



**MOUNT PLEASANT
PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN MINI-CHARRETTE
SEPTEMBER 21-23, 2005**

FINAL REPORT: NOVEMBER 22, 2005

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Prepared for:

Mount Pleasant Main Street Program

Funded by:

*re*STORE DC / DC Main Street
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and
Economic Development
District of Columbia

Supported by:

National Trust Main Street Center

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§I. PURPOSE AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this three-day study was to develop a series of recommendations for strengthening the visual identity of the Mount Pleasant neighborhood business district in general, and to enhance the use, design, and function of Lamont Park in particular. The study area for the mini-charrette included Mount Pleasant Street, NW, (from Irving Street to Park Road) and adjoining side streets, and the public parks located at the gateways to the business district (including Asbury Park, Park Road Park, and the Mount Pleasant Library Gateway).

This purpose was consonant with one of the long range goals for the Mount Pleasant neighborhood, as expressed by members of the Advisory Neighborhood Commission, which is to create and attract a creative entrepreneurial class to the neighborhood, through a mixture of affordable housing, all-scale neighborhood service retail, and improved transit service.

The study objectives included:

- Identification of issues and concerns, and opportunities and recommendations related to the existing public space design and use in the Study Area;
- Development of a shared vision within the Mount Pleasant community for the uses and improvements to public space in the Study Area through a public consensus-building process;
- Development of conceptual improvements and remedies for the design and use of public space in the Study Area; and
- Drafting of recommended approaches for the Mount Pleasant community to help promote and realize the proposed improvements and remedies to enhance the design and use of public space in the Study Area.

The initial finding and consensus of the Study was that Lamont Park is the primary potentially great community “place,” as well as the site with the most potential to become a successful civic space and public amenity for the Mount Pleasant neighborhood.

During this study, the perceptions, experiences, visions, and plans for the Mount Pleasant commercial district and Lamont Park were gathered from residents and stakeholders during a public workshop and from representatives of nearly all of the recognized civic and commercial organizations in the neighborhood through individual meetings. However, the short duration of this study limited the development of a truly shared vision for the neighborhood’s many public spaces, one that is based upon broad representation from the Mount Pleasant community as a whole and that is achieved by engaging a large and diverse constituency.

The findings described in this report, including accompanying photographs and design schematics, are intended to provide the Mount Pleasant Main Street program and the greater Mount Pleasant community with a basis for developing consensus on the types of remedies and improvements that will enhance the overall quality of the neighborhood business district. These findings remain preliminary, pending further review and discussion within the community to confirm a shared vision for the public spaces in the Mount Pleasant commercial district and actions that can be taken to achieve this vision. This report is intended to provide a solid foundation for those discussions and options for enhancing and strengthening the appearance and use of public spaces in Mount Pleasant’s commercial core. This report references the results of a

similar charrette, conducted in 1992 with the American Institute of Architects, both to acknowledge the past work accomplished by the community and to build on the many recommendations from that study that remain valid. The experience of this 1992 activity also underscores the importance of ongoing community engagement after the completion and distribution of any such report.

It is hoped that these findings and preliminary recommendations will encourage the community to work cooperatively with District of Columbia and federal government agencies and partner organizations to identify funding sources for the recommended changes and enhancements to the neighborhood business district.

This workshop was provided to the Mount Pleasant Main Street (MPMS) program as a technical assistance service funded by *reSTORE* DC / DC Main Streets. The Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development of the District of Columbia conceived, designed, and launched the *reSTORE* DC initiative in January 2002. *reSTORE* DC helps revitalize older, traditional neighborhood business districts, commercial corridors and small businesses through the organization, design, promotion, and economic restructuring of commercial areas.

CHARRETTE PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

The Mount Pleasant Public Space Design Mini-Charrette Report was prepared by a multi-disciplinary “Faculty” comprised of the following experts:

- Cynthia Nikitin, Project for Public Spaces, Inc., New York, New York;
- Scott Day, Urban Development Services, San Antonio, Texas; and
- Lawrence Clark, Bender Wells Clark Design, San Antonio, Texas

A public workshop was held the evening of the first day, preceded by a walking tour of the Study Area with District of Columbia government officials and employees, MPMS board members, and the Faculty. The walk-through consisted of informal interaction with and questions to District officials regarding issues of concern and challenges that they confront in helping to manage and regulate the neighborhood business district.

Approximately 30 people attended the evening workshop, which was held in the La Casa Community of Christ Center on Mount Pleasant Street. The workshop included a presentation of great commercial streets and parks from around the world and across the country, and was followed by on-site evaluations by workshop participants of five sites, including Lamont Park. The streets and sidewalks proximate to the park were explored and the Park Road and Mount Pleasant Library/Marconi Parks also were evaluated.

The next day, the Faculty met with neighborhood stakeholders to discuss issues and opportunities related to improving Lamont Park and the neighborhood business district. The Faculty then compiled findings from the interviews and workshop and created a concept plan and recommendations that incorporated the opportunities for short, mid, and long-term improvements, including their own ideas for a layout of uses and amenities for the park and the neighborhood business district. The findings were presented to MPMS board members and public workshop participants at the conclusion of the charrette and were compiled for this report.

