

RESTORE MASS AVE PROPOSES TREE PLAZA BY PNC BANK ON DUPONT CIRCLE

Nonprofit unveils plan for shaded space at city's most popular Capital Bikeshare station

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WASHINGTON DC (November 20, 2015) Today Restore Mass Ave (RMA), a nonprofit working to restore the historic tree canopy and landscape of Embassy Row, released its Tree Plaza Concept Plan. The plan envisions how the barren city sidewalk on Massachusetts Avenue by the PNC Bank Dupont Circle branch can be planted with nine new shade trees. Now the 7,100-square-foot sidewalk area at 1913 Massachusetts Avenue NW, in the heart of the Dupont Circle neighborhood, encompasses a bank entrance and ATM, a future entrance of the Dupont Underground, the city's busiest Capital Bikeshare station — and just two struggling trees.



LEFT: Proposed Tree Plaza looking east.
RMA sign is at far left.
Leo A Daly/Restore Mass Ave

RMA has been planting and arranging care for trees west from 20th Street along Massachusetts Avenue NW to Wisconsin Avenue NW since 2006. To complete its re-greening of Embassy Row, the group now proposes that the current heat island by the bank be transformed into a shaded, inviting community space. The pervious area would quadruple from 4 to 16 percent thanks to the additional tree boxes and the enlarged lawn near the bank's parking lot. The plaza area and proposed new tree sites are entirely on city land.

Leo A Daly, the international architecture, engineering, planning and interior design firm, partnered with RMA to create the plan’s renderings. “The plan meets community, environmental and historical objectives,” said RMA President Deborah Shapley. “First, the proposed plaza will benefit the public, residents and businesses in the vicinity. Second, it will connect the ecosystem of the large trees in Dupont Circle with the rows of large trees RMA is nurturing west from 20th Street on Massachusetts Avenue. Finally, the Tree Plaza will be the starting point for tours of the historic landscape of Embassy Row, one of the last Grand Avenue streetscapes in the United States.”



LEFT: Proposed Tree Plaza looking west. Leo A Daly/Restore Mass Ave

Benefits of continuous tree canopy

The Tree Plaza’s well-sited and maintained trees will create an inviting community space for residents, workers, and tourists - including thousands of people going to and from the nearby Red Line Metrorail entrance. The trees’ branches will meet overhead to shade and cool the now-hot sidewalk. They will cleanse the air. They will catch most of the rainfall that now rushes across the sloping pavement and burdens city drains.

“Around the city, the DC government is replacing paved areas with trees and plantings to make the public spaces more inviting and to soak up storm water to meet federal water quality goals,” noted Marty I. Scherr, a member of the RMA Board of Directors. “I am amazed that the city has no plan for one of the most popular intersections in the District.” RMA has asked the city to plant trees at this location, but so far to no avail.

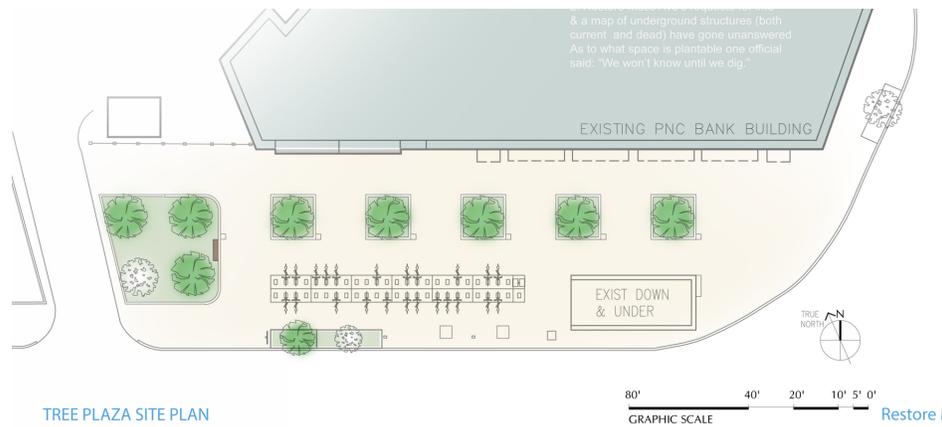
“I am amazed the city has no plan for one of the most popular intersections in the District.”

