

Tenleytown Main Street

4545 42nd Street, NW Suite 214
Washington, DC 20016
202.362.1815



TESTIMONY OF LEIGH CATHERINE MILES, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TENLEYTOWN MAIN STREET TO THE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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 (TMS), a position I have held since January 2016. I thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD), the DC Main Streets program, and the Clean Team program.

This past year has been filled with unprecedented challenges for our communities, disrupting daily life and livelihoods. Our small, local businesses have borne the brunt of the economic crisis as they struggle to weather nearly a year of constrained operations, declining revenues, and public health concerns. It is a testament to their resiliency, the support of our residents, and the investments made by the city and DSLBD in programs like DC Main Streets that these businesses continue to prevail amidst the myriad and seemingly endless challenges they encounter.

Throughout the past year, Tenleytown Main Street has worked on the frontlines to sustain businesses in the short-term and position them to rebound in the future. In calendar year 2020 alone, TMS:

- Awarded \$82,500 in grants and recovery supplies to Tenleytown small businesses and helped them secure \$377,000 in additional grant assistance. Of businesses receiving grants from TMS, 51% were woman-owned and 30% were minority-owned. When factoring in the value of hundreds of hours of pro-bono technical assistance, TMS has been able to direct more than half a million dollars of assistance to our small and local businesses.
- Provided more than 1,000 hours of technical assistance to help businesses adapt their operations, access government relief programs, and apply for financial assistance.
- Granted 60 Tenleytown businesses personal protective equipment to safeguard employees and customers during the pandemic. At the request of DSLBD, TMS also led the distribution of PPE supplies to more than 100 businesses in Ward 3 as part of a citywide program.
- Enabled a dozen restaurants to set-up new or expanded streateries, parklets, sidewalk cafes, and pick-up/drop-off zones to sustain business despite indoor dining restrictions. TMS also published a printable guide to local delivery and carry-out options for Tenleytown residents.
- Provided digital marketing support that has benefited more than 50 businesses by enhancing their online presence and engaging customers in a virtual environment.

- Published weekly Tenleytown Business Briefs with up-to-date information on financial and technical assistance programs, policy changes impacting businesses, operational guidance, and other relevant information. Local business owners and managers read these briefs more than 21,000 times.
- Adapted our annual community festivals - Art All Night and Tenley WinterFest - to celebrate responsibly our creative, family-friendly community, increase foot traffic, and market local businesses.

A defining feature of Main Street programs is that we are woven into the fabric of the communities we serve, enabling us to develop deep, trusted relationships with our local businesses. When crises like the pandemic arise, business owners know they can pick up the phone, call us at any hour or day, and talk directly with someone who knows them personally and will make sure they receive the assistance they need. We are able to rapidly deploy support – from standing up PPE distribution in a matter of days to reallocating resources to fund emergency grants to having experts on-call to assist with loan applications and operational pivots. Main Streets have been and continue to be a lifeline for our local businesses.

Thank you Tenleytown Main Street for all the support. It has been a relief to know that we could ask you all for help with figuring out what DC is demanding these days and on how to help keep customers [informed] & safe. Assisting us with getting the grants applications in so we could receive money to help us stay open.

Please keep up the great work. The help you all have provided has been more than I thought possible.

Janice McLain, Owner, PetMAC DC

As we navigated this past year, I am grateful to DSLBD Director Kristi Whitfield and her staff, including Cristina Amoruso and Elizabeth Anderson, who supported us as our organization pivoted to get essential support to businesses, offered guidance as we sought to address unique business challenges or identify appropriate District resources, and encouraged us to get creative in how we approached the work of Main Streets. DSLBD also played an invaluable role in convening Main Street programs across the city to share information, resources, best practices, and ideas. It is a model that TMS and my colleagues in Ward 3 have adopted, creating a mutually supportive network that regularly engages to leverage our collective expertise on behalf of our five, now six, Main Street commercial districts.

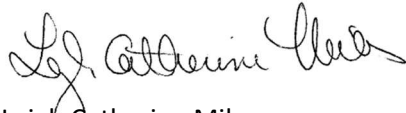
While my testimony has thus far focused on the Main Street program, I would be remiss if I did not highlight the work of the Wisconsin Avenue Clean Team, which Tenleytown Main Street manages in partnership with Career Path DC. Our two full-time and one part-time crew members have continued to provide vital clean and safe services throughout the pandemic, covering 2.2 miles of Wisconsin Avenue, six days a week. Their work, while important in any normal year, has been critical during this abnormal year as they cleaned up after vandals targeted storefronts in the summer, helped move PPE supplies, and maintained the cleanliness of our public spaces amid a health emergency.

As we enter the second year of the pandemic, we know there is much more work to be done, but we are hopeful that we can see the light at the end of this exceptionally long tunnel. Tenleytown Main Street remains steadfast in our commitment to the small, local businesses that form the heart of our

neighborhood. We will emerge stronger from the pandemic and continue to build a vibrant business district. As one optimistic sign, half a dozen businesses have already announced plans to open in Tenleytown in the coming year.

On behalf of our Main Street and the businesses we serve, I thank Mayor Bowser, the DC Council, and this committee for your continued commitment to and investment in DSLBD and the Main Street and Clean Team programs it supports.

Submitted respectfully by

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leigh Catherine Miles". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Leigh" being the most prominent.

Leigh Catherine Miles
Executive Director
On February 9, 2021