

TESTIMONY OF LEIGH CATHERINE MILES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
TENLEYTOWN MAIN STREET  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT  
APRIL 13, 2017

Good morning Chairman McDuffie and members of the Committee on Business and Economic Development. My name is Leigh Catherine Miles and I am the Executive Director of Tenleytown Main Street.

Tenleytown Main Street recently passed a major milestone. In January, we completed our first full year as a Main Street program. Earlier this week we celebrated with the release of our annual report, copies of which I've provided for you today. I would like to thank all of you, Mayor Bowser, and DSLBD Director Ana Harvey for investing in Tenleytown's business community through the DC Main Streets program.

In our first 15 months, Tenleytown Main Street welcomed 10 new restaurants and shops that brought an estimated 110 jobs to the neighborhood. We organized music and arts festivals that celebrated our community's creative culture and attracted thousands to our business district. We funded storefront improvements through a small grants initiative; supported local businesses through networking and advocacy programs; and launched a Clean & Green program to keep Wisconsin Avenue looking fresh.

On this last point, I want to pause to acknowledge the Wisconsin Avenue Clean Team and our partner Career Path DC. When TMS surveyed the neighborhood back when we first opened our doors, a significant percentage of the community described our commercial area as dirty. Through the efforts of our outstanding Clean Team, which I've had the fortune to work with from Day 1, we've made huge strides in changing that impression. In the last six months alone, the Clean Team has collected more than 5,000 pounds of litter and recyclables and removed graffiti from 62 properties in the service area, which includes our Main Street. And while we were fortunate to have an easy snow season this year, the Clean Team crew made sure that curb cuts and sidewalks were clear whenever ice or snow did fall. The Wisconsin Avenue Clean Team is a vital partner in keeping our Main Street open for business.

And our business district is growing. Five more businesses have already announced plans to open later this year, while two residential and retail development projects will add close to 250 residential units and 11,000 sq. ft. of retail. It's not unusual to hear people comment "There's so much going on in Tenleytown these days" or "Wow, Wisconsin Avenue is really looking good."

As a resident, I've long known that Tenleytown is a fantastic neighborhood to work, live, and play. Thanks to your support and the proven Main Street Approach, people across the city are taking note of all Tenleytown has to offer and our community has a renewed sense of pride in our business area.

Tenleytown Main Street will continue to build on this momentum. During the remainder of this year, we will:

- Work with commercial brokers to implement a retail attraction strategy to bring new businesses to the neighborhood;
- Complete an assessment of our commercial storefronts and draft design guidelines that will inform future investments in façade improvements;

- Launch a new Health and Wellness Fair as part of our annual Earth Day celebration – coming up on Saturday, April 22 - to showcase Tenleytown’s growing number of healthcare, fitness, and wellness businesses;
- Produce three other signature events, including Make Music Day in June, Art All Night in September, and our week-long seasonal celebration Tenley WinterFest; and
- Expand our marketing and branding initiatives to attract shoppers and diners to Tenleytown.

Of course, none of this would be possible without your ongoing investment in the DC Main Streets program. The Main Street initiative is vital for historic neighborhoods like Tenleytown – and our small businesses, many of which have been in the community for decades – to keep pace with the tremendous growth taking place across the District.

A modest increase in funding for DC Main Streets to \$150,000 per program in fiscal year 2018 would allow Tenleytown Main Street not only to continue the types of programs I’ve described, but also make investments in business façade improvements and placemaking in our public spaces – the kinds of durable improvements that help make a neighborhood a place where people regularly want to spend time, shop, and dine. Funding at this level would also allow Tenleytown Main Street to continue to build a sustainable organization able to achieve the kind of impact our veteran DC Main Streets have had in their communities.

Again, I thank you for your continued investment in Tenleytown. Our relatively new program is still growing and we are still learning, but without a doubt the Main Street Approach is working in Tenleytown. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.