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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: August 16, 2010

TO: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner

ADDRESS: 1300-1399 W Street, NW

APPLICATION: New sidewalk and step paving, bike racks, plants and trees

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Location: The property is located at the intersection of W and 14th Streets, NW, and is within the boundaries of the Greater U Street Historic District.

Proposal: The applicant is requesting to install new paving, bike racks and plants and trees.

BACKGROUND

The Office of Planning received the public space application for review on August 3, 2010. A PDRM was held for this site on November 1, 2007. The site is located in the Greater U Street Historic District and it has been reviewed by staff in the Historic Preservation Office.

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 E-1.1.3: Landscaping

Encourage the use of landscaping to beautify the city, enhance streets and public spaces, reduce storm water runoff, and create a stronger sense of character and identity. 603.7

KEY ISSUES

The location of the proposed paving, bike racks and landscaping is within an area considered a destination for retail and leisure. The addition of plants and trees will further the goals of the District to create an attractive and active sidewalk atmosphere in this part of the city. The introduction of bike racks and landscaping will add an active use to the block. There is a proposed total of 11 new inverted U bike racks and 13 new street trees.

However, there are several issues and concerns that were raised at the PDRM that have not been addressed by the applicant. Comments provided at the PDRM addressed issues related to street tree spacing and tree boxes, sidewalk width and material, specialty paving at building entrances, access to loading dock, and location of PEPCO vaults. The Public Space Committee should ensure that these issues are addressed prior to approving this Public Space permit.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The improved paving, landscaping and bike racks are a welcome addition to the neighborhood. However, there are still some outstanding issues and concerns raised by the District at the PDRM that have not been addressed.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be tabled until the applicant addresses issues raised at the PDRM held on November 1st, 2007, submits an updated site plan, and reviews the revised plans with the Historic Preservation Office.