

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

RE: Dupont Tree Plaza

Response to DDoT's Preliminary Design

Movants, Advisory Neighborhood Commission 2B (ANC 2B), requests that DDoT:

1. Design and implement the Dupont Tree Plaza (DTP) main features in the plan ANC 2B previously endorsed and shown when the City Council approved funding in the FY2023 DDoT budget for "Dupont Tree Plaza."
2. Main features compared to DDoT preliminary plan of 6-12-2024:

a) Trees. The design submitted to DDoT by Restore Mass Ave (RMA) had 12 large shade type trees. It continued the double rows of shade trees that stretch from 20th Street for two miles out Massachusetts Avenue. These tree rows and views form the 'restored' landscape of the nation's last Grand Avenue. This has been Restore Mass Ave's principal program since 2007; many trees are growing large and shady, making a new environmental landmark in DC.

Because the 1900 block of Mass is the most used transportation node on the route, and because of the site's unique historic value (see below). Restore Mass Ave has worked with experts since 2015 to retrofit a shady unique historic space at this location. (A list of appearances before the ANC, subcommittees and other groups is below.)

The 6-12 DDoT design has few additional trees. There seems little chance of large shade tree growth, as soil volumes are not the 1,500 cubic feet per tree which DDoT implemented elsewhere on Mass Ave. (Volumes are in Greening DC report.)

In RMA's plan the trees frame the Dupont Underground trolley tunnel entrance.

The RMA design added two trees in the lawn west of the parking lot driveway to 20th Street. These plus the main new Plaza trees align as a wildlife corridor between the forest of Dupont Circle and the tree rows of Mass Ave. In any event the west sidewalk and drainage has already had infrastructure renovation from DDoT's MARP.

b) Public space uses in the RMA Dupont Tree Plaza plan facilitates public transport use because 9 bus lines intersect nearby along with MetroRail Red Line. The space is mainly a pedestrian passage for workers in region, tourists, students, residents, retailers.

Public space must be open and flexible for use by popups and use by some farmer's market vendors though nearly all locate now in the Massachusetts Avenue roadway and on 20 Street.

c) Views and obstructions. The Dupont Tree Plaza features open surface below the trees for cool walking and directed views along the space. It omits benches, big shrubs, low trees for ease of pedestrian passage and flexible uses.

d) Bike stands. Movants support relocating the Capital Bike Share stands to allow more trees. Retaining the same number of docks nearby was part of ANC's 2B resolution in 2019 approving the RMA design. Relocating the present bikes nearby is one option in the 6-12 DDoT plan.

e) Lighting for safety and appeal. The RMA design envisions dusk-to-dawn lighting, underlighting of trees and of other points so hundreds of people who pass are safe and enjoy the space. Movants support integrating lighting into the DDoT plan.

f) Sustainability. We seek sustainability out 20-50 years per Sustainable DC goals.

f-1) Stormwater The 6,000 sq ft main Plaza area has been extensively studied by RMA's engineer and others for how to handle the heavier storms coming in future. The sidewalk already floods often and freezes in winter. The CSO outlet which takes the overflow into Rock Creek is one of the most overloaded in the system. The DDoT 6-12 plan does not seem to address runoff except for some pervious surface. Movants request meaningful stormwater retention be a key feature of the Plaza.

f-2) Heat Sweltering heat of this bare area is suffered by thousands who cross daily. This "heat island" is tracked on DoEE air quality maps. Restore Mass Ave with American University has mapped sidewalk temperatures there compared to tree-lined sidewalks. Improving hard surfaces to lessen city heat is a fast-moving field.

Movants request DDoT propose modern heat-reflecting surfaces and consider the best options for hard-surface projects to be built in 2027.

3. Historic Value and Character

The main goal of this retrofit is to show the site's **historic value & character**. It is unique!

The PNC Bank building at 1913 Mass is the site of the 1873 Stewart Mansion - the first and most colorful of the grand palaces and where Embassy Row really started.

The Mass Ave NW Historic District runs from 17 Street through Dupont Circle out to the Naval Observatory. The Comprehensive Plan, Chapter 10 on Historic Preservation, states:

"improvements and landscape features [should] represent distinctive elements of the city's cultural, social... history." The process should involve "community participation and support" so "every neighborhood [is able] to enjoy civic architecture."

Since city goals include historic preservation of this site, and it adds to the character of the space, it should be featured in the Dupont Tree Plaza plan. The RMA plan's signage and tour info enables this.

Other local history can be shown and local events like the Dupont House Tour. The design should look ahead to the reopening of the trolley steps as a Dupont Underground attraction.

4. Funding

Movants request that funds already secured for "Dupont Tree Plaza" be spent on the main features described. We also note that this project qualifies for up to \$200,000 more from the

DOEE Clean Water Construction program. Restore Mass Ave with its engineer submitted all the data needed for DDOT to qualify for a CWC grant in April 2023. The project would likely receive a high score. Additional funds may come from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, which supported the 2019 engineer plan which was approved by all agencies.

If additional funding is needed, many potential funders know of this project and respect the community's years of grass-roots effort to redesign this public space.

5. Community support

ANC 2B was briefed on the Dupont Tree Plaza project by Restore Mass Ave and its engineer on July 10, 2019 and voted 9-0 in favor of it. (Resolution attached.) Additionally from June 2019 the 2 B Transportation and Infrastructure Committee and Land Use Committees have been briefed and voiced support. In 2022 Restore Mass Ave submitted plans and memo to the City Council Committee on Transportation and Environment in February-March 2023; Brooke Pinto was lead sponsor; in April the Council included a line item funding for the project.

ANC 2 B was briefed again on the project in relation to the Deck-Over project February 8, 2023. This plaza remains a stand alone project in a separate division from the Deck-Over. In 2023 community groups supported an earlier build of the plaza if possible.

6. Schedule

Due to delays in construction caused by the plaza site's use as a staging area for the Connecticut Avenue deck-over project DDOT has a few extra years to finalize a unique Dupont-and-city-enhancing redesign for this space.

WHEREFORE ANC 2B respectfully requests that the DDOT design and implement the above features in the Dupont Tree Plaza. The ANC reiterates its support for the plan with the features judged by Restore Mass Ave and expert advisors as crucial to a modern installation meeting the transportation, environment, business and community needs of the Dupont neighborhood and the city:

ANC 2B therefore requests that the planners using funds from this line item propose a 35% design that fulfills the above necessary features of the Dupont Tree Plaza.

Respectfully submitted,



Founder and President, Restore Mass Ave
For the Board of Directors, RMA
June 12, 2024