



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: August 9, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 718 14th Street NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed sidewalk cafe

Site Information

Zone: DD/C-4
Historic District: No
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Downtown commercial district

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on August 3, 2010. This café is for the adjacent Potbelly sandwich shop.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy T-2.4.4: Sidewalk Obstructions

Locate sidewalk cafes and other intrusions into the sidewalk so that they do not present impediments to safe and efficient pedestrian passage. Maintain sidewalk surfaces and elevations so that disabled or elderly pedestrians can safely use them. 410.8

Policy UD-3.1.8: Neighborhood Public Space

Provide urban squares, public plazas, and similar areas that stimulate vibrant pedestrian street life and provide a focus for community activities. Encourage the “activation” of such spaces through the design of adjacent structures; for example, through the location of shop entrances, window displays, awnings, and outdoor dining areas.

Policy UD-3.10: Sidewalk Cafes

Discourage the enclosure of sidewalk cafes in manner that effectively transforms them into indoor floor space. The design of sidewalk cafes should be compatible with the architectural qualities of the adjoining buildings, should complement the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

KEY ISSUES

The property is located Downtown on 14th Street, NW, between New York Avenue and G Street, NW. It is located in an area zoned DD/C-4. There is medium level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as commercial.

The sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed is located along New York Avenue and is 26 feet wide. The adjacent business has a 3 foot shop window projection. There are 8 feet at the curb set aside for tree boxes and other street furniture; there is an unusual bench location at this site that further reduces the available sidewalk width. Without the bench, this leaves 15 feet to accommodate

for pedestrians and café seating. The proposed seating area includes 10 tables and 20 seats in an area that is 455 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 9 feet. This leaves 6 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 8 foot furniture zone at the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk cafe. This is particularly important in the Downtown commercial district. In addition, District regulations require that a café leave 10' clear sidewalk at street corners. One option for creating a wider pedestrian path would be to remove a bench. There is an adjacent bench that could be removed and would add about 3' of clear pedestrian path. The Downtown BID was consulted and they agree with the removal of the bench as long as the applicant pays the cost of removing the bench and repairing the sidewalk. Consultation with DDOT is still pending. This particular bench is not a necessity and there are other benches in close proximity.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 455 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 30 seats; the application is for 20 seats.

The applicant also proposes a fence around the perimeter of the café. The fence must not exceed a maximum height of 42", needs to be at least fifty percent open and must be movable so that it can be removed when the café is not in use.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the conditions that the adjacent bench is removed and the sidewalk repaired in order to provide an appropriate amount of clear pedestrian path. In addition, the proposed fence must not exceed a maximum height of 42", must be at least fifty percent open and must be removable.