sizable fleet of high school racing boats. I have been following carefully the process used by both Georgetown and George Washington Universities to get space assigned for their planned new boathouses and I heartily support the plans and designs proposed.

I have heard that there is a small but vocal opposition to the Georgetown University plan. I believe their objection s are naïve and do not reflect the expertise of the professional architectural and site planning that the university has undertaken. The Potomac is a spectacular venue for competitive as well as recreational rowing and yet some Georgetown citizens do not recognize this – preferring to think of the river as a pristine feature of a remote national park and not a waterway through a major urban area. The river must reflect the needs of the city and its vitality. Rowing has grown in popularity on the Potomac in Georgetown, especially since the water is clean and the riverfront is now an exciting focus for visitors.

I believe the Georgetown Boathouse is a handsome landmark structure scaled to complement the other buildings along the riverfront and the existing shore line landscape.. It will provide one of the major public attractions to the new Waterfront Park now being designed. Most

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importantly, the G.U. Boathouse is scaled to house the Georgetown Crew, its boats, equipment rooms, practice tanks, fitness rooms, lockers, and other necessary spaces. If the opponents succeed in having the structure reduced in size, some important function would no longer be accommodated. The most significant aspect of the proposed boathouse is that it will safely house the entire Georgetown University fleet of racing boats. There will be no need for unattractive and risky outside storage with partially covered boat racks and security fencing. The entire space surrounding the boathouse will be landscaped and accessible to the public. Walkways will invite visitors to see the practice rowing tanks and to witness the colorful launch and retrieval processes.

I also believe that the proposed location of the boathouse will cause neither conflict with recreational boating nor negative traffic conditions with nearby boathouses. Boating is a genteel sport; recreational boats have always yielded to the beautiful but less maneuverable racing shells. Kyakers and canoers usually are respectful of the athletic perfection of a well-trained crew. In short, for a kayaker or canoer, there is more likelihood of a collision with a motor boat, floating restaurant or another kyaker or canoer.

The river shoreline will be greatly enhanced by the Georgetown Boathouse as drawn. It will give the public an expanded perception of the sport of rowing and help the Potomac gain its deserved position as one of the most important and picturesque rowing venues in the nation. I believe the citizens of DC and the surrounding area will be very proud of the proposed new boathouse. If the river could speak, it would say "Yes" as well.

Sincerely,

John Vorhes
Walt Whitman High School Crew Boosters