

February 10, 2005

Mrs. Barbara Downs, Chair
Georgetown Waterfront Commission
3321 P St., NW
Washington DC 20007

Re: Georgetown University Boathouse Proposal

Dear Mrs. Downs:

Unfortunately for me, I will be away from the city on February 16, when the Georgetown Waterfront Commission meets again. Because of the importance of the contents of this letter, however, I respectfully request that the matter of an alternative site for Georgetown University's boathouse be placed on the agenda for the February 16 meeting of the Commission. As you know, with respect to the GU boathouse proposal, at the scoping session for the Environmental Assessment on January 11, the National Park Service announced that "everything is on the table."

I support a boathouse for Georgetown University on the Potomac River, but not at a location within the C&O Canal National Historical Park at the gateway to the Capital Crescent Trail near Key Bridge. Any structure, and especially the enormous boathouse proposed by the University on this site, would adversely impact the public's use and enjoyment of this treasured area. In these circumstances, GU and the NPS should seek an alternative site.

For land use planning purposes, the Park Service should treat the Georgetown Waterfront Park (from Washington Harbor to 34th and Water Sts.) and the waterfront property from 34th and Water Sts. to and including the site currently earmarked for GU's boathouse within the C&O Canal National Historical Park, as one integrated area for planning purposes. This would avoid piecemeal planning.

Presently, the non-motorized boathouse zone extends from 34th and Water Sts., to a point within the C&O Canal National Historical Park variously described by NPS as somewhere between 1,000-1,250 feet upriver from Key Bridge. George Washington University (GW) has a claim for its boathouse on the first parcel upstream from 34th and Water Sts. to the ramp off of Key Bridge to the Whitehurst Freeway. Parenthetically, NPS should also anticipate the possibility of the removal of the Whitehurst Freeway, an effort being seriously pursued by Councilmember Jack Evans.

The ideal place for GU's boathouse would be immediately downriver from GW's parcel. While some may object to this intrusion into the Georgetown Waterfront Park, if a boathouse at this location were well designed and appropriately reduced in size, it would be an attractive addition to what is in reality an urban park. This solution could be

accomplished by a long-term lease agreement between NPS and GU. This arrangement would also enable NPS to impose appropriate restrictions for the benefit of the public on the size and shape of this boathouse. Moreover, GU could convey its upriver parcel and its easement to that parcel to NPS as part of the leasehold agreement. This arrangement is a win-win solution for everyone: GU secures its boathouse on the Georgetown Waterfront; the public's interest in the preservation and protection of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and the Capital Crescent Trail is assured; and NPS obtains GU's upriver parcel and its easement for incorporation into the C&O Canal National Historical Park.

Thank you for your kind attention to this matter. On the assumption that the Park Service will be represented at the Commission meeting, I am sending a copy of this letter to NPS officials and to Mrs. Sheila Weidenfeld, Chair of the C&O Canal National Historical Park Advisory Commission.

Sincerely yours,

Robert B. Norris

cc. NPS – Lawler, Parsons, Blumenthal, Brandt
C&O Canal NHP Commission – Weidenfeld