



Testimony of Leon Johnson
Director of Public Space Operations, Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District
Performance Oversight Hearing: Committee on Business & Economic Development
John A. Wilson Building
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue NW – Room 123
Washington, DC 20004
Wednesday, February 13, 2019 at 12:30 PM

Greetings Chairman McDuffie, members of the committee and staff. My name is Leon Johnson and I'm the Director of Public Space Operations for the Mount Vernon Triangle Community Improvement District (MVT CID), one of DC's now 11 Business Improvement Districts. We thank you for hosting this very important performance oversight hearing and allowing us to testify.

The purpose of my testimony today is to publicly state how support from the District's Department of Small and Local Business Development – or DSLBD – has enabled Mount Vernon Triangle's evolution from a neighborhood formerly known for its abundant supply of parking lots, into an attractive District of Columbia attraction and destination to live, work and visit.

None of these benefits would be possible if the neighborhood was not first considered a clean and safe place to live, work, invest and locate a business. In our annual neighborhood perception survey covering calendar year 2017, four out of five respondents stated they perceived the neighborhood as clean or very clean, and two out of three respondents stated they perceived the neighborhood as safe or very safe. What's more, in our perception survey for calendar year 2018 that is currently underway, nearly 9 out of 10 – or 89% – of respondents said they perceived the neighborhood as clean or very clean, and 7 out of 10 respondents said they perceived the neighborhood as safe or very safe.

We should all feel extremely proud of the outcomes that we've collectively achieved in a relatively short period of time. And all of the credit for achieving these results is owed to our outstanding crew of Clean Team Ambassadors who do the hard work every day of ensuring that Mount Vernon Triangle is clean and safe for our residents, workers and visitors.

However, for as much as the grant that we receive from DSLBD has enabled our community's success, it has also literally changed the lives of the men who are employed with us through Central Union Mission and its "Ready to Work" training program. The DSLBD grant allows us to provide full-time, living-wage employment to seven DC residents and facilitates more than \$200,000 in annual salary. This in turn enables each employee to afford their own independent housing, with one employee – Mr. Steve Powell – able to afford his own home through a program offered by Habitat for Humanity.

DSLBD's investment in our clean team program creates significant leverage that allows countless additional financial and quality of life benefits to accrue to our team members, community, stakeholders and the District of Columbia. Indeed, the baseline clean and safe services that we provide through our grant serve as the foundation for the marketing, branding and community-building efforts for our residents and small businesses. This all leads to greater destination appeal while boosting local economic development.

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Indeed, today's Mount Vernon Triangle has become especially known for its vibrancy, growing to 60 restaurants and retailers, including more than 600 outdoor dining seats along our streets. This progress has enhanced our destination appeal and led to the improvement, animation, safety and walkability of our public spaces. Since 2007, eight major corporate, legal and association headquarters announced their relocation to the Mount Vernon Triangle area—a place now universally considered clean, safe and great for business.

Since beginning my tenure at the CID just over five years ago, DSLBD has demonstrated an honest and sincere commitment toward serving as a credible, reliable partner that is invested in our community's success. I have every confidence this commitment will continue. And the furtherance of this partnership along with the clean team grant will sustain Mount Vernon Triangle's continued emergence as a vibrant, thriving, mixed-use community and "destination of choice" for anyone choosing to live, work, do business and entertain in the District of Columbia.

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Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify on DSLBD's performance relative to our organization. We again appreciate the opportunity to offer our perspective and look forward to answering any questions that you may have.

