

U.S. COMMISSION OF FINE ARTS

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26 March 2026

Dear Mr. Green:

In its meeting of 19 March, the Commission of Fine Arts reviewed a concept design for a new boathouse for Georgetown University, to be located at 3500 Water Street, NW (case number OG 25-252). The Commission adopted the report of the Old Georgetown Board and approved the concept submission with the following comments.

The Commission members expressed strong support for the proposed design, which they characterized as very beautiful. For the development of the design, they suggested using a traditional, natural material for the architectural details instead of painted PVC as proposed. Likewise, they recommended using standing-seam metal roofing only and did not support the presented alternative of large rectangular solar panel roofing system, which they said would be out of scale with other cladding elements such as cedar shake siding.

The Commission and the Old Georgetown Board look forward to further review of this project at the design development phase. Please coordinate the next submission with the staff which, as always, is available to assist you.

Sincerely,



Thomas E. Luebke, FAIA
Secretary

David Green
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Georgetown University
3700 O Street NW
Washington, DC 20057

cc: William Kirwan, Muse/Kirwan Architects
Gilles Stucker, D.C. DMPED

Encl.: Report of the Old Georgetown Board, 19 March 2026

OLD GEORGETOWN BOARD REPORT & RECOMMENDATION

19 March 2026

OG 25-252

3500 Water Street, NW (Square 1179, Lot 800 / 805)

Construction of new Georgetown University boathouse

Reviewed in concept as OG 25-252: Jul 2025; Mar 2026

REPORT: Georgetown University seeks concept approval for the construction of a new boathouse on Water Street, to be located on a site where the Key Bridge Boathouse currently sits, between the bridge and a series of three c. 1959 brick rowhouses. The proposed two-story building with stone, timber, and wood-shingle facades would include boat storage, a multi-purpose room, locker rooms, a classroom, and a coach's meeting space. The design, massing, and scale are in keeping with the nearby Washington Canoe Club and Potomac Boat Club buildings, as well as the general historic boathouse typology. While the adjacent boathouses are clad in wood, there is a historic precedent for stone to be used on boathouses (cf. Boathouse Row in Philadelphia). In addition, with the heft of Key Bridge and the stone Alexandria Aqueduct ruins close by, the use of stone seems appropriate here. The proposed facility would also include a publicly accessible launch area for small paddle craft, which requires further survey work.

The Board members first reviewed the concept design in July 2025 and expressed strong support for the design, commenting positively on the appropriateness of the massing and materiality. They suggested that the south facade be refined to convey a more celebratory Victorian spirit, recommending steeper slopes on the gables and heavy timber to support the flag poles. For the north facade, they recommended reworking the entrance to have a stronger presence along the street. They also recommended further study of the height and depth of the arched openings at the ground floor, as well as restudying the telescoping quality of the entrance volume and the composition of the glass walls at the interior stairs on the south and west. Finally, the Board requested construction of on-site mockups of the proposed stone facades for its review, and additional information on how this project would fit into the Park Service's master plan for Water Street.

At its meeting of 5 March, the Board members found the design to be responsive to their previous comments and expressed great enthusiasm for the potential of the project. They asked for more information on the proposed Tesla solar shingles, including their color, texture, sizing, and mounting details; the roof was previously proposed to be standing-seam metal.

RECOMMENDATION: NO OBJECTION to concept design for new boathouse for Georgetown University, per supplemental materials received 12 February 2026, PROVIDED further information is provided with regards to the solar installation, including maintenance and location of conduits and associated equipment. File design-development submission at DOB with detailed and dimensioned drawings for review by the Commission.