



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: December 14, 2009
TO: Public Space Committee
FROM: Josh Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
SUBJECT: 145 N Street, NE – Security Bollards

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Applicant: CS Master V., LLC (David Cerniglia, Authorized Agent)

Location: This site is located in NoMa, a neighborhood north of Union Station. The property is zoned C-3-C and is immediately adjacent to the New York Avenue Metro Station entrance. The 100 block of N Street, NE, is a critical block for establishing the character of the neighborhood as a pedestrian friendly area where many of the residents or workers rely on Metro heavily. NoMa is where development is guided by the NoMa Vision Plan and Development Strategy – a Small Area Plan adopted by City Council in early 2009 – promoting a walkable, mixed-use environment, and that has specific streetscape guidelines intended to create a park-like character in public space that incorporate sustainable development practices.

Proposal: The applicant is requesting to install 80 bollards in public space. They are located along the curb and in two places cross the sidewalk.

BACKGROUND

The District first met with this applicant to review streetscape plans for this site in the fall of 2007. Since the site is located within NoMa, plans were reviewed to ensure they followed the NoMa streetscape guidelines. At that time security bollards were not included in the streetscape plans, and the District explained that any security for the building would need to be located on private property. These streetscape elements are associated with a building that is part of a much larger development project – Constitution Square – that encompasses the entire block between 1st, M, and N streets, NE, and the railroad tracks.

BASIS OF REPORT

The Office of Planning (OP) has reviewed the application, considered existing site conditions, coordinated with DDOT, and completed research on the site to prepare this report. OP also referred to the NoMa Vision Plan and Development Strategy and several policies in the Comprehensive Plan as part of completing this report:

Policy UD-3.2.3: Site Planning and Design Measures to Increase Security

Encourage architectural design and site planning methods that minimize perimeter security requirements and have a reduced impact on the public realm. Such measures include separating entryways, controlling access, “hardening” of shared walls, and the selection of more resilient building materials.

Policy UD-3.2.4: Security through Streetscape Design

Develop and apply attractive, context-sensitive security measures in the design of streets, plazas, and public spaces. These measures should use an appropriate mix of bollards, planters, landscaped walls, vegetation, and street furniture rather than barriers and other approaches that detract from aesthetic quality.

DDOT Public Space Security Policy

Department Order No. 301.03, December 19, 2003

DDOT encourages security perimeters to be established within privately owned space or federal public space adjacent to buildings (i.e. not on sidewalks, curbs, gutters, streets or public alleys. (Section IV: Guidelines, Letter H)

KEY ISSUES

The District made it clear to the applicant in meeting held during 2007 that security for the building should be provided for on private property. When the District first met with this applicant in 2007, it was made clear that the city had specific streetscape guidelines for NoMa and policies that encouraged security perimeters to be established within privately owned space. During meetings with this applicant, no plans submitted for review have included security bollards in public space.

Some of the security elements proposed are located in the area of the sidewalk intended to be maintained as a clear pedestrian path and impede pedestrian circulation. The NoMa Streetscape Guidelines included wide sidewalks in commercial areas, including the public space adjacent to the site included in this application. Wide sidewalks and pedestrian facilities are particularly important along the 100 block of N Street, NE, one of two streets leading into NoMa from the New York Avenue Metro Station. Access into NoMa is limited by the location of railroad tracks to the east and south, and high-volume traffic corridors to the north and west. In addition, the north side of N Street, adjacent to the ATF building, was ceded to the federal government and is not public space – leaving the sidewalk on the south side of N Street as the only public sidewalk in this block. These factors further increase the importance of maintaining wide, unimpeded pedestrian facilities along N Street.

The approval of such extensive security in public space at 145 N Street, NE, would set an unwelcome precedent in the NoMa area. The bollards being proposed are not the first to be requested in public space within NoMa, but they are the most extensive. A previous application for bollards at the building entrance of 700-2nd Street, NE – also located in NoMa - was reviewed and denied by the Public Space Committee in February 2009.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The application for security at 145 N Street, NE, is inconsistent with public space security policies that were made known to the applicant early in the planning process for this building. The proposed security is located in a sidewalk that is a primary pedestrian into NoMa from the nearby New York Avenue Metro Station, and inconsistent with streetscape guidelines developed for NoMa. Approval of this application would set a precedent for using public space as the location for security within NoMa.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be denied.