



August 12, 2022

Kimberly Vacca
Transportation Planner, Neighborhood Planning Branch
Planning & Sustainability Division
District Department of Transportation
250 M Street SE
Washington, DC 20003

Dear Kimberly,

I listened to your presentation on this topic on WebEx, on July 18. You said that the justification for DDOT seeking to create a permanent Streatery program was a survey to which there were 80 responses in favor. That is a pathetically tiny number in relation to the number of ABC Restaurants, Taverns, Night Clubs, Grocery Stores and other ABRA license classifications that could possibly apply and be approved for a streatery. According to a file containing all licenses on the ABRA website, there are well over 2,000 such licenses. And if there are to be surveys, why not publicize them to residents and not just the industry?

The Kalorama Citizens Association is located within the boundaries of Adams Morgan in Ward One. For decades, the KCA has spent inordinate amounts of time dealing with the presence in our otherwise largely residential community of approximately 70 on-premise ABC licenses. These businesses dominate the commercial areas in the heart of the neighborhood. Some of the many problems that are associated with these businesses are noise, overcrowding, over-service of alcohol (witness the many over-served persons on our streets, particularly on Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights), massive pressure on street parking due to all the visitors, sloppy trash and recycling, and as a result of that, a long-term, apparently inexhaustible supply of rats. We don't claim that all restaurants or taverns are responsible for these problems, but there's such a density of similar establishments that a problem like rats or noise is so widespread that it's hard to pin the blame on any one, or group of establishments.

This is all to say that a permanent streatery program would only add to the dimension of our problems by gifting more public real estate to ABC operators, increasing ABC occupancy into outside areas that are likely to become rat magnets, and draw noise from operations closer to residents. By the way, the number of non-ABC businesses participating in the current streatery program is tiny, perhaps one or two. Every ABC business in Adams Morgan that has wanted a regular Sidewalk Cafe has one, with one exception that I can think of where the geography worked against it. Quite a few of these Sidewalk Cafes are of a good size. In addition, though on private space, there are quite a few rooftop "Summer Gardens" that enable some of those with minimal regular Sidewalk Cafes to have a significant outdoor space.

As a permanent addition to our streetscape, we hope DDOT will take into account that as the pandemic wanes, the stateries will be less used. Very hot weather, very cold weather, snow, rain, the desire to be inside, will all lead to this being an un-necessary program.

Denis James - President
Bob Ellsworth - Vice President
Bonnie Rowan - Secretary
Jean Stewart - Delegate, DC Federation of Citizens Associations
Larry Hargrove - Delegate, DC Federation of Civic Associations

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I personally thought the idea of expanding outside service for restaurants was a good idea to help them survive during the coronavirus pandemic. They came into being when all we had were masks to protect us. Now we have vaccines, drugs targeted towards the virus, and a fair amount of experience on how to avoid the problem. As I walk around Adams Morgan, it's a rarity to see anyone in an ABC establishment wearing a mask, be it inside or outside. The City Council recently extended the life of the streateries until December 31, 2023. We believe that is more than enough. Though none of us know what is to come in the future concerning the coronavirus, the feeling here is that the streatory program has served its purpose. Our streetscape looks like a shanty town.

As soon as the 18th Street streatory was established, nearby residential blocks, always the target for visitors seeking parking, became ever more crowded with vehicles that would normally be serviced by the parking on 18th Street, now taken away by the streateries. We understand that the intent of this effort by DDOT is to improve their appearance by creating strict guidelines, but I read repeatedly in this proposal that applicants could be excused from certain requirements by appeal to the DDOT Public Space Committee. Well, that is what would happen then, and on a grand scale, and we'd go on living with a lot of the poorly designed, dangerous structures that we now have, with maybe a few changes, but not much.

While we don't think this program should continue, if it should, then we make the following specific comments concerning some of the suggested rules:

First, these should not be "guidelines" but regulations. DDOT has its own Public Space Regulations to draw from - there's no need to re-invent the wheel. And regulations are far more enforceable.

Travel Lanes should never be allowed to be used for streateries.

Any road or street with Metrobus or Circulator service should be ineligible for the program.

Only individual businesses and commercial property owners of the buildings concerned in the application should be eligible to apply. It's totally inappropriate to allow ANCs to apply, when they are the representatives of the residents who elect them - the same residents who may have strong objections to elements of this proposed program. They can't be put into the position of applying and then advising the DC Government that it should approve their own application.

BIDS and Main Streets and CIDs should not be allowed to be the applicant either. These organizations do not represent the residents of an area. In many cases they and most of their member businesses are not from the neighborhood. They are not democratic. They should have no say over the activities within a neighborhood. It's the residents who will be the most affected. ANCs have the built-in right to take up matters within the areas that they represent. Allow them to be seen as objective in the same way we hope they would be when dealing with a resident's zoning or historic preservation matter.

Please make it clear that a continuous unbroken line of Jersey barriers is required on the travel lane side of streateries that are located in parking lanes.

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Under "Unpermitted Uses", please add "Any electronic device that creates or reproduces sound." And "Loudspeakers."

Are umbrellas to be allowed? As they are in many Sidewalk Cafes, this would seem natural, and perhaps keep the numbers of roofs built to a minimum.

The Executive Committee of the Kalorama Citizens Association approved the content and the sending of this letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Denis James".

Denis James, President - 202 705-7411, denisjames@verizon.net