Upon receipt of the completed report from the Faculty, final review and corrections were made by DC Main Streets staff members and the Board of Directors of Mount Pleasant Main Street.

This report is organized by overall themes, with issues and recommendations culled from the five site evaluations. Lamont Park, given its importance to the Mount Pleasant commercial district and to the community, is treated as its own site.

§II. ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Workshop participants cited a number of things they liked about the public spaces in Mount Pleasant. These include the diverse mix of people and architectural styles and that many of the buildings are worth restoring. They felt that the northernmost part of Mount Pleasant is a significant intersection and a busy crossroads and that the corner at Park Road creates a gateway to the neighborhood. The bus terminus and service are viewed as assets, as well as the openness of the street, the width of the sidewalks, and the green of the parks and plazas that dot the neighborhood. People liked the human scale of the buildings and the street, as well as the mix of stores and services provided.

STREETS

Issues

- *Trash.* During the neighborhood walk, representatives from District agencies pointed out that Mount Pleasant Street receives trash pick up twice a day, and that the sidewalks are swept at least once per day. Notwithstanding this attention by the District Department of Public Works, workshop participants felt that the street “always looks dirty.” Oftentimes, trash falls out of the cans while it is being picked up and remains on the street; trash also blows out of the cans and onto the sidewalks or the doorsteps of businesses. The sidewalk cleaning is also not effective in keeping the sidewalks free from litter. Moreover, Mount Pleasant Street and the surrounding residential streets receive no mechanized street sweeping. The District agency representatives claimed it is because the residents don’t want to move their cars; the residents claim it’s because of issues related to the District bureaucracy. See image above.
- *Traffic.* Mount Pleasant Street has an average daily traffic count of approximately 5,000 cars per day. While carrying local traffic, it also functions as an arterial, as it serves as a direct southwest to northeast connection for through traffic. For the most part, the street is one lane in each direction with parking on both sides. There are turn lanes at Kilbourne Place and at Lamont Park itself, which the terminating Route 42 and 46 buses use to re-head themselves back south bound along Mt. Pleasant Street. Lamont Street is one-way, east bound at 17th Street, and 17th Street is one way, south bound, though only north of the intersection with Lamont Street. The street has a painted median and several signalized intersections that usually keep traffic from moving faster than the speed limit, though some speeding is perceived to occur. Traffic fatalities and accidents were not considered to be a problem.
- *Parking.* Meters allow for two-hour parking and parking spaces are often occupied by business owners and their employees, which often makes them unavailable to customers.



- *Deliveries.* Delivery trucks, often 18 wheelers, either double park or park in the striped median next to Lamont Park to make their deliveries. There are no off-street loading areas, nor are there designated loading zones on the street itself.
- *Street crossings.* Crosswalks are zebra striped but are missing in some places, primarily across Mount Pleasant Street between the bus stop and the east side. Streets are fairly easy to cross but the intersections of Kilbourne Place and Lamont Street were considered dangerous.



Opportunities

- Build on the median; landscape with street trees at either end and at intersections with floral plantings around the base of the tree (see the image of La Casa Community of Christ Center).
- Create a sheltered waiting area at Peace Park for the day laborers with seating and lighting.
- Change the meters to 30-minute parking to promote turnover of spaces, make more spaces available to shoppers and customers, and to discourage all-day parking by employees. In the long term, parking meters could be replaced by one Pay and Display parking kiosk per block. This also would free up additional sidewalk space.
- Add more bike racks.
- Make the existing crosswalks more distinctive. In addition, crosswalks connecting to the park need to be more visible and wider in order to help define the pedestrians' realm. The crosswalks could be defined with paint stripes, relatively inexpensively, or through the use of contrasting paving materials, which are more expensive.
- Create speed tables at non-signalized intersections to alert drivers to slow down and watch for pedestrians.
- Create curb bulb-outs at all intersections in order to narrow crossing distances and slow down the speed of turning vehicles. This also would provide additional space for plantings, lighting, and trash receptacles (see image to the right).
- Define and beautify the business district's entries with lighting, signage, and decorative plantings. Specifically, many of the routes leading from the residential areas have



overgrown vegetation along them, making it intimidating for people who walk along these streets at night. This is especially true at Lamont and 17th Streets. Shrubs should be kept to no more than two feet in height back to the buildings' foundations and tree limbs should be pruned up to at least 10 to 12 feet above grade. Tree limbs should also be pruned to allow streetlights to clearly illuminate the sidewalk. This should be done as a part of a comprehensive community education plan to make the neighborhood less conducive to undesirable activities.

