

## Celebrating 10 years and 13% tree canopy growth

RestoreMassAve.org  
@restoremassave



### *Re-greening Embassy Row*

Hon Jack Evans  
DC City Council  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Jack,

September 16. 2019

We at Restore Mass Ave are deeply alarmed by a bill planned to come before the Council as “emergency” legislation tomorrow. **Please watch for this bill and stop it.**

RMA has been saving large trees and planting and growing large-type trees along two miles of the historic corridor of Massachusetts Avenue in Wards 2 and 3, known as Embassy Row. Our program of protection, filling in rows of trees, and local stewardship has seen tree canopy grow by 13% along our route, in the decade when city tree canopy grew by 2.5%. Our special charge is large trees, including many that are Heritage size.

Council Member Charles Allen plans to introduce the **Sursum Corda Cooperative Clarification Temporary Draft**. The link to the text is below. The bill would rescind the 2016 Amendments to the 2002 Tree Law for the Sursum Corda developer. But it is a template for rescinding protections of Heritage trees (and others) throughout the city.

The Sursum Corda site has many Heritage Trees that the developer wants to remove. The 2016 Tree Law Amendments designated this new class of large trees of 100 inches or larger in circumference, which may be removed only by express permission of the Mayor. The fee for removal is “not less than \$300 per inch” of circumference, or \$30,000 for a 100” circumference tree.

If the Council passes the Allen bill **three bad things will happen.**

**First:** A large number of huge trees on the site will be taken down in the name of developing / improving DC. This is nuts! For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and all the 21<sup>st</sup>, these trees have sheltered residents, made healthier, cooler air and soaked up rain that cleansed DC’s watershed. And they are beautiful.

If lost, the quality of life will go down, for long-term residents and new-arriving condo dwellers. Sacrificing the trees to the god of more volume of marketable buildings is saying to heck with the District’s soils and tree heritage.


The bill would allow the developer to pay fees at the rate of \$35 per inch of circumference, the rate for ‘special trees’ in the 2002 law. This is another way Allen’s bill serves the developer’s financial interest.

**Second:** Under present 2016 legislation, Heritage Trees may be removed only by the permission of the Mayor. But Allen's bill states this new act shall take effect *"following approval of the Mayor (or in the event of a veto by the Mayor, action by the Council to override the veto"* then after the 30 day period of Congressional review. In other words, when the Council votes for this exemption once – it is geared up to override a Mayoral veto. Thus it guts the authority and intent of Mayoral permission requirement of the present law.

**Third:** Casey Trees warns correctly that, "while the language would only be applicable to the Sursum Corda development, it creates legislative precedent for other developers who wish to remove trees. There are a number of other projects throughout the city that have Heritage Trees - if this bill passes it will create a template for other projects that had some level of planning prior to the passage of the Tree Canopy Protection Act of 2016 to remove Heritage Trees."

The Board of Directors stands with Casey Trees and others urging that this bill be rejected – as well as any variant of it now or later. **Don't allow this precedent!**  
The developers at Sursum Corda can do better!

Respectfully yours,



Deborah Shapley, Founder & President

*Link to the bill:*

[http://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-09-12-Sursum-Corda-Cooperative-Clarification-Temporary\\_draft.pdf](http://dccouncil.us/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/2019-09-12-Sursum-Corda-Cooperative-Clarification-Temporary_draft.pdf)

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