



**RESTORE MASS AVE**

*Friends working together to re-green Embassy Row*

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**Restore Mass Ave launches Street Tree Inventory Project  
to address how to grow better city trees.**

Restore Mass Ave, a local non-profit which arranges for new trees and tree care along Embassy Row in Washington, DC, today announced its new Street Tree Inventory Project for 2013-2014.

“Street trees” are trees planted next to curbs, usually in sidewalk tree boxes. Most cities – including Washington – plant very young trees in these spaces. Such tree-planting and plans for large numbers of new trees have become popular with municipal leaders and voters.

The problem is that young trees face problems growing under the harsh conditions of city sidewalks, especially during DC’s hot summers. Nationwide, urban forestry professionals are concerned that too many city trees die young. The public expects returns in air quality, storm runoff reduction and rising property values. However, if too many trees die, their benefits do not materialize. So, what makes one young tree – or a row of them on a city block – grow to mature size and live for decades?

Restore Mass Ave hopes its Inventory Project will shed light on whether *stewardship*, such as watering and weeding around street trees, correlates with larger size and longer life for those trees. Only if a larger fraction of such trees reach maturity will the public get the benefits sought from planting them in the first place.

So RMA’s neighborhood grass-roots project aimed at helping local trees may provide a useful model for other neighborhoods and cities.

“Since 2007 Restore Mass Ave has urged owners of property on Mass Ave to care for these public street trees,” says Deborah Shapley, RMA founder and President. “We have monitored each street tree planted by the city; we have worked to help as many as possible survive. RMA has employed occasional professional services, such as a water truck. “But mainly, the Mass Ave property owners and our Treekeepers give continuing help to city trees.”

“The RMA system of organization – planting trees, getting care for them and keeping records of their growth – makes these trees good candidates for study,” Shapley says. Also, since RMA’s mission is to re-grow the canopy of major trees that once graced

this part of Mass Ave, this tree population should provide measurable benefits if it grows successfully through the years.

Phase I of the Inventory is almost complete. Treekeeper volunteers have measured 282 city sidewalk trees; also in the inventory database are empty spaces where trees have died or which otherwise need to be planted, for a total of nearly 300 sites.

Volunteers measured each tree's diameter 4.5 feet above ground, known as breast height. A tree's DBH, or Diameter at Breast Height, is a key metric for its size and age. For example a 1" DBH linden may be 3 years old, while a linden with a 3.37" DBH is to be likely 10 years old. Treekeepers are now measuring the Hs or heights of all 282 trees; they are also noting each tree's condition, such as dead branches.

The *benefits* a tree provides derive from the *entire* tree, including the crowns of leaves of deciduous trees, such as the elms and lindens along Mass Ave.

As shown in the attached RMA poster "Benefits of Maturing Trees," a linden of almost 18" DBH can provide \$117 worth of benefits *each year*. Benefits include absorbing carbon dioxide (which addresses global warming), soaking up air pollution (which improves air quality), less power use by buildings (which saves electricity) and absorbing rain and snow (which lowers storm water flow into city drains).

Phase II will determine how these trees are doing and try to compare them to other DC street trees that have not received extra care. RMA hopes that the Urban Forestry Administration (UFA), which plants and keeps records of all 144,000 DC street trees, will be involved in this phase.

"We don't know if our trees are growing larger and healthier than same-age trees elsewhere in DC. That's what we hope to find out," Shapley says.

The Inventory Project is advised by Dr. Jessica Sanders, Director of Technical Services and Research at Casey Trees and Dr. Lara Roman of the US Forest Service Northern Research Station. Technical assistance is provided by Michael Potts, GIS Analyst at Casey Trees and Jason Henning of The Davey Institute and USFS.

Treekeepers put in 150 hours in 12 field sessions. They were Gary Chappell, Jon Gossens, Robert Nevitt, Audrey Nevitt, Caitlin Phillips, Deborah Shapley, Sally Wiebe, and Joe Witte. Special thanks are owed to Robert Thomason for data compilation and leadership.

RMA is member of Alliance for Community Trees, which has provided critical advice and encouragement to the Project. Today's launch is part of ACTrees' 2013 National NeighborWoods Month.

Video: how measure DBH [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEU\\_NpzKqp8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kEU_NpzKqp8)

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