- Undertake a traffic study. The complex traffic patterns throughout Mount Pleasant are caused by the shift in the grid created by diagonal streets, as well as the topographic relief to the west. This creates a complex street pattern. Add to this the multiple bus routes that cross the area, and thus, a complex traffic management scenario is formed. The resolution of these issues was beyond the scope of this study, but a multi-mode traffic study is needed to help resolve some of the congestion and to restore large quantities of asphalt to pedestrian use. These patterns and needs should be observed over various times of the day, week, and month. This study should include access into Mount Pleasant, transit across Mount Pleasant (as part of east-to-west traffic flows), bus routing, one-way vs. two-way streets, bikes, and pedestrians. The traffic is only expected to get worse due to commercial development projects planned for 14th Street, NW (DC USA).
- Improve bus routes. All bus routes that traverse Mount Pleasant need to be examined in conjunction with an overall traffic study. Improving bus routes may solve one issue but may impact other transit users.
- Resolve issues related to delivery trucks. Identify locations behind businesses or on side streets where trucks can park to unload. Work with merchants to talk to freight hauling companies to see if smaller vehicles, like vans, can be used instead of 18-wheelers.

SIDEWALKS

Issues

- *Sidewalk use.* Mount Pleasant Street is graced with wide, brick sidewalks. At their widest point, on the



west side of the street, they measure about 20 feet across. Their width varies on the east side as well, from 15 feet down to four feet, as sidewalk obstructions (utility poles, mail boxes etc.) significantly reduce the circulation areas (see left image above). Where the sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate outdoor displays and seating, the businesses there neither take advantage of this space nor tend to need outdoor space. The fact that the shops and businesses in these locations have their gates down and curtains closed during business hours also makes the sidewalks feel overly wide and empty, which, because they are not claimed by people for positive uses, become locations for loitering (see right image above).



- *Sidewalks as community space.* By and large, the sidewalks are underutilized as community-building public spaces and under-exploited as places for merchandise display and commercial activity. While they lack comfortable seating, like benches, people nevertheless find places to sit — on curbs and utility boxes — which gives the impression that people are just hanging out, when they might only be resting or waiting for a bus (see images above).
- *Lighting.* The existing street lighting is neither pedestrian-scaled nor do the existing roadway cobra head fixtures illuminate the sidewalk.
- *Shade.* There is a lack of shade on the east side of the street, especially in the northernmost blocks, yet people seem to prefer walking on that side of the street. This could be because the storefronts are more attractive and open to the street and the building fronts are more human scaled (see image to the right).
- *Pavers.* The bricks have come loose in many places. The cause of this has been attributed to poor adhesion and sub-surface water damage, which is due in part to inadequate and improper drainage from downspouts on the commercial buildings. Neither have the causes been addressed nor have the bricks been repaired. Specific responsibilities for addressing and correcting these problems need to be clarified.



Opportunities

- In most places, the sidewalks in Mount Pleasant are wide enough to allow for outdoor café type seating. This should be explored and encouraged. The sidewalks in Miami's popular South Beach neighborhood are on average 10-feet wide and are as narrow as four feet in some areas and are double loaded with café tables.
- Participants requested that U.S. Postal Service mailboxes be returned to their previous locations throughout the neighborhood.
- Street lighting along the residential streets is in the process of being upgraded on side streets in the neighborhood but not on Mount Pleasant Street. When lighting fixtures are changed out, Washington globe light standards should replace the cobra head fixtures.
- Another level of lighting that should be considered for upgrading is the use of people's front porch lights. Right now, many of the corridors leading into the commercial district are excessively dark. The ambient light produced by a cumulative neighborhood lighting effort should reduce the opportunistic aura that presently exists.
- Relocate newspaper kiosks so they no longer block sidewalks and obstruct pedestrian circulation. They could be reconfigured into a two-by-six, multiple newspaper vending structure designed in a historic motif.
- Sidewalks need to be swept daily and steam cleaned to remove chewing gum.
- Benches should be placed along the street in front of businesses whose clientele would make use of them, such as the pharmacy, bakery, pizza restaurant, etc. The "World's Fair" Bench design, with ringed central armrests that discourage lying down and sleeping, is recommended.
- Add many more trees with ample shade canopies to both sides of Mount Pleasant Street.
- Consider replacing tree boxes with grates.
- Add landscaping around bus stops alongside Don Juan's Restaurant.
- Replace dead street trees in the Park Road park.
- Use decorative metal trash cans along Mount Pleasant Street. Take advantage of the opportunity to incorporate ash urns into their tops. The District empties trash cans daily but often they still are overflowing. This reinforces the point that there needs to be a coordinated effort to educate the apartment dwellers and managers that residential trash should not be thrown into the public receptacles.
- Remove cement planters.
- Prune overhanging plants and trees from private residences that impede pedestrian circulation paths.
- Move the bus stop and bus waiting area away from Don Juan's restaurant at 17th Street and Lamont Street to allow the owner to set up outdoor café style seating.
- Begin addressing the issue of improper drainage from downspouts onto the sidewalks—a major cause of sub-surface water damage to the brick sidewalks. This may require the

District Department of Transportation and the Water and Sewer Authority to provide assistance by connecting downspouts to the underground drainage pipes.

LOCAL BUSINESSES

Mount Pleasant Street is fortunate to have many locally owned businesses and very few chain stores. Moreover, many business owners and employees actually live in the neighborhood as well. Several of the stores, such as Heller's Bakery, have been in business for more than 50 years. Other businesses, such as Pfeiffer's Hardware, are relatively new but are a welcome presence for the neighborhood (see image on the next page).

