

March 12, 2021

Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2A
c/o West End Library
2301 L Street NW
Washington, DC 20037

Attn: Peter Sacco, ANC Executive Director [Peter Sacco 2A@anc.dc.gov](mailto:Peter.Sacco@anc.dc.gov)

**Re: Foggy Bottom Association –
Request to ANC 2A re Preservation of Waggaman White Row House**

Dear Commissioners:

At the 2021 First Quarter GW/Community Advisory Committee Meeting on February 16, 2021, a representative of The George Washington University (GW) informed the group that GW plans to demolish a historic three-story Victorian row house located at the intersection of 22nd and I Street (diagonally across from Whole Foods).¹ GW filed for a raze permit on January 29, 2021, but we understand that the Ward 2A Advisory Neighborhood Commission (ANC) has not received the required 45 day notice. The Nashman Center, currently housed at the address, but is scheduled to move to the newly rebuilt Hillel Center building on 23rd Street NW. The house at 837 22nd Street NW is located in ANC 2A-8 (a SMD that is currently vacant).²

Background on 837 22nd Street NW. The House was one of eleven residential row houses constructed for DC developers Thomas E. Waggaman and Thomas W. Kerr in 1886. It is the only one remaining of over 50 such row houses constructed on Square 77. The House is an irreplaceable reminder of the history of Foggy Bottom and once it is demolished, it is gone forever.

The House is adjacent to a small park and GW has stated that it will demolish the House to create additional “green space.” It appears, however, that GW plans to redevelop the entire part of the square that fronts on 22nd Street NW as outlined in their Campus Plan from 2007. Such redevelopment will eliminate the current park area as well as the 980 square feet of additional “green space” purportedly created by the demolition of the Waggaman Row House.

The FBA asks the ANC to request that GW consider preserving the House, and perhaps incorporate it into the eventual new development. Although the House is not currently a protected historic site, by virtue of its age and qualities, it could be nominated for inclusion in the DC inventory of historic sites. Before seeking such a listing, however, the FBA asks the ANC to engage GW to determine if there is a path toward preservation of the House.

¹ See Waggaman House current photographs, Attachment A.

² See ANC 2A map, <https://www.anc2a.org/map>.

The FBA and the ANC Can Help Preserve the Waggaman House.

Since its founding as the Foggy Bottom Restoration Association in 1955, the FBA has fought to preserve the historic character of the Foggy Bottom area. In keeping with its roots and original objectives, the FBA's current mission statement indicates that the FBA will "promote historic preservation in the [Foggy Bottom] area."³ Likewise the ANC has an important role in historic preservation and the DC Historic Preservation Review Board "gives great weight to duly adopted ANC views on matters of significance to neighborhood planning and development."⁴ The ANC clearly has standing under the DC Code to request designation of a property as a historic landmark.⁵

The Historic Neighborhood Value of the Waggaman Row House

The Waggaman Row House was built in 1886 and served as a private residence until GW purchased it in 2000. The "Reconnaissance-Level Architectural Survey of Properties in Foggy Bottom, Washington D.C." (Dec. 1999), prepared for The George Washington University (1999 GW Survey), contained the following description:

This solitary residence is all that remains of a former row of houses along 22nd Street. The structure is brick with many decorative elements. Molded brick with raised dots adorn the arches over the windows and door. An off-center projecting bay is decorated with chamfered comers. A metal fence, possibly historic, surrounds the property.⁶

An EHT-Traceries Report, which GW also commissioned, described the house as follows:

Once part of a row of eleven well-designed houses by Waggaman and Kerr, 837 22nd Street [is] now the only surviving example of a single family dwelling on Square 77. Typical of Washington middle class row houses, the brick house is two bays wide, three stories high and on a raised basement. Stained glass transoms grace the first floor windows and each house has a steep false gable on the front. Molded brick and corbelled corniced articulate the pressed brick facades.⁷

A 1982 Foggy Bottom/West End Survey characterized the House as "well designed" and "typical of Washington middle-class row houses." The "1993 Resurvey of Historic Resources in Foggy Bottom/West End", which Lois Snyderman prepared for the FBA, noted that the House

³ See History of the Foggy Bottom Association, <https://www.foggybottomassociation.org/history>.

⁴ See DC Gov, Office of Planning, ANC Participation in the HPRB Review Process, <https://planning.dc.gov/page/anc-participation-hprb-review-process>.

