

January 28, 2005

Subject: Boathouse or Bloat-house?

In his article on the proposed Georgetown University boathouse (DC Extra, 1/27/05, "At the River's Edge, Competing Visions"), David Nakamura did a good job of canvassing the field of players, and presenting their opinions. There were, however, some errors in the article, one of which I would like to clear up. In the body of the piece, as well as the caption that appears under a photo of me, the statement is made that the opponents "would prefer a smaller structure in a different location." I don't think anyone can speak for the opponents as a group, but I can say that I've never heard that said. Most, if not all, of the opponents I've spoken with feel that there are more appropriate locations for the GU boathouse than the one proposed, but I don't believe anyone has prejudged the size of the boathouse if located elsewhere - each site will present its own appropriate size. What some of the opponents have said, including the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, is that if a proper assessment of possible sites indicates that the proposed site is the most appropriate one, a boathouse located there will have to do a better job of fitting the site, and its historic structures, than what has previously been proposed. Another point which needs some expansion has to do with the reference to the 1987 Georgetown Waterfront Plan. It should be pointed out that that Plan limited the Boathouse Zone to "no more than 1000' upstream from Key Bridge", but the currently proposed site extends some 250' beyond that limit. We find it interesting that the Park Service can arbitrarily extend the BZ upstream from its planned limits, but refuses to consider extending it in the other direction at 34th Street. I also must object to the implication in the article that the opponents of the current plan are preventing the other rowing programs, particularly the high school programs, from having the type of facilities they need. While we are attempting to protect the Park by ensuring that the most appropriate boathouse site & size are used, other groups have previously opposed any boathouses (small, medium, or large) on parts of the Waterfront. The Georgetown ANC, CAG, and Waterfront Commission all adamantly opposed a GU boathouse downstream of 34th Street, as well as a proposed high school facility at that location. Bill Starrells of the ANC says, "...no one wants it there." That is just not true. Tony Johnson, the GU coach, has said he would have preferred a boathouse at that location. The high school advocates wanted a boathouse there. I guarantee you that most users of the CCT and the Towpath would prefer a boathouse at 34th Street to one at the proposed site. As a matter of fact, it would appear that the only folks who don't want the boathouse at 34th Street are the Georgetown citizens groups. While their input in the process of expanding the use of the Waterfront is important, no group should be given veto power over how best to use that area.

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