Issues

- *Business Association.* There are approximately 80 businesses on Mount Pleasant Street. A business association has existed for some years, though regular participation currently involves only 9-12 businesses. The group is reaching out to other business owners and to the Mount Pleasant community, but it has not yet defined its organizational role in the revitalization of the neighborhood business district. Many businesses are concerned about the impending competition from retail development in neighboring Columbia Heights. This concern may provide the impetus for concrete initiatives that will bring together the Mount Pleasant businesses and gradually enable more far-reaching endeavors
- *Business signage* is a problem (see the lower left image). There appears to be little or no awareness of signage guidelines or standards, particularly those befitting an historic main street. Whether that is the case or existing guidelines and ordinances are not enforced, it is critical that merchants receive support when they want to change or upgrade their signage. The facade improvement program being promoted by the Latino Economic Development Corporation also has proven to be problematic. Merchants informed the Faculty that the applications process was closed months ago; that applications far outstripped the number of grants available; and that the original \$8,000 grants were quickly found to be inadequate to cover the real costs of the facade upgrades, including signage. At the same time, merchants who have decided to go it alone have encountered many obstacles in the District's approval process.
- *Inviting customers.* Some local merchants complained that neighborhood residents do not patronize or support their businesses. Many Mount Pleasant Street businesses keep their window and door gates down and shades drawn during business hours, which makes them look like they are either closed or are afraid of being robbed, even during the day.



The message that this may communicate to some residents is that the street is very unsafe, that businesses are not open to the public, and that merchants in general are turning their backs on the street.

- *Sidewalk vaults.* There are a number of obsolete vaults/elevator doors along Mt. Pleasant Street in front of the businesses. One business owner asked about the possibility of removing a sidewalk vault. MPMS informed the Faculty that those costs would likely be borne by the property owner. In the case of absentee landlords and building owners, it is the business owners themselves who, by default, are perceived to be responsible for such changes. Many can not afford them and therefore ignore the problem. Those that do express concern are told that they are responsible to pay for repairs. Clarification of these kinds of issues is necessary in order to build the level of trust required to undertake the process of strengthening and developing the commercial core of Mount Pleasant.

Opportunities

- A calendar of events should be published monthly and should include advertisements, special promotions, and highlights of local businesses.
- Publicize and circulate Mount Pleasant Main Street storefront renovation guidelines, which include signage.
- Establish standards for window transparency. Many of the businesses along Mount Pleasant Street have their security grills pulled down over their windows around the clock. While security is a concern, it shouldn't overwhelm the appearance of the business district.
- Business owners should be given ample assistance to help relocate these grills to the store's interior and transition them to a more modern, open mesh. An open mesh pattern still allows light to filter out on the sidewalk at night after the store has closed. Again, this ambient lighting helps reduce the amount of darkness that is found along some areas of the street.
- Allow for additional displays of merchandise on sidewalks.
- Facilitate and expedite merchant-initiated façade and signage improvements.
- Add decorative awnings on buildings.
- The current gateways and points of connection in the commercial district lack the type of activities that would encourage greater pedestrian use and interaction. The Faculty recommends that the Mount Pleasant Main Street program work with businesses to encourage outdoor dining if at all possible. This would put another set of eyes and ears on the street that would make people more comfortable using the neighborhood's public spaces. MPMS should work with other organizations in the neighborhood to identify feasible and appropriate activities and continue to offer assistance and encouragement to those businesses that abut the park that could fulfill this need.

§III. LAMONT PARK



Mount Pleasant has been vigilant about improving Lamont Park over the years. The park has transitioned from being a grassy Victorian park with a hedge around it, to a more open plaza-like design. This is partially due to the fact that the earlier configuration created a space that was too secluded from view, which resulted in a limited use of the park other than for illicit activities. Regardless, some residents support a return of the park to this earlier Victorian design. The current park design, however, creates a more active space that strives to meet the multiple needs of a diverse community while, at the same time, makes the park

easier to manage and to police because of its open nature. But as the needs of the community change, so should the park, to the greatest extent possible. Lamont Park now includes a stage for small performances with limited seating and a variety of trees, but it is almost entirely hardscape—an extreme deviation from its original design. The following recommendations for the park’s redesign are based upon the public’s input during the community facilitation and site observations, and are derived from a variety of older studies, such as the AIA Charrette from 1992.

Lamont Park functions as a bus transfer center, a farmer’s market site, a concert venue, and a gathering place, and truly is Mount Pleasant’s central park/civic square. On the evening of the workshop, the Faculty noted that the users of the park included seniors, children, teens, and a few older men who were quietly engaged in drinking and talking. For this park to truly serve as a civic square, much more attention needs to be paid to its management and programming than to its design and beautification.

In fact, 80 to 90 percent of the success of any public space is management. Clearly, if physical design improvements were to be made to this park, without its own constituency of users who will take care of it, in partnership with a management entity that can negotiate with the District on the neighborhoods’ behalf, the park will quickly fall back into a state of disrepair.

