American Hiking Society

Establishing, protecting and maintaining foot trails in America

April 28, 2003

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

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-30-31
Exhibit 46

CASE NO.02-30
EXHIBIT NO.46

Dear Ms. Mitten:

I am writing on behalf of American Hiking Society (AHS) to express our concerns regarding zoning Tract 102-114 for development as a private boathouse. We urge the Commission to eliminate any new development along the Potomac riverfront from the Key Bridge west to the District line to protect the integrity of the C&O Canal National Historic Park—a nationally significant cultural, recreational, and natural resource.

As the national voice for America's hikers, AHS promotes and protects foot trails and the hiking experience. AHS represents its 5,000 individual members as well as the volunteers and members of its 160 member organizations, including seven member clubs in the Washington, DC area – more than 500,000 outdoor enthusiasts – and is the only national organization dedicated to establishing, protecting and maintaining America's foot trails.

We understand that Georgetown University has plans to build a large boathouse for its crew team along the Potomac River (Tract 102-114). This proposal has the potential to negatively impact important qualities of the riverfront. Development of this tract would reduce the amount of parkland available to the public; disrupt wetlands and a flood plain along the river; obstruct scenic views along the Capital Crescent Trail and C&O Canal Towpath; and increase traffic in an already limited area.

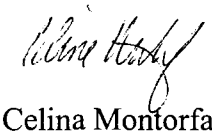
The Potomac River maintains its relatively clean and wild character because of the lack of development from Key Bridge to Cumberland, MD. The proposed boathouse development could increase pollution and runoff and alter natural systems that keep the river healthy. Furthermore, the C&O Canal Towpath is the backbone of the congressionally-designated Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail, established in 1983 to commemorate the mix of history, culture, and recreation along the Potomac River. The proposal would alter the trail experience for users of this resource representing one of twenty-three national scenic and historic trails.

Hiking represents one of the fastest growing recreational activities—75 million Americans hike regularly or occasionally (Outdoor Industry Association's Participation Study 2001). The Potomac riverfront must be adequately protected so that future generations of hikers and other trail enthusiasts will be able to enjoy the riverfront's unique natural and cultural heritage, including abundant flora and fauna, the C&O Canal National Historic Park, and the longest stretch of the 500+ mile-long Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail.

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We urge you to oppose the proposed boathouse and protect the riverfront through proper zoning. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Celina Montorfano
Director of Conservation Programs