

January 25, 2006

Mr. Anthony Lanier
President, EastBanc, Inc.
3307 M St., N.W., Suite 200
Washington, D.C. 20007

Dear Mr. Lanier:

In your capacity as a major benefactor to the Georgetown Waterfront Park, I am writing to enlist your assistance in creating a beautiful and interesting urban park on the Georgetown waterfront, in preserving the integrity of the C&O Canal National Historical Park, and in achieving a correct and environmentally sound site on the Potomac River for Georgetown University's boathouse. Also, with your experience as a developer, I believe that some of the land use planning issues I have attempted to raise will resonate with you. While not obvious at first glance, the future of both the C&O Canal National Historical Park and the Georgetown Waterfront Park are inexorably intertwined.

I support a boathouse for Georgetown University on the Potomac River, but not at the location proposed by the Park Service within the C&O Canal National Historical Park near the entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail. I understand that the Georgetown Waterfront Commission, a relatively small group of Georgetown residents, is on record in support of Georgetown University's boathouse at this location. The Commission's position is not based on sound urban planning nor did it consider the size of the boathouse proposed by Georgetown University. The real reason for the Commission's action, is to exclude this boathouse from consideration at an alternative site at the western edge of the Georgetown Waterfront Park. While I do not question the hard work and devotion of these residents, I do question the somewhat narrow focus of their perception of the design and contents of this park and their refusal to even consider the adverse environmental impact of locating this boathouse in the C&O Canal Park. As federal parkland, the Georgetown Waterfront Park belongs not to a small group of residents of Georgetown, but to all of us.

Any structure, and especially a collegiate boathouse at the proposed site, would have an adverse environmental impact and restrict the public's use and enjoyment of this treasured area. It would only be accessible over the Capital Crescent Trail which of course is used by bikers and hikers every day of the year. This colossus of a boathouse would be crammed into an inappropriately small area and would dwarf its immediate downstream neighbor, the historic Washington Canoe Club. It would also loom over the C&O Canal towpath. Indeed, at this location, it would be the McMansion of all boathouses. The proposed dock for this boathouse, jutting some 75 feet into the river, would impinge on the traditional training area used by the Canoe Club for over 100 years.

The proposed location of this boathouse also poses the potential for a hydrological disaster when the next large flood occurs, as surely it will sometime in the future. Powerful currents moving downstream in a flood will be channeled and squeezed between the proposed boathouse nearly 300 feet in length and the C&O Canal embankment. When this happens, the force of the water is magnified and the damage resulting therefrom would be more severe than if the flood waters flowed over a wider area. In fact, this magnified rush of water would probably rip the embankment apart.

As now imposed, the non-motorized boathouse zone extends from 34th and Water Sts. to a point variously described by the Park Service as somewhere between 1,100 and 1,250 feet upriver from Key Bridge. This ambiguity as to the upriver boundary obtains because, as a representative of the Park Service testified at a hearing before the DC Council on June 22, 2005, there is no "hard line in the woods" but just a "general guideline." If this zone can be extended from 1,100 to 1,250 west of Key Bridge, why not a similar extension east of Key Bridge.

The current justification for the boundaries of the non-motorized boathouse zone is based simply on the fact that these boundaries were established in the 1987 Plan for the Georgetown Waterfront Park and the C&O Canal National Historical Park. Nearly 20 years old, this Plan is outdated and fails to address the changing needs of the public in 2006. These arbitrarily drawn boundaries fail to recognize the ever expanding public interest in water-related activities as evidenced by the growing number of rowing programs. Since the promulgation of the Plan in 1987, the Capital Crescent Trail has been established and developed.

In terms of land use planning, the entire waterfront from Washington Harbour to the Washington Canoe Club should be treated as one integrated and comprehensive area. This would allow for a review and needed modification of the 1987 boundaries which are no longer relevant. In order to protect the integrity of the C&O Canal National Historical Park and the entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail, the proposed site for Georgetown University's boathouse in the Park and immediately upstream from the Washington Canoe Club should be eliminated, once and for all, from any further discussion. For all the reasons well documented in the public record, this particular site for a boathouse is an obvious mistake. If a land use planning mistake has been made, it is far better to correct it now than to regret the consequences of the mistake in the future when corrections may be impossible. What is now needed is a plan with a clear vision for the future which accommodates current realities.

While I understand that many individuals would prefer the Georgetown Waterfront Park to be entirely passive, there is no good reason for this type of park to consume the entire 10 acres of the Park. The artificially and arbitrarily drawn boundary separating the Georgetown Waterfront Park from the non-motorized boathouse zone should be redrawn to reflect the changing needs of the public. Since the Georgetown Waterfront Park is approximately 10 acres, locating Georgetown University's boathouse on a site at the far western edge of the Park adjacent to George Washington University's site would amount to just a small intrusion in a portion of the Park now planned as a buffer of grass and trees. As you know, the labyrinth has been shifted approximately 350 feet downstream. Most of the currently approved design for the Park would remain in place. A boathouse at this site would not restrict views to the Park and the river along street corridors

perpendicular to Water St. Georgetown University and GW could share access roads and docks, thereby reducing the environmental impact on this area. This site is also deeper and more readily accessible than the originally proposed site. And it would also raise few, if any, NEPA issues. Of course, Georgetown University would bear the cost of site preparation, bulkhead renovation and new construction in this portion of the Park, thereby shifting some of the considerable expenses away from the Park Service and the Foundation. With the ever expanding public interest in water-related activities, a boathouse at this location would be a contemporary reminder of the early history of Georgetown as a port. In conclusion, two elegantly designed collegiate boathouses, side by side, at the western end of the Park, would be an architectural tour de force.

As you know, the draft Environmental Assessment (EA) on the Georgetown University boathouse has been scrapped and a new EA is being prepared from scratch. For the reasons advanced above, as well as by numerous other individuals, it is now abundantly clear that the proposed site for this boathouse within the C&O Canal National Historical Park near the entrance to the Capital Crescent Trail is a mistake. Thus, the Park Service, Georgetown University and the public in general have an opportunity to correct this and other land use planning mistakes. .

In conclusion, I respectfully urge you to add your considerable voice to the growing number of individuals and organizations seeking an environmentally acceptable site for Georgetown University's boathouse while at the same time enhancing the amenities possible for the Georgetown Waterfront Park. To achieve these goals I would ask you to consider recommending to the National Park Service the following:

- (1) that the Park Service postpone and delay any further work on the Georgetown Waterfront Park until the Environmental Assessment on the Georgetown University boathouse proposal is released to the public and resolved;
- (2) that the Park Service eliminate from any further consideration the proposed site in the C&O Canal National Historical Park for Georgetown University's boathouse; and
- (3) that the Park Service give full consideration to the alternative location at the western edge of the Georgetown Waterfront Park adjacent to George Washington University's boathouse site for the Georgetown University boathouse.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my comments. Of course, if you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact me. With every best wish,

Sincerely yours,

Robert B. Norris

