

September 12, 2005

Editorial Page Editor  
The Current Newspapers  
Washington, D.C.

Dear Sir or Madam:

It's remarkable how little Georgetown University seems to understand the implications of its own plan to build a mega-boathouse within the C&O Canal National Historical Park. At a D.C. Court of Appeals hearing on September 7, the university's attorney described the land as "underutilized" and therefore appropriate for development. The site in question is a section of wooded flood-plain near the head of the Capital Crescent Trail. It is already being "utilized" as part of a scenic environment that is deeply appreciated by hikers, bikers, and other park visitors from near and far. The addition of a large new structure would crowd and despoil this much-loved area.

I was also pained to hear the university's attorney repeatedly stress that the proposed facility (which is to be reserved for GU's own use) would increase public access to the river. This statement appears to be based on a kind of trickle-down theory -- if we allow a powerful institution have the choice parcel of federal land that it desires, less favored boaters will then be able to find accommodation elsewhere. Instead of following that approach, planners should address the need for more river access in a way that does not harm the broad public interest. Suitable sites for building a new boathouse, or enlarging existing ones, exist downriver on the Potomac, and also along the Anacostia.

Hands off our national historical park!

Sincerely,

Edmund Preston  
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