

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF PLANNING



**PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW**

**DATE:** June 16, 2008  
**FROM:** Chris Shaheen  
**ADDRESS:** 1025 Vermont Avenue, NW  
**APPLICATION:** Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafe

**Site Information**

**Zone:** C-4  
**Historic District:** None  
**CFA:** No  
**Neighborhood Character:** Central Business District

**Background:**

This application was received by the Office of Planning on June 14, 2010. In July 2008, the Public Space Committee approved a different sidewalk cafe at this address. This café is for the adjacent business, Juice Joint Café; it is not known if this business has a Certificate of Occupancy for a restaurant or grocery store.

**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 in the central business district on Vermont Avenue, NW, between K Street and Thomas Circle. It is located in an area zoned C-4. There is a high level of pedestrian activity during working hours and moderate level of pedestrian activity at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as office with ground floor retail.

The sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed located along Vermont Avenue and is 40 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection. There are approximately 4 feet at the

curb set aside for tree boxes and other street furniture. The proposed seating area includes 6 tables and 24 seats in an area that is approximately 306 square feet. The application also includes two umbrellas and several flower boxes.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 310 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 20 seats; the application is for 24 seats.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 19 feet and 8 inches. This leaves approximately 15 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and an adjacent tree box. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café.

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION**

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial area. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. However, in this case, the number of seats being requested exceeds the amount allowed for a café area of this size. It is also not clear that the adjacent business has a Certificate of Occupancy for a restaurant or grocery store.

**The Office of Planning's recommends that this application be approved on the condition that the number of seats be reduced from 24 to 20 and that the business provide verification that is has a Certificate of Occupancy for either a restaurant or grocery store.**