DON W. CROCKETT
ATTORNEY AT LAW
3070 Q Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20007 **(202) 338-1997**

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District of Columbia Zoning Commission
441 4th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

RE: Zoning Commission Application 0307

Members of the Commission:

I write in opposition to Harvard University's application to use two single family residences at 3242 R Street, N.W. as office space for a period of five years.

I have lived at the above address for more than thirty years. During that time, our residential neighborhood has been under constant siege by a never-ending parade of commercial, governmental, and "non-profit" interests who disrupt our "peace and quiet" with non residential uses.

When I first arrived in 1973, street parking was impossible to find on weekdays because commuters had taken over Georgetown as a free public parking lot. Parking was also very tight in the evenings and on weekends because a service station at Wisconsin and Q was operating a fleet of more than 100 rental cars on the residential streets. After weekday residential parking restrictions took effect in 1977, the newly emptied parking spaces on the residential streets were soon filled by the employees and customers of businesses on Wisconsin and M Streets. In the evenings and on weekends, many of those businesses would offer valet parking and ferry the cars to the residential streets. Drunks returning to their cars from the nearby bars continually disturb the residents late at night. This non residential use has yet to be solved.

Georgetown University has completely taken-over the residential neighborhood between P and M Street West of 36th Street as part of its campus. It has increased its enrollment by thousands of students without providing on-campus housing. This forced those immature students into our neighborhoods where they created intolerable noise and other serious nuisances. In 1990, the University promised to house all undergraduate students on campus by 2000 and then promptly broke that promise and actually shut down one of its existing dormitories. Similar battles between residents and the expansionist University are destined to continue forever.

ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
Case 03-07
Exhibit 37
ZONING COMMISSION
District of Columbia
CASE NO.03-07
EXHIBIT NO.37

In 1988, the District of Columbia decided to convert the Hurt Home for the Blind at 31st and R Street into mental facility to accommodate 60 severely mentally disturbed teenagers, who were extremely dangerous. After two lengthy zoning battles that went to the Court of Appeals, the facility was ultimately restricted to a child care home for 15 children under the age of 12.

In 1995, the District of Columbia began renting the waterfront park at the end of Wisconsin Avenue to promoters for large rock and roll events that attracted hundreds, if not thousands of party goers and tied-up traffic for hours. The music could be clearly heard as far North as 3070 Q Street. That activity was stopped only after residents discovered that the promoters were forging the signatures of nearby residents in order to obtain the necessary licenses pursuant to 19 DCMR Chapter 1300. At about the same time, Georgetown University allowed its students to hold noisy rock and roll parties on the public streets near the campus which had similar same impacts on nearby neighbors. That activity was stopped only after a student was killed in a drunken fight.

In 1995, the Tudor Place foundation began renting the grounds of that historic home for large wedding receptions and corporate events which tied-up traffic, made parking for residents impossible and bombarded them with noise from the large dance bands which played at these outdoor events. Similar events are conducted at the Evermay estate at 28th and Q and the Dumbarton House at 27th and Q and are a continuing problem.

In short, we residents find it very difficult to maintain a normal, quiet, residential neighborhood in Georgetown. As a result of the above described intrusions, we have grown very wary of any attempt to convert single-family homes into non residential uses.

Accordingly, I oppose Harvard University's proposal to convert the Bass single family home into an office for 18 Harvard employees for a five-year period. The application itself raises a legitimate suspicion that this "temporary" use will ultimately develop into a request for a permanent university use.[1]

My first question to the management of Dumbarton Oaks is why didn't they consider leasing office space in Georgetown rather than converting a private residence for that purpose. I note that more than 5,000 feet of prime office space with parking has been advertized for the past six months at Hamilton Court, which is located on 31st Street, just below N Street. I make that walk every day and so could the Dumbarton Oaks employees.

My second question is why five years? If the construction is going to take five years, it will set a record and create an unnecessary burden on the nearby neighbors. Any special exception should end when the construction is complete.

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[1]Harvard University has a track record of surreptitious campus expansion. It secretly assembled a large campus expansion into Alston through proxy purchasers that stunned residents when they ultimately learned how they had been had.

My third question concerns the extreme vagueness of the "temporary use." Why hasn't the University specified the actual hours its employees will keep? What does the University mean when it says it may hold "small in house receptions?" Why would it hold "receptions" in a temporary office instead of in its expansive facilities at Dumbarton Oaks?

In light of the above, I recommend that the application be denied because the University has not shown that it cannot find suitable temporary office space for 15 employees in a commercially zoned part of Georgetown. Single family homes should be approved for use as office space only as a last resort. The University has failed to show that locating its offices in the nearby commercial zones of Georgetown would cause it any harm. On the other hand, a commercial use of a single-family home would create a bad precedent that may be cited in future cases.

Alternatively, I recommend the insertion of the following conditions into any special exception issued to the University.

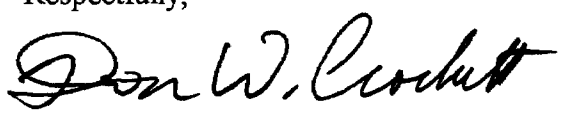
1. The residence shall be used only for temporary office purposes between 7:00 A.M. and 5:30 P.M. on weekdays. There will be no evening or weekend use.

2. The residence shall not be used for social events, receptions, or parties of any kind.

3. The special exception shall terminate when the construction of the Library at Dumbarton Oaks is completed and no later than five years.

4. In no event will the temporary use of the Bass property constitute a ground for further use by the University on either a temporary or permanent basis.

Respectfully,



Don W. Crockett