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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: December 28, 2009
TO: Public Space Committee
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
SUBJECT: 1200 19th Street, NW

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Applicant: Douglas Foster (Authorized Agent)
Location: The site of the proposed unenclosed sidewalk café is on west side of 19th Street, NW between M Street, NW and N Street, NW. It is located in a DC/C-3-C zoning district. It is an active commercial area with moderate pedestrian and vehicular activity.
Proposal: The applicant is requesting to install an unenclosed sidewalk café with 19 tables and 39 chairs.

BACKGROUND

The Office of Planning received the public space application for review on November 6, 2009.

BASIS OF REPORT

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

Policy UD-3.1.7: Improving the Street Environment

Create attractive and interesting commercial streetscapes by promoting ground level retail and desirable street activities, making walking more comfortable and convenient, ensuring that sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic, minimizing curb cuts and driveways, and avoiding windowless facades and gaps in the street wall.

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 compliment the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

KEY ISSUES

The proposed unenclosed sidewalk café consists of 19 tables and 39 chairs. The sidewalk café area is listed in the application as 550 square feet. This measurement is incorrect and is actually 272 square feet, which allows for 18 chairs. The total sidewalk width from the property line to the curb is approximately 35'. As proposed, the sidewalk café is located in a sunken area separate from the existing sidewalk. The proposed café does not reduce the size of the approximately 6' clear pedestrian walkway as well as a street furniture zone of approximately 6'.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The size of the sidewalk café needs to be reduced in order to adhere to public space regulations. The square footage of the café is incorrectly identified as 550 square feet instead of 272 square feet. The maximum number of chairs allowed for this café space is 18.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be denied. The applicant needs to submit new drawings to show the configuration of the sidewalk café with a maximum of 18 chairs.