3406 N. 3rd Street
Arlington, VA 22201

April 30, 2003

RECEIVED
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING
2003 MAY 12 PM 1:06

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

Re: Case # 02-30 and 02-31 Land to Remain Unzoned

Dear Ms. Mitten:

The purpose of this letter is to urge you and your fellow members on the Zoning Commission to protect our parklands by rejecting the request by Georgetown University to rezone tract 102-114 immediately upstream from the historic Washington Canoe Club boathouse.

This stretch of parkland, beginning in Georgetown, is truly a treasure. Yet it is threatened by the desire of Georgetown University to conduct a land swap with the Park Service, have the land rezoned, and then proceed with construction.

I am very familiar with the area. As a junior high school student in the late 1950's I began paddling with the Washington Canoe Club. I am a current member of the Club and still paddle there, as do my children. I have witnessed the return to health of the Potomac from the polluted cesspool of my youth, to the beautifully clean waterway that so many enjoy today. I have watched with satisfaction the conversion of the old railway spur to the Capital Crescent Trail, used extensively for commuting and recreation alike. I have also noted a dramatic return of wildlife to the river, including the magnificent blue heron that can be seen any day just up river from the Washington Canoe Club.

This beautiful parkland, which should be protected, is now threatened by plans to build an enormous structure just inside the Georgetown entrance to the 180-mile long National Park. Proposed for one of the narrower stretches of land between the C&O Canal and the River, this boathouse – eight times larger than the adjacent and historic Washington Canoe Club – will have a detrimental impact on just about everything that should be preserved. It will obstruct views of the river from the trail and the Canal. It will destroy habitat in the area most accessible to Georgetown. During floods, it may have unintended adverse consequences for the Washington Canoe Club, though the exact dimensions of this threat are unknown due to an absence of hydrologic studies.

Another adverse impact that relates primarily to the proposed location of this boathouse is the safety of those who enjoy the river. It is important to understand the

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 02-31
Exhibit 93

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.02-31
EXHIBIT NO.93

differences in the kinds of racing craft that use the Potomac. Rowers use long, powerful, fast and rear-facing race boats. The Georgetown facility is build exclusively for rowers. Paddlers use much smaller, lighter, slower and forward-facing boats – kayaks, and canoes. The Washington Canoe Club is exclusively for paddlers. For generations, these two different kinds of race boats have coexisted on the Potomac, with the rowers launching their boats downstream and using the Virginia side and the paddlers starting upstream and using the Washington side. The proposed Georgetown facility, located adjacent to and upstream from the Washington Canoe Club, disrupts this natural separation in ways that can only lead to a decrease in safety. Since Georgetown's proposed boathouse is so large, occupying such a small slice of land and designed for extremely long boats, their docks must protrude much farther into the river – 85 feet. This not only permanently removes several racing lanes for the paddling venue, but means there will be daily cross traffic of these incompatible types of boats and coach's launches.

It should be stressed that by maintaining the existing zoning, Georgetown will not be prevented from building a new boathouse. It will simply mean that Georgetown will have to locate its structure in an area more compatible with the large size of the building – something they should have done in the first place. It will mean that they must recognize and respect the multiple uses of the existing parkland. Denying Georgetown's request for special zoning treatment will serve the larger public interest.

Washington is truly a wonderful place. With its network of trails, waterways, and open spaces, I can't think of another city with so many different ways to connect with nature within minutes of both residential and commercial areas. Much of what we enjoy today was made possible by preservationists a generation ago. When I was growing up in Washington, plans called for a 14-lane highway coming down Spout Run and crossing the Potomac at the Three Sisters Islands. My mother and many other citizen-activists of her generation fought long and hard against this plan, ultimately prevailing against a powerful highway lobby. We all owe them a debt of gratitude. Today that same stretch of river and parkland and trail is again threatened by another powerful and well-connected interest group – my own alma mater, Georgetown University. Today, the privilege and the responsibility of protecting that stretch of parkland falls on your shoulders. Future generations of Washingtonians will be indebted to you if you hold to your land-use principles and simply deny the request to rezone this parkland.

Sincerely,



Jay Carver