

**Remarks to the Committee on Public Works and the Environment:
Proposed Georgetown University Boathouse
and
Planning for the Georgetown Waterfront Park**

June 22, 2005

David Winer, citizen member of Defenders of Potomac River Parkland

The intention to place a private boathouse within the natural C&O Canal National Historical Park above Key Bridge is misguided. This choice of location came about through an unfair and inadequate planning process of the entire Georgetown Waterfront Park and Non-motorized Boathouse Zone below Key Bridge. That planning, of a National park, did not include input from the whole community. Rather, this arrangement primarily responded to the desires of organized Georgetown citizens. Such restricted involvement is inequitable since it prevents the planning and development of the land between Wisconsin Avenue and Key Bridge based on the needs of a wide range of interested citizens.

Existing plans do not seem to appreciate the overall environment of the unique (in all the world) resource of a wild major river that enters a prominent urban setting. More disturbing, the plan fails to acknowledge the setting of the area as an unparalleled, world-class resource for recreational use of the river. Thus, the growing demand of high school and college rowing programs, and of unaffiliated citizens who practice paddle sports, is ignored. If you look at this large area in its entirety you can see that there is plenty of room for activities associated with a traditional city park, as well as facilities for non-motorized boating. See the attached view, derived from a Terraserver satellite photograph taken in 2002.

The result of this planning failure is to restrict severely the Boathouse Zone, and worse, to extend that zone up-river into the C&O Canal National Historical Park. The natural parkland is wholly unsuited for development, especially development of a private boathouse intruding into the intensively used C&O Canal towpath and the Capital Crescent trail.

It takes little imagination to envisage a lively and beautiful park across the whole of the Georgetown shoreline, with boathouses *and* traditional park amenities. Boathouse Row in Philadelphia is often cited as a model for riverfront development--the Potomac in DC offers a similarly prime prospect for public and private recreational use. Our waterfront could become a pride of the National Capital as a uniquely animated and enchanting attraction among the monuments, museums, and other features of the city.

Georgetown Waterfront Park and its defined Boathouse Zone are vitally important to this shoreline and should be considered together in a systematic plan—while addressing needs of the citizens of the greater Washington community and our visitors. Planning for the riverside parkland above Wisconsin Avenue appears to have been carried out below the radar screen of the District of Columbia City Council. There is much at stake, and we seek your influence to help prevent an unfortunate outcome.