



June 16, 2020

**Testimony of Glover Park Main Street before the Committee on
Business & Economic Development**

Chairman McDuffie and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony before the Committee on behalf of Glover Park Main Street. My name is Kate Dean and I started December 1, 2019 as the organization's executive director.

Due to the strong support of Councilmember Cheh and the residents of Glover Park, GPMS joined the Main Street family in FY20. This is a first for the area as the business community has never had any organized representation, so I have been working to build trust with the business and property owners, while learning the ropes as a nascent program in partnership with the Department of Small and Local Business Development (DSLBD).

The health of Glover Park's business corridor relies upon the strength of small, local business. At present, there are just over 70 storefronts between Calvert and Whitehaven on Wisconsin Avenue. 75% of those storefronts are operated by small businesses. Nearly half are owned and operated by immigrants, minorities, and women. One third of Glover Park's businesses are legacies.

While the residential areas encircling the main street have been flourishing, the commercial corridor has been in transition. No longer is there a demand for late night venues, but for family-friendly establishments. High rents and citywide trends have caused flight eastward, and a handful of problems from geography to transportation prevent Glover Park from becoming a true destination across the DMV.

During our six months in operation, however, GPMS has been hard at work to change the appeal of Glover Park. We assembled a Board of Directors made up of eleven active members from commercial real estate, local business, property owners, community leaders, and residents. With the help of our Board, we reached our annual fundraising goal before the end of the second quarter and continue introducing the organization to potential stakeholders and partners. We have met with the community, conducted extensive surveys, and with the support of DSLBD, received up-to-date market analysis on the neighborhood. We were three months into operations when COVID-19 hit.

In early March, GPMS had finalized its inaugural façade improvement grants. We received 11 strong applications and were prepared to fully fund six projects, including a significant



“gateway” improvement at Calvert & Wisconsin. That money was swiftly reallocated, and – along with any additional dollars we could identify in the budget – more than \$67,000.00 will go to direct and technical assistance to local businesses. Additionally, we green lit a \$3,000.00 streetscape clean-up project in partnership with the Clean Team.

Since the beginning of the COVID crisis, GPMS has:

- Disbursed \$33,000 in 12 grants directly to small businesses;
- Launched a request for proposal process to fund an additional \$35,000 in technical assistance grants through July 15;
- Provided 160 hours of technical support to businesses in need;
- Sourced and procured personal protective equipment (masks & gloves), disinfectant, and hand sanitizer for every storefront;
- Arranged six local and national media interviews highlighting GPMS and Glover Park businesses.

We remain engaged everyday as the needs of the business evolve. Many of our anchor properties remain shuttered. Restaurants are staying alive by offering take-out and delivery. Businesses not in operation are eager to reopen. After the area experienced some damage and looting on the night of May 31, many businesses boarded up, which has a psychological effect on the community. GPMS will need to work hard to bring back the confidence of business owners and the neighborhood. We worry about the high average rents in the area, and whether that will result in future vacancies. We haven’t been able to take advantage of some of the city’s generous programs like sidewalk and streetscape expansion due to existing traffic zoning, parking concerns, and narrow sidewalks, but continue searching for novel ways to aid “pivoting” businesses. We have underwritten delivery services, helped businesses move online, provided funding to bridge expenses, paid for consultants, and purchased technology. We recognize this is merely the beginning of what businesses will need to fully recover.

But there is reason to be optimistic! In February, Whole Foods Market announced their future return to Glover Park. We have two construction projects underway that will create additional housing – one building of affordable housing – and multiple retail spaces along Wisconsin. Two previously vacant properties are being developed by well-known local restauranteurs who will introduce cutting-edge concepts to the city and inject life in the corridor. JBG Smith’s recent opening of Glover House and the Trader Joe’s have attracted new residents and consistent foot traffic to the lower part of Glover Park, and there is the expectation of additional retail clients moving in, as well.

GPMS has had an exciting introduction to the Main Street family and we owe a debt of gratitude to DSLBD Director Whitfield and her staff for helping us adapt throughout this remarkable time. We also want to recognize the other Main Street directors for their endless support and for sharing expertise – it would be impossible to operate without the



community of the group. We also would especially like to acknowledge the support of Councilmember Cheh and her staff. They have been resourceful and responsive, and along with your staff, Chairman McDuffie, have helped us navigate the rapidly changing legal and regulatory landscape. We thank you for being champions for locally owned businesses and supporting the promise of our diverse neighborhood.

GPMS has a lot of work to do going forward. We are operating as jacks-of-all-trades, supporting businesses through these evolving, compounding circumstances, while recognizing that we have even greater expectations to meet in FY21. We need to deliver on the promises made at the creation of the Main Street – to improve the streetscape, create a sense of place, and revitalize the business offerings along the corridor. Glover Park’s changing demographic of young families and long-term residents want to see the neighborhood thrive. For it to do so, we need your continued support.

Thank you for recognizing the importance of our work by fully funding the Main Street programs in FY21. Main Streets are the most effective and efficient way to reach small and local owners and operators across the city. We have proven that not only can we deliver on the expected, but we can be nimble, on-the-ground ambassadors during a crisis. To many, we have become the line of communication to the government, which can seem opaque and daunting to those with scarce time and resources.

GPMS stands ready to deliver an even higher standard of results, and we hope to become more engaged with the Council in 2021. In the meantime, please feel free to be in touch for more information.

Respectfully submitted,

Kate Dean

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