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A verdant and vital commercial corridor

ANC 1D resolves to advise the DC Department of Transportation, the DC Office of Planning, the DC Public Space Committee, the DC Department of Public Works, and the District Council to focus its immediate streetscape efforts on Mount Pleasant Street as a pilot program to explore innovations and means of continuing financing for upgrades and maintenance of this commercial corridor.

The following sections are equal parts of this resolution: The above opening statement, the policy points, and the “why”, with its concerns and rationales.

Policy Points

1D advises the above bodies to adopt the following policies in the Mount Pleasant commercial corridor:

1. Stop all current work in enlarging or adding new trees and tree boxes until there has emerged a plan that builds on smaller pilot projects to assure that there is a good fit between innovations, local needs and practicalities. However, ANC1D supports the immediate removal of all tree fences on Mount Pleasant Street.
2. Explore, starting in a single half-block area, ideally the south half of the west side of the 3100 block of Mount Pleasant Street, the feasibility of growing large trees (fifty foot plus) by providing structured soil underneath permeable pavers so that the soil is protected from compaction and can hold the moisture needed to sustain large trees.
3. Choose the first pilot area: First, so that there will be favorable conditions for large trees; second, so that an increase in public space will significantly improve economic activity. ANC1D advises that 80% of public space rentals could be reinvested in new pilot programs and continuing services to the area.

Why: Mount Pleasant Street has a narrow right-of-way and relatively narrow sidewalks and little remaining public space. With so little space serving so many people and purposes, careful and innovative uses of this space can provide far greater utility than simple designs better suited to less dense and less diverse districts.

1a. 1D advises that adding and enlarging the current design of tree boxes seems likely to reduce much further space for pedestrians, and often for bikes, wheelchairs, and shopping carts. In densely populated areas like our commercial corridor, the benefits of trees versus other uses of the space cannot be assumed to be paramount. To do so without weighing trees' benefits along with all the benefits from other uses, seems to neglect and perhaps lose benefits to people.

1b. 1D advises the bodies to focus available funds on a small area so that a tree and its water retention system can be installed in a few days with minimum disruption to merchants and to pedestrians. By installing the system in a series where outdoor cafes and other expanded economic uses are viable, then a critical density is easier to achieve, and a permanent attraction created.

1c. 1D advises the above governmental bodies to also consider working with current users of public space to reconstruct their stairs, fences, and other overlaps on public space to increase the shared use of the space in ways that bolster community, cultural, and economic development.

1d. 1D advises the above DC Government bodies to remove all tree boxes and replace them with permeable pavers and water retention systems. Tree box removal should improve the chances that merchants will find economically viable uses of the larger areas of public space available for rental.

1e. 1D advises that new trees not be installed without a water retention system since they will be lost if the system is installed later. Further, not installing trees immediately will save money and allow a more rapid expansion of the system. Moreover, trees installed without the system have been sickly, prone to dying, and, when surviving, stunted in growth.

Passed by 5 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on December 7, 2010, with a quorum present. Voting "yes": Commissioners Bosserman, McKay, Edwards, Scott, Tunda.