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## Mount Pleasant Town Square and Pedestrian Encounter Zone

Resolved, that ANC1D advises the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) to undertake a study of a trial “Pedestrian Encounter Zone” for Mount Pleasant Street NW, from Irving Street to Park Road, but primarily in the 3200 block, yielding a substantial expansion of the effective area of Lamont Park, as well as promoting pedestrian and bicycle use of Mount Pleasant Street.

Why:

There is general agreement in Mount Pleasant that the commercial strip should be made more attractive to pedestrians, and less devoted to automobile traffic. Mount Pleasant Street at this time is a 56-foot-wide barrier between Lamont Park and the shops on the east side of the street. Pedestrians frequently cross this street in mid-block, making their way across two lanes of traffic, two lanes of parked cars, and one center lane used for turning buses and as a truck loading zone. Declaring this barrier a “pedestrian encounter zone” would give pedestrians priority over traffic, legitimizing and enhancing current use.

Such “encounter zones” have found success in Europe, where certain central-city areas have been designated areas where pedestrians, not cars, have priority. Traffic is not prevented from entering the area, but drivers must yield to pedestrians, not merely at crosswalks, but everywhere within this zone. Traffic moves slowly, typically with an 18 mph speed limit. The “pedestrian priority” status tends to shift through traffic to other roads, resulting in areas that approach pedestrian malls in people-friendliness, yet which do not prevent access by delivery vehicles or business patrons.

Mount Pleasant Street is ideal for an experimental implementation of a “pedestrian encounter zone” in the District. This is not an essential through route to any outside destinations. Through traffic can take 16th Street, bypassing Mount Pleasant Street entirely. East-west through traffic is best confined to the east-west arterials, Park Road and Adams Mill Road/Irving Street. The reduction of traffic on Mount Pleasant Street would be enhanced by allowing the long-recommended and planned left turn from northbound 16th Street onto westbound Park Road, avoiding the tedious roundabout of the triangle park on the east side of 16th Street, and so reducing any temptation to cut through Mount Pleasant Street to reach westbound Park Road.

Noisy northbound traffic on this block could be further reduced by revising the routes of northbound Metrobuses to take 16th Street, and the left onto Park Road, instead of coming up Mount Pleasant Street. This would have the additional benefit of allowing the conversion of several bus stops into metered automobile parking areas. These additional customer parking spots could justify the elimination of some of the parking on the 3200 block, further reducing vehicle congestion on Mount Pleasant Street, and promoting the use of this area for pedestrians, instead of for cars.

These preliminary concepts require more detailed and thorough investigation. ANC1D advises such an investigation, a study of this “pedestrian encounter zone” as it might be experimentally implemented here in Mount Pleasant, to see how well this could work in DC.

*Passed by 5 to 0 vote at the legally noticed, public meeting of ANC1D on April 20, 2010, with a quorum present. Voting “yes”: Commissioners Edwards, Scott, Lepanto, Bosserman, McKay.*