



# FOGGY BOTTOM NEWS

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www.savefoggybottom.com

April 15, 2009

The theme of George Washington University's "Science and Engineering Complex" was a FBN lead story\* in our November 26, 2008 issue. We were duly concerned about the sheer magnitude of the project and its effect on our fragile community. This included environmental, quality-of-life matters, and the cost to all District taxpayers to cover added infrastructure operations and maintenance, and to supplement tax revenues from a dwindling FB population. Our community is not the only one to despair. Voices within the university are incensed that GW departs from its mission of scholarship to one of "fundraising." With permission, we reprint the following article.

## GW HATCHET: OP-ED

### Donald Parsons: S&E Complex will benefit the highest bidders

When the humble and the wealthy of Cologne contributed to their magnificent cathedral, there was little controversy over what activities would be conducted within—souls would be saved according to the guidelines of the Church. Such is not the case with GW's cathedral ("Cologne Cathedral on 23rd Street?" *GWHatchet*, Feb. 2, p. 4), otherwise known as the Science and Engineering Complex (SEC).

A fall semester "vision" statement on the SEC is as innocent of content as the

University's beloved Strategic Plan for Academic Excellence. As the Chair of the Faculty Senate SEC Committee Hermann Helgert wryly reported after one meeting, the only apparent consensus was that the scientists and engineers should have separate doors for entering the building. (Interdisciplinary research would apparently blossom post-entry.)

Make no mistake, there is a serious controversy underpinning this blurred public vision. The tension is driven by the resource stretch required to finance

the building. A well-endowed university would no doubt design its primary science and engineering facility around the needs of students and faculty for lab facilities. A tuition-driven university with a modest tradition of alumni giving may have to stretch beyond the obvious. The GW administration, with its limited endowment and its taste for opulent buildings, is in just such a stretch situation.

The administration's solution is to limit severely the space allocated to the educational mission of the University and to treat the building as

an industrial park. Executive Vice President of Academic Affairs Donald Lehman has not hesitated to declare that lab space in the new building will be allocated on a cash basis, with GW scientists, engineers and doctors free to compete for space. Student labs will be limited to one floor, apparently the first for visibility. When asked at a Senate meeting what percent of student labs would be accommodated in the new building, Lehman would only concede "a significant fraction." He left unsaid whether a significant fraction

*(continued on next page)*

**FB FARMERS MARKET  
EVERY WEDNESDAY  
2:30-7 PM**  
Intersection 24th and I St NW  
at New Hampshire

**THE NEW CAFÉ GRÖN  
LUNCH THURSDAYS &  
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THROUGH SUNDAYS  
1-6 PM**

Don't forget to visit our Café Grön serving lunch Thursdays & Fridays 12-2 pm and open for sandwiches and many other homemade Swedish delicacies Thursdays through Sundays 1-6 pm. All the homemade delicacies have been prepared entirely with ingredients grown through sustainable and organic producers. We also offer a discount to visitors who use environment-friendly transportation to get to us. The Café is located in The HOUSE OF SWEDEN. 2900 K St NW.  
[www.swedishcaterers.com](http://www.swedishcaterers.com)

## CALENDAR

**SATURDAY, APRIL 18, 5-8 PM — ARTISTS RECEPTION AT WATERGATE GALLERY  
WATERGATE MALL, VIRGINIA AVE. NW**

Exhibition featuring FB artists, Richard D. Barrett and Pamela Soldwedel, Barrett's giclee prints "capture the moment". Soldwedel's stone, bronze and mixed media sculptures express passion, mystery and ambiguity central to the human experience. For more info call 338.4488 or go to [www.watergategalleryframedesign.com](http://www.watergategalleryframedesign.com)

**FRIDAY, APRIL 17 AT 7:30 PM —**

**HOUSE OF SWEDEN, GREEN DIALOGUE PECHA KUCHA NIGHT VOL #8**

Eight presenters will talk about their unique green pitch, each with 20 images x 20 seconds. Music by DJ Adrian Loving. \$10 admission at the door. To read more about the Pecha Kucha concept visit [www.pecha-kucha.org/cities/washington-dc](http://www.pecha-kucha.org/cities/washington-dc) Please send RSVP to [rsvp-hos@foreign.ministry.se](mailto:rsvp-hos@foreign.ministry.se) indicating the event in subject line.