⁵ D.C. Municipal Regulations, Title 10A, sec. 203.

⁶ 1999 GW Survey, https://archive.org/details/rg0063_s10_c001_f02_i001/page/n125/mode/2up, at p. 126.

⁷ EHT Traceries Report Excerpt, Attachment B.

was the last of what was originally a row of eleven 19th century row houses, and recommended its nomination as a historic landmark as a “High Priority.”⁸

The 1999 GW Survey noted generally that: “The urban vernacular architecture of the row house is well represented throughout the residential neighborhood, on the George Washington University campus, and through a smattering of small private businesses. These share a common vocabulary of form, style, materials, scale, and decoration. Their presence throughout the area creates a cohesiveness that links the Foggy Bottom and University districts with their common past.”

In fact, at one time, row houses of similar construction were common in the Foggy Bottom area, but development, including the growth of GW, has caused the demolition of numerous such structures. The House provides a delightful reminder of the historic character of the neighborhood, even as it is surrounded by much newer buildings. After GW acquired the House in 2000, it housed the Women’s Studies Program. It currently houses the GW Nashman Center for Community Engagement, but GW plans to move that office to the new Hillel building at 23rd and G streets NW.⁹

GW’s Plans to Demolish the Waggaman Row House

GW’s stated reason for demolition of the House — to add to “green space” — lacks credibility. The GW Feb. 21, 2021 press release, “New Home for Nashman Center, GW to Expand Green Space” does not mention the demolition of the Waggaman Row House, but states that:

the university plans to replace the current site with green space. GW has begun the permitting process. The space, adjacent to Rome and Phillips Halls, is part of a site that was previously approved for development during the 20-year timeframe of the 2007 Foggy Bottom Campus Plan. The site will be integrated with existing adjacent green space to create an enlarged outdoor space for community use.¹⁰

The Waggaman Row House has a total footprint of 980 square feet. The value created by addition of a tiny portion of grassy area is outweighed by the detriment of the House’s destruction. In fact, in its current location, the House provides an anchor and a border along I Street protecting the small existing park area, and its removal would degrade that green space.

GW’s longer term plans apparently involve elimination of the current park, as well as the neighboring 1982 Academic Center on Square 77 (Rome Hall, Phillips Hall, and The Smith Hall of Art), in place of a new structure. GW’s Strategic Facilities and Campus Master Plan Presentation (June 2020) refers to this as the “SHOWCASE STEM + INNOVATION

⁸ 1993 Resurvey of Historic Resources in Foggy Bottom/West End.

⁹ GW Press Release (2/21/2021), New Home for Nashman Center, GW to Expand Green Space”, <https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/new-home-nashman-center-gw-expand-green-space>.

¹⁰ GW Press Release (2/21/2021), New Home for Nashman Center, GW to Expand Green Space”, <https://gwtoday.gwu.edu/new-home-nashman-center-gw-expand-green-space>.

BUILDING.”¹¹ Thus it appears that the House’s demolition is part of GW’s larger redevelopment scheme.

GW Should Consider Options for the Preservation of the Waggaman Row House

GW could build that new structure while maintaining the Waggaman Row House. In fact, it may be possible to construct the new building to envelop or incorporate the existing house. Incorporation of historic structures in new design has been part of GW’s expansion approach. As stated in the 1999 GW Survey: “Through reuse projects such as “The Shops at 2000 Penn,” the John Quincy Adams House, Stockton Hall, the Lenthall Houses, Woodhull and Underwood Houses, and numerous other historic buildings, the University has become a careful steward of many of the area’s notable historic buildings.”¹² There are also numerous examples of successful incorporations of historic structures in new developments in Washington DC and elsewhere.¹³

GW also should consider the possibility of relocating the Waggaman Row House. Although moving a historic property is not the preferred approach, recently there have been several successful groupings of row houses which have proved satisfactory.¹⁴

Preservation of the Waggaman Row House would be consistent with GW’s goals of preserving the past while building a University for the future. Indeed, GW has observed in its Preservation Plan that:

The Foggy Bottom Campus includes a unique composition of structures varying in both age and scale. The university is committed to maintaining the diversity of the building fabric on campus through the identification, maintenance, preservation and adaptive reuse of architectural and historic resources. These preservation efforts enhance the campus experience and preserve the broader character and architectural history of the District of Columbia.¹⁵

¹¹ See GW Strategic Facilities and Campus Master Plan, Community Workshops Overview Video from the June 2020 Foggy Bottom Community Planning Workshops, <https://ourmasterplan.gwu.edu/community-workshops-overview>; Master Plan Slides, Attachment D. (Note that the map shows green space to the west of the building, but the drawing shows that to be sidewalk, with some trees.)

