

Thursday, October 31, 2024

Dear DDOT Director Sharon Kershbaum:

Small business owners are the beating heart of Georgetown's historic commercial district. We are taxpayers, employers, building tenants and owners. Many of us are Georgetown residents, as well. Our investments, community involvement, and business presence make Georgetown an appealing and thriving destination for visitors and residents alike.

It is precisely because of this commitment to, and investment in our Georgetown community, that we ask the DC Department of Transportation (DDOT) to address the long-standing problems associated with the Georgetown Business Improvement District's (GBID) Widened Sidewalk Extension and Streatery Pilot that we believe are greatly damaging the character and appearance of Georgetown.

As you know, the Streateries Pilot allowed the GBID to extend sidewalks into M Street and Wisconsin Avenue -- the commercial heart of historic Georgetown -- for restaurants to use for outdoor dining.

The Pilot also allowed the GBID to use grey plastic sidewalk extensions to widen sidewalks in the commercial heart of historic Georgetown for pedestrian traffic, scooters, and bike racks.

While we supported the Pilot during the COVID-19 emergency -- and believe appropriately designed and well-maintained uses of public spaces could be a tremendous asset to the entire community -- it is *well past time* to transition to a long-term plan that works for all of Georgetown, including small businesses that are not restaurants. It is also *well past time* to enforce aesthetic and maintenance rules so the streateries make historic Georgetown look better, not worse. New York City has done it, as have historic communities as close as Old Town Alexandria.

The GBID holds the permit for the Streateries Pilot on behalf of the restaurants. The GBID collects fees from all businesses in Georgetown to manage the public spaces, including the streateries and sidewalk extensions. The GBID, as the permit holder, is responsible for maintaining the streateries and enforcing aesthetic and maintenance rules.

Yet here we are, years after the COVID-19 emergency ended, *still* with chipped jersey barriers jutting out into already-narrow streets, blocking delivery trucks and visitor parking and forcing cyclists and cars into a single lane. We *still* have shoddy planters filled with trash and dead plants.

We *still have* mis-matched outdoor furniture. And we *still have* ugly, gray plastic sidewalk extenders, often heaped with discarded scooters or just holding trash bins. This is not the upscale shopping and dining experience residents and visitors to Georgetown expect of one of the Nation's most famous historic neighborhoods.

We ask DDOT to require the GBID to comply with its permit or to move the permit from the GBID to the individual restaurants (as is done elsewhere in the City). We also ask DDOT to move now from the Pilot to a plan for the long-term use of Georgetown's roads, sidewalks, and public spaces, which takes into account the full scope of the community's transportation needs.

Here are two easy steps that can and should be taken immediately:

1. DDOT should order the GBID to remove decking and sidewalk extenders that are not directly in front of an operating restaurant.
2. DDOT must order the GBID to comply with the Old Georgetown Board's historically appropriate standards.

Signed,

Bill Dean, CEO, M.C. Dean, Inc.

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Alexa and Krista Johnson, Owners, Ella-Rue

Becky Waddell, Founder, Take Care

Robert Hughes, General Manager, Violet Salon

Deborah Winsor, Owner, August Georges

Ed Solomon, Owner, Anthony's Tuxedos
AnnMaria Baldine, Manager, Amina Rubinacci
Omer Cevirme, Owner, Salon Omer & Spa
Maryam Amirmajdi, Owner, Jaryam Boutique
Sara Swabb, Owner, Storie Collective Interior Design
Daphna Peled, Owner, Pillar & Post
Susan (Moki) Heston, Owner, Moss & Co
Zoe Feldman, Owner, Zoe Feldman Interior Design
Jackie Dunn, Owner, Oliver Dunn
Elizabeth Lichte Crocker, Commercial Property Owner
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