John P. Helm
5406 Cromwell Drive
Bethesda, Maryland 20816
April 30, 2003

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Carol Mitten
Chair
DC Zoning Commission
Suite 210
441 4th Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

Dear Ms. Mitten:

I am writing to express my opposition to any action by the District of Columbia which would permit Georgetown University to construct a boathouse upriver from the Key Bridge. I understand that the University would like to build a boathouse on undeveloped land which the University obtained from the National Park Service in a land swap. While the idea of building a boathouse on the river is a good idea, it is not a good idea to build a boat house on the site selected. This site has not had a building previously and is in an area which is in a flood plain. This site is unlike the area down river from Key Bridge which historically been developed along the river bank and would be a reasonable site for a boat house. The site selected by Georgetown University is beautiful natural park land which presents a welcome vista to the urban dweller from both the water and the paths along the canal and shore. It would be a shame to loose this natural area where one can enjoy the wilds of nature within the boundaries of the city. Surely, we have learned how important it is to preserve such spaces. It seems the District can do what the Park Service failed to do – preserve this land in its natural state – by denying the University the opportunity to build a boathouse on this site. In denying Georgetown University permission to build on this site the District would preserve the undeveloped river shore within the District which exists from the 99 year old Washington Canoe Club and which continues undeveloped to Cumberland, Maryland.

While I hope you see the virtue in preserving this land in its natural state, I must also object to the size of the building project planned by the University. It is far larger than any typical boathouse and would be a questionable structure if placed any where else along the shore. Certainly, a structure built along this beautiful river should be compatible in size with its location and complement rather than dominate the site. Examples of appropriate sized buildings for water sports are the historic Washington Canoe Club down river from the site chosen by Georgetown University and the Potomac Boat Club which is down river from the Canoe Club.

In closing, I hope you choose to preserve this river bank area in its natural state because once developed it can never be restored to its current condition.

Sincerely,

John P. Helm

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-31
Exhibit 66

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-31
EXHIBIT NO.66