

TESTIMONY OF LEIGH CATHERINE MILES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
TENLEYTOWN MAIN STREET
BEFORE THE COUNCIL OF THE WHOLE SUBCOMMITTEE ON LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND UTILITIES
OCTOBER 14, 2016

PUBLIC ROUNDTABLE ON THE DEPARTMENT OF SMALL AND LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT'S PROGRESS ON
MAIN STREETS AND BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT DISTRICTS, AND THE GROWING ROLE OF MAIN STREETS AND BIDS
IN SUPPORTING LOCAL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Good morning Councilmember Allen and members of the Subcommittee on Local Business Development and Utilities. My name is Leigh Catherine Miles and I am the Executive Director of Tenleytown Main Street.

Tenleytown Main Street is proud to have recently completed our inaugural year as a DC Main Street program. I say year, but in reality, we have grown from a brand-new organization into a fully-formed Main Street in just nine short months. Our rapid development would not have been possible without the support of the District Council, Councilmember Mary Cheh, Mayor Bowser, DSLBD Director Ana Harvey and her outstanding team, my fellow Main Street directors, and most importantly the Tenleytown business community and the scores of neighborhood volunteers who have dedicated countless hours to bringing new life to the commercial district at the heart of our community.

Despite being one of the newest DC Main Street programs, I can unequivocally say that the Main Street model works. In the past nine months, Tenleytown has welcomed five new businesses, bringing an estimated 40 new jobs to our Main Street, and another five businesses have announced plans to open in the coming year. Two residential and retail development projects, slated to begin construction within the next 6-9 months, will add close to 250 residential units and 11,000 sq. ft. of retail. Our business district is poised for growth, and we are pleased entrepreneurs are taking note of the opportunities in Tenleytown.

Equally, we are pleased that District residents are also taking note and gaining a new appreciation for what Tenleytown offers. From international dining to favorite lunch spots, belly dancing to martial arts studios, musical instruments to pet supplies, and healthcare to hardware - it's all available right in Tenleytown.

Special events hosted by Tenleytown Main Street, from our Earth Day celebration to Make Music Day on the summer solstice, have highlighted our local businesses, celebrated the unique spirit of the neighborhood, and brought new energy and customers to our commercial core. Just last month, Art All Night in Tenleytown showcased more than 40 artists and performers, the majority from the surrounding community, at 11 venues along Wisconsin Avenue, attracting thousands of people to our shops, restaurants, and Main Street. Several business owners commented that they had never seen Tenleytown so bustling on a Saturday night.

We'll round out the year with the weeklong Tenley WinterFest, starting November 25. The annual event features a scavenger hunt at local businesses, restaurant specials at more than 15 eateries, lighting displays at local shops, and an array of family-friendly seasonal events.

Signature neighborhood events like these not only draw residents and customers to our commercial area, they also help solidify a Tenleytown identity – a lively, welcoming, family-friendly, and somewhat eclectic community that prioritizes unique local enterprises.

As our business district grows, we are committed to ensuring that new businesses are successful and that our current businesses reap the benefits of this growth and remain competitive. In our first year, Tenleytown Main Street has established a program of business assistance that includes regular networking opportunities to connect businesses with District resources, support for storefront improvements, market analysis, and one-on-one consulting on outreach and design projects. This fall and winter we will add marketing, branding, and business retention to our technical assistance program.

As we look ahead to 2017, Tenleytown Main Street will seek to continue building upon our inaugural year, ever mindful of our mission to serve our local businesses and make Tenleytown an even more desirable place to work, live, and play. As I testified earlier this year, continued investments in our business community and our unique Tenleytown brand are critical for our historic neighborhood to keep pace with new and burgeoning neighborhoods across the District.

Again, I thank you for your ongoing support for Tenleytown Main Street and Main Street programs across the District. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.