- MARTY SCHERR OF RMA

Creating community is site plan goal

The renderings show LED lights under individual trees and along the bank wall, creating a beautiful and safe space after dark. PNC Bank’s visibility will be improved with new signage at the lower windows. The

Capital Bikeshare stand will be mostly shaded, with the same number of bikes as now. The plan envisions a second bike rack nearby that could nearly double the number of bikes to 84. The Tree Plaza would also have an information kiosk and be a starting point for Dupont neighborhood tours.



TREE PLAZA SITE PLAN

Left: Site Plan

In Phase 1 the left / west end will add pervious lawn with four shade trees. (Leo A Daly/Restore Mass Ave)

In Phase 2 the present sidewalk will be replaced with plantable tree spaces and good soil. Bike stand will have same number of bikes. (Leo A Daly/RestoreMassAve)

Plaza site critical to restoring our “Grand Avenue”

The proposed Tree Plaza is integral to completing the historic avenue landscape. In 1873, at the current bank site, Nevada Senator William Morris Stewart built a huge “castle.” Stewart’s “folly” rose in woods and swamp, yet kicked off a wave of mansion-building on Massachusetts Avenue, which the city enhanced by planting double rows of trees, as shown on the 1880 map in *A Grand Avenue Revival*, RMA’s award-winning book. 1/

Coalition is forming

RMA is forming a coalition in support and plans meetings with community, business and city leaders. Some Dupont Circle leaders got a preview of the plan at a meeting at the Embassy Row Hotel last summer and supported the vision.

“The Tree Plaza plan proposed by Restore Mass Ave supports PNC’s focus on sustainability, the environment and community,” says Michael N. Harreld, regional president of PNC Bank. “We urge other businesses and the city to support this plan.”

Relation to other projects

The city’s budget recently added \$10 million to build a “cap park” over the roadway where Connecticut Avenue goes under the north side of Dupont Circle. RMA supports this endeavor though it is a complicated project decades in the making and in the study phase. RMA also supports the Dupont Underground project to repurpose the trolley tunnels under Dupont Circle. While RMA agrees on the

need for coordination among projects, it notes that the site of the Tree Plaza is physically separate; it's tree canopy can be maturing while other, larger projects get under way.

City action needed

RMA says the Tree Plaza can be done in the next couple of years under the leadership of either the DC Department of Transportation or the DC Department of Energy & Environment.

The full Tree Plaza could be realized in two phases. The DDOT Urban Forestry Administration could do Phase One now, by removing the sidewalk by the parking lot entrance, expanding the little lawn, and planting three more shade trees for a group of four.

In Phase Two, six more trees would be added in new sidewalk openings. The city would first dig up that area and create good rooting space for the trees and rainwater absorption. Useless old vents, etc, under the sidewalk would be replaced by good soil and a more permeable surface. "The gray-to-green transformation of this site can be a symbol of 21st century Washington," says Shapley.



Above: Present site view looking east (RMA photo)

RMA's Marty Scherr says, "The Dupont area is growing too fast to wait for these larger projects to coordinate and get going before trees get planted in this one space. We follow the Chinese proverb: "The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."

How to help

Please email treeplaza@restoremassave.org to join RMA's Dupont Tree Plaza Coalition, to comment or be notified of meetings. For updates, please visit our new [Dupont Tree Plaza](#) web page.

About Restore Mass Ave

Restore Mass Ave, a 501 (c) 3 registered in the District of Columbia, began in 2006 with the mission of adding major trees to expand the tree canopy along Massachusetts Avenue's Embassy Row northwest from Dupont Circle. RMA engages in local projects that can also help others "green" their streets. So far it has arranged more than 330 new trees to recreate the historic streetscape, with trees mainly provided by the city UFA and Casey Trees. RMA recently published *A Grand Avenue Revival: Massachusetts Avenue Landscape History & Design Guide* with a generous grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. For more about RMA, please visit restoremassave.org.

1/ A Grand Avenue Revival: Massachusetts Avenue Landscape History & Design Guide, Fig.4.
Download the pdf at <http://restoremassave.org/grand-avenue-revival-book/>.