¹² 1999 GW Survey at p. 4.

¹³ See, e.g., Mt. Vernon Square, <https://ggwash.org/view/64546/this-new-building-includes-parts-of-three-old-buildings>.

¹⁴ See, e.g., Moving Buildings To Save D.C.'s Historic Foundation (June 28, 2012), <https://www.npr.org/2012/07/10/155917108/moving-buildings-to-save-d-c-s-historic-foundation>.

¹⁵ GW Historic Preservation Plan, <https://neighborhood.gwu.edu/historic-preservation-plan>.

The Waggaman Row House Merits Historic Protection

GW did not include the House in its boundaries for the Old West End/George Washington Historic District.¹⁶ The GWU/OWE Historic District Registration Form, indicates that the historic district's boundary "has been drawn on the west to exclude those buildings to the east and west of 22nd Street that are part of the GW campus, but that are out of period that would not contribute to the historic district."¹⁷ The 1886 Waggaman Row House, however, is clearly within the 1800-1951 period of the historic district.

The Waggaman Row House also does not currently have individual historic landmark status. GW's consultant, EHT Traceries determined that it was not individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because "the building stands as an isolated remnant of a much larger development" and "[o]ther examples of middle class row houses exist elsewhere throughout Foggy Bottom and the George Washington University Campus."¹⁸ There is no reason, however, why this conclusion cannot be reconsidered and the House could be nominated for inclusion on the DC Inventory of Historic Places.

Research is continuing on the House's history, but it meets Criteria for Listing in the D.C. Inventory of Historic Places because, as a remaining middle-income row house built in the Foggy Bottom/Old West End area at the end of the 19th Century, it is associated with historical periods and patterns of growth and change that contributed significantly to the heritage, culture or development of the District of Columbia and/or it embodies distinguishing types of architectural styles or building types that are significant to the appearance and development of the District of Columbia.¹⁹ The fact that House is the lone remaining row house in a four-block area at the heart of the Historic District is a compelling argument for its preservation. It stands as a poignant reminder of Foggy Bottom's vibrant past in the middle of a modern space.

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¹⁶ See George Washington University/Old West End Historic District, <https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/GWU%20Old%20West%20End%20HS%20Map.pdf>.

¹⁷ GWU/OWE Historic District registration form, <https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/George%20Washingt%20University%20Old%20West%20End%20HD%20Nomination.pdf>, at 33.

¹⁸ EHT-Traceries Report, Att. B.

¹⁹ D.C. Municipal Regulations, Title 10A, sec. 201 (a) and (g).

At this time, the FBA is not requesting that the ANC submit a historic landmark designation for the Waggaman Row House, but to engage in discussion with GW about its potential preservation. We thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely Yours,

John P. George
President, FBA

ATTACHMENT A: CURRENT PHOTOS OF WAGGAMAN ROW HOUSE



ATTACHMENT B: EHT-TRACERIES REPORT (excerpt)



837 22nd Street, Square 77

Date of construction: July 27, 1886, Permit # 267 # 2773
Developer: Thomas E. Waggaman and Thomas W. Kerr
Stories/Height: 2 stories over a full basement

Once part of a row of eleven well-designed houses by Waggaman and Kerr, 837 22nd Street now the only surviving example of a single family dwelling on Square 77. Typical of Washington middle class row houses, the brick house is two bays wide, three stories high and on a raised basement. Stained glass transoms grace the first floor windows and each house has a steep false gable on the front. Molded brick and corbelled cornices articulate the pressed brick facades. The building functioned as a residence prior to its current use as office space for the George Washington University.

This building stands as an isolated remnant of a much larger development. The building retains such architectural detailing as a denticulated cornice, belt courses, and brick detailing. Although the building was constructed by noted developer Thomas A. Waggaman, it has lost much of its historic context. Other examples of middle class row houses exist elsewhere throughout Foggy Bottom and the George Washington University campus. This building is considered to be not individually eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

ATTACHMENT C: GW STRATEGIC FACILITIES AND CAMPUS MASTER PLAN
(excerpt)

