

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

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PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: April 20, 2010
TO: Public Space Committee
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
SUBJECT: 1309 F Street, NW – Sidewalk Cafe

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Applicant: Douglas Development
Location: The property is located on the north side of F Street NW between 13th Street NW and 14th Street NW. It is located in the area covered by the Downtown Streetscape Regulations and along a busy commercial corridor. It is located in a DD/C-4 zoning district.
Proposal: The applicant is requesting an unenclosed sidewalk café with 10 tables and 20 seats. The proposed seating area has a total square footage of 127.

BACKGROUND

The application was submitted to the DDOT public space permitting office on April 1, 2010.

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 and other District regulations as part of completing this report:

Policy UD-3.1.2: Management of Side walk Space

Preserve the characteristically wide sidewalks of Washington's commercial districts. Sidewalk space should be managed in a way that promotes pedestrian safety, efficiency, comfort, and provides adequate space for tree boxes. Sidewalks should enhance the visual character of streets, with landscaping and buffer planting used to reduce the impacts of vehicle traffic.

Policy UD-3.10: Side walk 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 proposed unenclosed sidewalk café has an area of 127 square feet and proposes 10 tables and 20 chairs. The 20 seats are more than the 8 that is allowed in an area of this size. The sidewalk width from the property line to the curb is 19'- 8". The sidewalk café as proposed leaves a 10' clear pedestrian walkway. However, the number of seats must be reduced to a maximum of 8 due to the small square footage of the proposed café space. The sidewalk café cannot be extended because a minimum 10' clear pedestrian sidewalk should be maintained in this busy downtown commercial corridor.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The sidewalk café is a welcome addition to the neighborhood, but the proposed number of seats needs to be reduced according to the small size of the café area.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the following conditions:

- 1. The applicant reduces the number of seats to a maximum of 8 due to the small square footage of available café space**