ISSUES

- *Park repair and management.* The design team has concluded that the current park design can continue to meet the community’s needs but would benefit from some upgrades. Most of the infrastructure is still sound but requires repair and cosmetic work. In short, this falls into the “patch and match” category of revitalization, rather than the “total tear out and rebuild” class. More significantly, the park needs to be managed—on a daily basis—by a park manager/caretaker who works under



the direction of a community-based board of directors. This will begin to enable the park to meet the community's needs to a much higher degree.

- *Buses.* The plaza is bifurcated by a bus turning lane from Mount Pleasant Street. Buses take that turn very fast and continue to turn quickly onto 17th Street and continuing to the bus stop on Lamont Street. However, buses appear to drive around the park, not through it (see image on previous page). Bus service runs on an average of 15-minute headways. Bus waiting in the park is limited to one shelter on the east-bound side.
- *Appropriate park design.* There seems to be a group of people who want to restore the park by making design changes and design improvements, be it from the Victorian era, or through the selection of a distinctive or consistent street tree, or through the introduction of historic lighting and railings. One must carefully consider how formal parks from bygone eras were used mainly for strolling and getting a breath of fresh air and how their design supported that limited range of controlled uses, versus how Lamont Park is currently being used and the many ways residents would like to use it in the future. Just as a Victorian design would be inappropriate for a Mercado or a plaza in South or Central America, the Faculty has deemed that a Victorian aesthetic is inappropriate for Lamont Park, since it could be quite difficult and labor-intensive to maintain and might displace the positive events and activities that currently occur in the plaza.
- *New uses for the park.* Many of the uses suggested by workshop participants, such as the sale of food, beverages, newspapers, and magazines, were rejected out of hand by District representatives and some residents. Vendors inside the park, however, would bring additional positive economic activity to the park while benefiting local merchants. Sales could also generate funds that might be dedicated to—and create a funding source for—the management and ongoing restoration of the park. Vendors and a management presence would provide the added benefit of additional “eyes on the street.” Vendors at the farmers market are allowed on the plaza but other types of vending are relegated to the sidewalk. Ownership and jurisdiction over the park also is complex. These issues must be clarified as soon as possible. In addition, MPMS working with *reSTORE* DC / DC Main Streets should urge the District or National Park Service to permit vending, retailing, and other kinds of managed economic incubator and entrepreneurial activities to take place in Lamont Park.

OPPORTUNITIES

Workshop participants wanted to celebrate the neighborhood's artistic elements and thought the park would be an excellent venue. They also liked the multiple uses the park supports and that many people take advantage of the park. The stage is also considered an asset but in need of design improvement.

Because of the small size of Lamont Park and the potential for very heavy use that it could receive, we recommend that each feature and amenity should serve multiple purposes and a wide range of audiences.

Amenities

- Currently, there is limited seating available in the park other than sitting on the edges of the stage's steps or on the edge of the planters, both of which are very uncomfortable.

Four benches, custom designed to match the rest of the improvements, are the only free-standing seating available. The design team feels that the existing free-standing benches can continue to be serviceable if the bench slats are replaced with a more durable material. Additional seating is needed and could be accomplished through one or more of the following options:

- Moveable chairs could be set out so that users of the park can arrange them as they see fit. These would be set out at the beginning of the day and taken in by a vendor. (See below.)
 - More of the existing benches could be cast and added to the park.
 - A seat wall could be placed along the edges of the new planter beds (see first image on the right). These should not continue entirely around the beds to enable surface water to drain into and over the plant materials in the bed.
- Move the bus shelter back and incorporate the bus waiting area into the park with benches and a more decorative shelter (see second image on right).
 - Introduce more of the existing historic lighting fixtures along the western edge of the park to increase lighting levels in the park.
 - Extend the island northbound into the striped area to make it larger (see third image on right).
 - Introduce gateway treatments in the northern part of the island, such as lighting, planting, and the historic Mount Pleasant sign to announce to people that they have entered a special place and to promote the neighborhood's identity (see last image on right).
 - Maintain the park in better condition. This would include cleaning the park, repairing loose bricks, and fixing the broken and non-working elements.
 - Improve the landscaping in the park. The current park has too much hardscape in the form of paving surfaces, and not enough greenery. This is especially poignant for people who remember the earlier design. Add larger trees to the park and bring them out to the edges of the park. Add hanging plants in planters from light poles and add planting beds around trees. The proposed



design (see attached) will allow for planting beds to be built around the edges of the stage to help define more of the park's interior. Additionally, these planting beds will allow for the current trees to receive more water and oxygen exchange at the root zone. These beds could be planted with bulbs and more colorful wildflowers but this will require a higher degree of maintenance. Until a maintenance entity can be identified, a simple ground cover such as Asiatic Jasmine or Coloratus, is recommended. One of the main requirements for these planting beds is that the height of any plant should not exceed 18" to 24".

