

ZONING COMMISSION HEARING ON CASE NO. 08-06-7
(Comprehensive Zoning Regulations Rewrite: Campus/Institutional)

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I. Background

- Twenty years of experience with Campus Plans in the District (two at Howard University and three at GW)
- Recent experience with the GW 2007 Foggy Bottom Campus Plan
- Active participant in the Office of Planning Working Group on this issue

II. General Support for the Office Planning Recommendations. GW representatives have worked with the Consortium of Universities on reviewing and analyzing the Office of Planning's proposed revisions to the Zoning Regulations for Campus and Institutional uses. These revisions would:

- A. Broaden the application of such regulations to all institutions in residential zones (not just colleges and universities), with different requirements based on size and impact rather than the specific type of use.
- B. Standardize and clarify the regulations governing campus plans for large institutions.
- C. Eliminate the "second stage" review for individual projects so long as such projects are generally consistent with the campus plan

GW concurs with the Consortium's testimony and generally supports the proposed revisions.

III. Areas in Need of Clarification or Revision. There are, however, several issues that require clarification or revision. The Zoning Commission should take a close look at the following issues:

- A. How much detail should be required for the Campus Master Plan?

The Commission should balance the desire for sufficient detail for plan approval with the recognition that buildings will not be fully designed at the campus plan stage. Applications for campus plans should only require sufficient information to

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demonstrate that planned development will not adversely affect surrounding property owners.

B. Is the value an institution provides to the city as a whole a relevant factor in reviewing campus plans and determining appropriate conditions?

Yes. Neither the current campus plan regulations nor the proposed revisions, however, clearly identify city-wide benefits as an issue to be addressed in campus plan hearings. While various portions of the Comprehensive Plan tout the value of universities for the city as a whole, zoning regulations focus almost exclusively on neighborhood impacts. Neighborhood impacts are certainly important, however they should not be the only factors to be considered in determining whether a plan should be approved and – most significantly – what kinds of conditions should be imposed. The role of universities in education, employment, economic development, and the arts is far too important not to allow broader considerations of city-wide benefits as an explicit factor in the review and approval of a campus plan.

C. Can environmental and sustainability issues be properly addressed in a campus plan?

Yes, but only to a degree. Campus plans are similar to small area plans and environmental and sustainability issues can be considered at a high level of review. For example, LEEDs for Neighborhoods has concepts that are applicable to campus plans. The zoning regulations should be clear, however, that more detailed reviews more appropriate to building permit reviews – including environmental impact studies and detailed landscaping plans — are not covered by the proposed rules governing campus plans.

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in this hearing.