



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 15, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 4654 Wisconsin Avenue NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafe

Site Information

Zone: C-2-A
Historic District: No
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Active commercial corridor

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 7, 2010.

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 sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed is 28 feet wide; the adjacent business has no shop window projection. The proposed seating area includes 4 tables and 16 seats in an area that is 280 square feet.

The property is located in the Tenleytown neighborhood on Wisconsin Avenue, NW, between Chesapeake and Brandywine Streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned C-2-A. There is a moderate level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as commercial and residential.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 280 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 19 seats; the application is for 16 seats.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 22 feet. This leaves 6 feet of clear pedestrian path between the proposed café and an existing 6 foot tree box. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café, although the Public Space Committee has the authority to approve an adjacent clear pedestrian path of 6 feet.

In addition, the applicant is going to remove an existing outdoor sign in public space when the proposed sidewalk café is implemented. The applicant is also proposing to install 12 planters on the edge of the café. The planters should be moved as close in to the restaurant entrance as possible, so as to minimize their reduction on the clear pedestrian path.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. The proposed sidewalk café is a welcome addition to this neighborhood. However, the size of the café needs to be reduced in order to provide an adequate clear pedestrian path. The applicant should reconfigure the seating closer to the restaurant entrance in order to maximize the limited space.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the applicant reduces the size of the café in order to provide an adequate clear pedestrian path of 8 to 10', and that the planters be pulled closer to the building.