- Maintenance of the trees. While the park's trees are not ideal for the site, due to the limited shade canopy they provide, the greater community expressed the desire to retain these trees if possible because they're beginning to mature. Replacing them with a more ideal, larger tree will cost a considerable amount of money. If smaller trees are used, then the lag time before they mature is not desirable from the community's perspective. All of the current trees will perk up and thrive if larger planting beds are constructed around them. Currently, they are growing out of small, elevated planting beds, which restrict their water in-take to primarily what falls into the tree well. The trees would do much better if they had a larger area from which to draw water and if they could receive some surface drainage from the park's plaza. In short, the new planting beds need to be at grade in some parts to allow water flow into and across the planting bed. On the other hand, water should be able to drain easily so that it does not collect on top of the planting beds.
- An additional problem will also be solved by constructing larger planting beds around the trees; the pavement will no longer heave. Currently, the paving is so close to the trunk that the surface roots lift the pavement as they mature.
- The vertical tree guards should be removed as soon as possible because the trees are of a sizeable enough caliper—and their bark mature enough—to stand up to the rigors of urban life. (See images on the right.)
- Revive and restore the medallions in the paving.
- Change bus drive paving. The bus drive that cuts across the park is currently paved in concrete and is quite wide. It allows buses to quickly cut through the park. The buses actually move through Lamont Park too fast considering the level of pedestrian use and activity. A different paving material, with pavers set slightly apart, would signal drivers to slow down as they pass through this park/plaza. Most importantly, however, this new paving treatment would better connect the northern part of the park to the southern end.
- Replace the water fountain with a larger decorative one.



Uses and Activities

- Add a community bulletin board to the park, temporarily mounted on the bus shelter. In the long term, a staffed information kiosk could be built in the park that also could include moveable seating, an outdoor café, bathrooms, and a newsstand.

- Redesign the stage. The single most important, and perhaps most expensive, improvement is upgrading the stage. The stage and steps are lined with brick work and tile work that is beginning to fail; the ramp up to the stage does not meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design codes and the railings do not meet construction code. These improvements are cosmetic, for the most part, and therefore the structure can be retrofitted more cost effectively than a complete tear out and replacement.
 - **Replace the brick.** The deterioration of the brick, while appearing to be accelerating possibly due to skateboard use, is not failing solely due to this factor. For some reason, the mortar that holds the brick work on the steps and around the stage has failed. However, there are a wide variety of mortars and adhesives that have been introduced to the market since this project was installed and are sufficient for an inexpensive repair.
 - **Replace the missing tiles at the base of the stage.** The current stage structure has a line of tiles on the bottom that were produced by neighborhood children in cooperation with a local artist. Unfortunately, this artist is deceased but we believe that artistic resources in the neighborhood would have the wherewithal to replicate the missing tiles.
 - **Stage railing.** The railing that rings the stage is wonderful in terms of its design and complements the tile as well. However, the railing's screen allows for objects greater than 4" in diameter to pass through it, which means that it does not meet code. (This diameter is selected because it prevents nearly all children from putting their head in between the spindles in the screen.) There are three options for addressing this matter:
 1. The screen itself could have pieces added on to develop a smaller patterned screen. This will probably result in a screen that looks like it's been retrofitted.
 2. A smaller grid screen could be placed on the inside of the existing screen on the railing. The design would have to limit the ability of clothing and other items catching hold. The secondary screen also would have to be far enough back from the existing screen so that litter doesn't catch in it. When you add up the factors involved in pursuing this option, it might make most sense to pursue the third option (below). A good designer/metal worker, however, may be able to make the second option work.
 3. Replace the existing rail and screen with one that complements the existing design and works with the design of the decorative tile.
 - **Add handrails leading up to the stage.** The addition of handrails to the steps would provide more stability. Hand rails need to be added if the stairs are 18 inches or greater in height.
 - **Relocate the ramp.** The ramp that is now parallel to Lamont Street should be relocated to the Mount Pleasant Street side of the stage. This will create a much shorter ramp that will easily meet ADA requirements. The current ramp is long

and by code warrants an intermediate landing spot. The current ramp could be filled in and a new flat top added to bring it to the level of the stage.