**SATURDAY, APRIL 18 BETWEEN 1-6 PM — FAMILY DAY AT HOUSE OF SWEDEN**

Bring family and friends and enjoy this family day with us. Interactive workshops such as The Mission and The Minibottle World that will teach you about the green house effect and climate change. You will also be able to create your own "minibottle" and pack your own spaceship. Films, quizzes and "green" treats for all children. No RSVP is needed. Welcome!

**SUNDAY, APRIL 19 BETWEEN 3-5 PM — DESIGNER'S TALK AT HOUSE OF SWEDEN**

Welcome to an afternoon workshop where Swedish and American experts will discuss the importance and benefits of sustainable design solutions. Speakers include Mr. Craig Provost - previously Gillette industrial designer, global design manager and sustainable design advocate and Ms Christina Ohman - manager of strategic development and innovation at the Interactive Institute, Sweden with over 20 years of experience in design and innovation covering a range of sectors. Please send RSVP to [rsvp-hos@foreign.ministry.se](mailto:rsvp-hos@foreign.ministry.se) indicating the event in subject line.

## THE FOGGY BOTTOM NEWS

Foggy Bottom Association  
Post Office Box 58087  
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The *Foggy Bottom News* is published by the Foggy Bottom Association as a service to its members and provides information on FBA and neighborhood news, programs, activities and other events of interest to FBA members. Contributions and story ideas are welcome, but the *FBN* reserves the right to edit or hold pieces as space requires.

The Foggy Bottom Association was formed by a group of citizens in 1955 and was formally incorporated in 1959. Attendance at FBA meetings is open to all residents of Foggy Bottom and the West End.

**FBA Officers:**

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## Donald Parsons (cont'd)

of student labs would not be accommodated.

Faculty and departmental offices will invariably absorb some additional space, but the nonstudent lab space will be allocated to those with externally sponsored research. If one imagines a building awash with scientists and engineers holding NIH and NSF grants, that may sound perfectly reasonable, but it is important to remember that those grants are at the pinnacle of a funding pyramid, with the broad base composed of projects that assess the impact of cosmetics on the eyeballs of rabbits and similar low-level, but economically interesting activities.

Unfortunately for those who prefer the educational mission approach—with its primary focus on student and faculty lab space—at

least one prominent member of the Board of Trustees, Nelson Carbonell, chair of the Board's SEC Committee, enthusiastically embraces the "industrial park" model. In his meeting with the Faculty Senate SEC committee, he bluntly opined that the University owes science and engineering faculty only an office—lab space is for purchase. As I remarked after the session to one engineer, I can imagine a set of mobile carts, much like those at the Foggy Bottom Metro stop, lined up outside the doors of the SEC, with the less contract-fortunate faculty earnestly conducting their research while students look on. Perhaps an alumni fund could be developed to provide umbrellas for students involved in mobile cart projects.

I have from time to time criticized the current monolithic approach to the SEC structure—essentially finding the largest available space on campus and filling it—as unimaginative. The vision for the interior, an industrial park "six blocks from the White House," rises to the level of strange. One can hear the splashing of drops into little rabbits' eyes and the ringing of the University's cash register—not the excited burble of faculty and student conversations at a major science and engineering intellectual center.

*The writer, Donald Parsons, is a professor of economics and member of the GW Faculty Senate special committee on financial and operational planning for the Science & Engineering Complex.*

*This article originally appeared in The GW Hatchet on April 6. Reprinted with permission.*



## MEMBERSHIP MATTERS — JOIN THE FBA!

*Interested in becoming a member of the FBA?  
Just clip and mail this form to:*

**Foggy Bottom Association (Membership)**  
Post Office Box 58087  
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**Membership good through August 2009!**

Being an FBA member gives you discounts at local restaurants and other merchants, and a great deal in joining the Sports Club/LA health club!

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Membership Dues: \$15 per year  
Full-time college student: \$5 per year

OTHER CONTRIBUTION: \_\_\_\_\_

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**Questions? Contact:  
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*Fill out, clip out and send.*