



Committee on Transportation and the Environment
Council of the District of Colombia

April 28, 2017

Testimony of Deborah Shapley
Founder & President, Restore Mass Ave, re:
Department of Energy & Environment FY 18 Budget Request

Committee Chair Mary Cheh and Members of the Committee:

Good morning. My name is Deborah Shapley. I am the founder and president of Restore Mass Ave, a 503 (c) (3) in the District of Colombia. For ten years Restore Mass Ave added new trees and tried to arrange for care of all trees along the two miles of Massachusetts Avenue northwest west from Dupont Circle, in Wards 2 and 3. A key goal is to extend the District's tree canopy and to restore historic landscape to enhance the famous architecture of this important street.

There are critical nodes in our city that are totally neglected. They offer no storm water management; they do nothing to lower the sun's heat, which hits bare pavement and reflects back up on pedestrians. Exhaust from traffic raises ground-level ozone, risking the health of pedestrians who pass regularly. In rains, dirty surface water floods into the District's Combined Sewer System.

One such node is the 7,100 square feet of city sidewalk where Massachusetts Avenue reaches Connecticut Avenue, northwest, just west of Dupont Circle. In the handout I provided, the photos show how this site looked yesterday.

This site has one of three busiest Capital Bikeshares station of 360 stations in the system. It is steps from the Dupont Circle Metro exit, which is used by 10,500 people on weekdays, according to WMATA. Daily, at least 18,000 vehicles pass, spewing exhaust on pedestrians. Four major bus lines converge there and the shuttle bus to Georgetown University pulls up and leaves four times per hour. These numbers don't include thousands of pedestrians using Connecticut Avenue business corridor, nor the thousands of US and foreign visitors in the hotels and embassies nearby.

Restore Mass Ave has taken the lead role to get nine more shade trees to canopy this neglected, dangerous parcel. How it *might* look is in two color images in the Handout. [SHOW] These Concept Plan renderings and a site plan were created pro bono for us by the Leo A Daly international architecture firm, whose office is nearby.

For ten years Restore Mass Ave has been planting new trees and getting care for all trees, to re-grow the double rows of shade trees. The rationale is in our book *A Grand Avenue Revival* which won a city prize the 2015 Award for Excellence in Historic Preservation in Education. [HOLD UP BOOK]

A century ago, double rows of American linden stretched all along Massachusetts Avenue for 7 miles across the city! We replant and restore only the two miles of the avenue west from Dupont Circle, because it has more remnants of the original landscape – with some trees more than 100 years old – and is lined with important Beaux Arts mansions. This stretch is a type of Grand Avenue that has vanished from most other US cities. But, to the cause of historic preservation, our particular restoration adds a 21st century environmental, sustainability dimension.

The Tree Plaza is needed as a kickoff point for learning about this unique Washington venue. The historic Grand Avenue here starts there. Where the PNC Bank is now, in 1873, the first huge mansion in the area was built on land surrounded by forest and swamp. In the top Leo Daly picture, you'll see our all-weather sign, where tours of the “restored” Mass Ave will begin. Our project will enlist DCPS middle school students to help design these tours. They'll learn local history, architecture, and green design. They'll contribute their tekky know-how; 13 year olds are the real technology whizzes in the District!

Our Dupont Tree Plaza advances DOEE's mission. It needs DOEE's support. I ask not as a lone supplicant, but on behalf of a District NGO supported by hundreds of small donors, an e-news list approaching 1,000, and with an active web site and social media. We have arranged 350 new trees and get care for some 1,000 other trees. We help to enforce the new DC Tree Law. At least 70 owners including 40 embassies are engaged. Casey Trees has honored us with seven community plantings.

Restore Mass Ave chooses projects that benefit the entire city. We curate double rows of shade trees, not for us alone. We're getting these trees growing so their branches interlock along the row and across the sidewalks. This streetscape of continuous canopy can help DC meet urgent federal stormwater and air quality standards.

But to expand tree canopy over the huge barren sidewalk at the Plaza site is a huge challenge. So we have engaged Designgreen, a respected green engineering firm with deep knowledge of DOEE programs and others to research and apply for design-build of this project.

We hope that the DOEE will look favorably on any application we may make for design and build. Some possibilities:

- A. The Tree Plaza will measurably mitigate stormwater flowing into the District's CSS.
- B. It likely qualifies for funding as a Low Impact Development (LID) project.
- C. Since it will lower pollution of the Chesapeake Bay watershed in the CSS area of the District, it could qualify for Clean Rivers funding.

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D. In snowfall as well as storms, slippery water covers the 7,100 square foot sidewalk and another 3,000 square feet of adjoining gutters and road. By creating pervious space there and breaking up pedestrian pathways, our project helps resilience sought in the Climate Ready DC program.

E. The project could be incorporated into Sustainable DC Plan 2.0, because as mentioned, no one else in city government or the private or community sectors plans *anything* for this site.

F. Finally, DOEE programs aim to get buildings in the District to save energy. We plan large type shade trees next to an important commercial building. The building will get protection from cold wind and hot sun and use less energy.

Building the Tree Plaza will advance DC's 5-year Comprehensive Energy Plan. Whoever occupies the building or wants to develop it, will need trees to offset energy use. So another reason RMA is pushing hard to get these trees in the ground fast, is we need them to reach meaningful size if and when, in future, the site is up for development. In the rendering, we're showing the trees as willow oaks about 3-5 years in the ground.

In conclusion, I stress that Restore Mass Ave's work advances DOEE's mission. We support the programs under DOEE Director Tommy Wells that Suraj Sarawal of Casey Trees referenced a few minutes ago.

Should these programs hit problems in coming months in terms of the budget or otherwise, we would be glad to speak up on their behalf.

Thank you for your attention.

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Re-greening Embassy Row

RestoreMassAve.org

Dupont Tree Plaza

Site is 100% city land (7,100 sf) adjoining PNC Bank at 1913 Massachusetts Avenue NW. At right is concept vision for 9 shade trees, info kiosk, night lights, and improved ecosystem services.

Images: Leo A Daly/RMA



Tree Plaza site
4-27-2017
Looking east

Looking west



Since 2007: Along the historic Grand Avenue 350 new trees planted and care for >1000 trees. Partners: > 70 embassies and private owners, Treekeepers, landscapers, agencies, Casey Trees. info@restoremassave.org