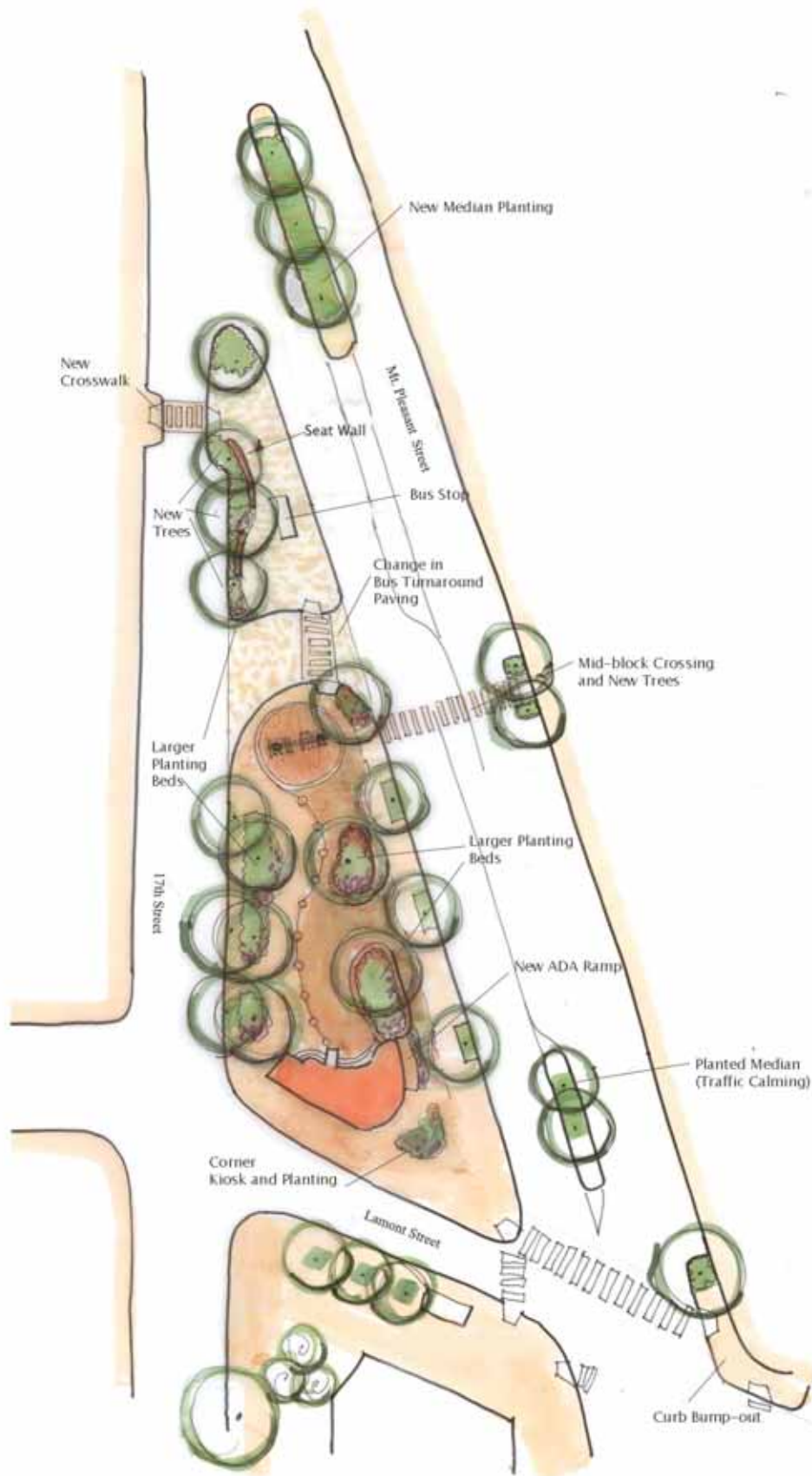
- Show outdoor movies during the summer.
- Host mid-week markets (farmer's markets or other types).
- Commercial uses, such as vendors serving coffee or selling magazines and flowers at key times of the day.
- Have area restaurants serve meals in the park.
- Introduce a children's play area. There appears to be a need for additional public play space in the neighborhood, especially since the playground at the north eastern corner of 16th and Lamont Streets is out of service. The stage could be redesigned or resurfaced to function as both a performance venue (for the six or seven performances that occur here each year) and a play area for children.
- In the longer term, Lamont Park and the Bestway/Don Juan block could be tied together functionally. This would require the buses to turnaround in a different location.
- When Lamont Park becomes the neighborhood's great "Third Place," having it also serve as a bus turn around may no longer be the highest and best use for the Park. In the meantime, 17th Street could be closed to all traffic except for buses to allow uses and activities to spill out of the plaza onto the street. Buses would be diverted during special events.

Park Management

- Discussions revolving around a vendor kiosk in the park during the site visit revealed that it may be illegal to sell things in some DC parks, particularly those that are under the auspices of the National Park Service. There may be a way of working through this if a park conservancy was established. The conservancy would be community-based to make sure that the facility is properly run and meets the needs of the community. Proceeds from sales of food could pay for staff and some park upkeep. Battery Park Conservancy in New York City uses this type of arrangement, as does Downtown Crossing in Boston, where the vendors pay fees to upgrade and maintain the plaza where they vend.
- Add an information kiosk to Lamont Park. Right now, people are posting notices on street light poles and other public amenities around the neighborhood. This eyesore could be addressed through more active management of the street. The first step to improvement is to develop a kiosk where people are allowed to post notices. In turn, there needs to be an effort to remove any illegally posted notices. The removal of notices needs to occur on a daily basis for at least a year and then at least twice a week for the following year. This effort also needs to be undertaken at the same time that a public relations campaign aimed at reducing litter is undertaken.
- Expand the kiosk concept to house a park vendor and bathrooms. The vendor would have limited items for sale but could also manage the park. The kiosk vendor could sell cold/hot beverages, ice cream, snack items, magazines, flowers, coffee, popcorn, or items that are produced in the commercial district by restaurants and bakeries. All of these products would have to be test marketed. In addition to sales, the vendor would be

responsible for setting up tables and chairs on a daily basis and taking them down at night. People using the park could also rent board games from the vendor.

