



**Testimony of
Adam Ortiz, Mayor
Edmonston Maryland**

**United States House of Representatives
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
Subcommittee on Water Resources and Environment**

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Madame Chairwoman and distinguished members of the Subcommittee,

I am Adam Ortiz, Mayor of Edmonston, Maryland. It is a pleasure to be here today to share the experience of our Town implementing low impact development.

The Town of Edmonston is a small working class town about seven miles from here located on the Anacostia River. We are very diverse, about equal parts white, black and hispanic. I like to say that we are diverse in every way, except we don't have any rich people.

In the last decade, our little town flooded four times. One year, 56 homes were affected. The damages were substantial: furniture, books and even automobiles were lost. In some cases, families lost absolutely everything except the clothes they were wearing.

Although we straddle the Anacostia River, we did not flood from it. We flooded from parking lots. We flooded from highways, roads, shopping centers, roofs. We flooded from millions of raindrops collected from thousands of hard surfaces, then funneled down storm grates and through the underground concrete stormwater system to little' Edmonston.

In time, we were able to secure a \$7million dollar flood control facility to keep us dry. We haven't flooded since.

Through this ordeal we learned that environmental neglect comes at a cost -- and that cost is always paid by someone, somewhere, at some time. As we learned this lesson firsthand, we decided to take responsibility for our own impact on the world around us.

As members of this committee, you well know that all streets have an expiration date, a time when they must be resurfaced and or restructured. The date for our main street, Decatur Street, was coming due, and we decided to do it right. We decided to build the most sustainable and responsible street we possibly could.

We also realized that a street is really much more than a place for cars to get somewhere. Streets are public spaces. They belong to the neighborhood, just like a community center or park. Therefore, it should do more than just serve cars, it should serve the community as fully as possible. From top to bottom we attempted to reshape Main Street.

For the top, we planted native large canopy trees. We replaced our streetlights with light emitting diode (LED) fixtures, powered by clean wind energy purchased from the Midwest. At street level, we have narrowed the street to slow traffic, added bike lanes and sidewalks to promote community interaction, health and wellness.

And most importantly, at the bottom we built natural bioretention treeboxes, or raingardens, along the street to naturally filter the water into the ground, mimicking the way it was in the age before strip malls. We had read about this technology being used in Portland, Oregon, and wanted it here. In addition to providing a beautiful landscape feature, these raingardens prevent pollution and flooding downstream, as 90% of the stormwater from the street is diverted from the storm drain into natural filtration.

Our goal is to encourage other communities to also take responsibility for their impact. We want them to steal our ideas. So, we have placed all of our engineering drawings on our website, and are building an interpretive walking tour of the street so others can visit, learn and improve upon our Green Street project. We don't want or need any credit, we just want more environmental responsibility.

In terms of cost, the stormwater improvements added little additional construction cost. In the long term, we expect to see savings in maintenance of the underground stormwater system and from cleanup of the Anacostia River and Chesapeake Bay. We expect to see increased revenues from increased property values and greater commerce from sightseeing. Already, four delegations from different places are scheduled to tour our Green Street. Also, our ribboncutting and dedication is scheduled for October 25th, and you are all welcome to join us.

We have been told that Edmonston has the greenest street in the United States. I'm not sure if that's true, but I'm proud that we are at least in the running. I'm also proud because we did this with our very modest tax base. We do not fit the stereotype, we are not a wealthy liberal area. We are working class, the little guys.

And if our little town can build a responsible, sustainable street like this, anybody can and everybody should.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to speak to you today.

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