- On the back side of the kiosk, a set of bathrooms could be located. Stand-alone bathrooms that are neither monitored nor managed could be a divisive issue. The Faculty felt that if someone is present to monitor, clean, and lock the facilities at the end of each day, that might help positively address some of the public urination issues.
- The major advantage of having a vending facility is that it will begin to prime the park with uses that will bring a more diverse crowd to the park. Of course, the audiences will be shaped by the types of activities that happen in the park/plaza, the type of music that is performed, the variety of items sold by the vendor(s) and the types of activities engaged in by the users of the space. If there are people sitting at tables enjoying ice cream, playing board games, or listening to music, it will send a message to others that the park is a good place to spend time and meet people.



§IV. DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

Ongoing, regular, and consistent management of Mount Pleasant's public spaces will be vital to the sustainability of any design changes made and will reflect the investment in the good and welfare of the community.

OPPORTUNITIES

- A trash management campaign is needed. Trash spillover is a problem not only on Mount Pleasant Street, but on all streets within one block of Mount Pleasant Street. Trash bins are lacking along 17th Street as well.
- Develop an image/management campaign to educate the residents about the need for using trash cans—not just simply throwing things on the ground. This needs to be supported by a staff person paid to pick up litter along the street regularly.
- *reSTORE* DC / DC Main Streets could help clarify the workings of District government in areas related to neighborhood commercial revitalization. This includes clarifying and resolving the mechanical street cleaning arrangements, the relocation of news boxes (see image on right), future plans and opportunities for receiving funds from future rounds of the LEDC Façade Improvement Program, signage enforcement and approval processes, and how sidewalk and elevator/vault covers can be repaired at minimal or no expense to local businesses below a certain income/revenue threshold.
- The District, through *reSTORE* DC / DC Main Streets, also needs to address issues regarding business access and service issues. Specifically, trucks are not permitted to unload or load in the service alley on the east side of 17th Street, due to the disturbance caused to residents, and therefore must transact all their deliveries on Mount Pleasant Street. Similarly, merchants on the west side of Mount Pleasant Street immediately north of Irving Street have to leave their trash cans in front of their businesses—due to the absence of a public alley—in space that would be better used for outdoor displays or seating.
- The ANC could reach out to the larger Mount Pleasant community through service organizations, tenant associations, schools, and churches, to obtain their ideas and input on how to improve their neighborhood in general and Lamont Park in particular.
- Local businesses could help support improved maintenance of the streets and sidewalks. Short of creating a BID, which we do not recommend at this time due to the tenuous nature of some of the businesses, each of the 80 merchants could contribute \$30/month to generate \$2,400 per month to pay for additional maintenance workers who should be local hires. (See image on the next page.)



- The District's Office of Historic Preservation can provide guidance on appropriate measures for building owners to clean, paint, and repair their buildings.



- The potential and market for second-story residential units should be explored.
- Historic signage guidelines, and more importantly enforcement of these guidelines, are required, coupled with dedicated funding sources to help local merchants upgrade their signage. The existing historic Mount Pleasant signage at Harvard and Mount Pleasant Streets should be

replicated and sited at the northern gateways (Park Road and Lamont Street) and Lamont Park—and any other principal entrances to the neighborhood—and redesigned to be more visible and attractive.

§V. CONCLUSION

The stakeholders groups with whom we were engaged, are clearly committed to improving the park and Mount Pleasant Street as a whole. The current focus within the neighborhood is primarily on the design and layout, materials, amenities, and features of the Park and the streetscape.

The Faculty strongly encourages Mount Pleasant to consider and discuss the Park's purpose, its current and future use, how to better meet the needs of current users while serving a broader audience, its larger role in the community, and the programs and activities that could take place in Lamont Park—to create a place, not just a design. When thinking about place making, everything needs to be done differently. Form follows function. These messages imparted by the Faculty to the workshop participants and stakeholders need to be heeded and taken to heart by the entity(ies) that ultimately takes responsibility for improving Lamont Park and the Mount Pleasant neighborhood business district.

Clearly, the adage that "you can't do it alone" applies in this case. Below is a preliminary list, generated by workshop participants, of potential partners who could help fund, implement, and maintain the improvements to Mount Pleasant's public spaces.

Always Mount Pleasant
AmeriCorps
Asian American Leadership
American Institute of Architects

American Society of Landscape Architects
Area Neighborhood Commission
Bank of America
Business associations

Casey Trees
Calvary Baptist & the Catholic Church
Council Member Jim Graham's Office
Cultural Tourism DC
DC Marketing Center
DC Office of Arts and Humanities
Department of Health
Department of Parks & Recreation
Friends of Mount Pleasant Library

Historic Mount Pleasant
Latin American Youth Center
Latino Economic Development Corporation
Mount Pleasant Main Street
(Design Committee)
Mount Pleasant Neighborhood Alliance
National Park Service
Neighbors Consejo
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Planning
and Economic Development (DMPED)

- *reSTORE* DC / DC Main Streets

Property owners—Especially Bestway
Schools

- Bell Multicultural H.S.
- Bancroft Elementary
- Lincoln Middle School

Supermarkets - Giant Foods
Target Foundation
Washington Metro Area Transit Authority