

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: August 11, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 1740 13th Street NW
APPLICATION: Curb cut and driveway

Site Information

Zone: R-4
Historic District: Greater 14th Street Historic District
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Residential

Background:

The Office of Planning received the public space application for review on August 4, 2010. Staff in the historic preservation office has noted issues with new curb cuts in this area and that this application requires the review and approval of the Historic Preservation Review Board. The applicant needs to submit to the Historic Preservation Review Board before a decision is made at the Public Space Committee.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy HP-2.5.4: Landscaped Yards in Public Space

Preserve the continuous and open green quality of landscaped front and side yards in public space. Take special care at historic landmarks and in historic districts to protect this public environment from intrusions, whether from excess paving, vehicular access and parking, high walls and fencing, or undue disruption of the natural contours or bermed terraces.

Policy UD-2.2.1 Neighborhood Character and Identity

Strengthen the defining visual qualities of Washington's neighborhoods. This should be achieved in part by relating the scale of infill development, alterations, renovations and additions to existing neighborhood context.

KEY ISSUES

The proposal is for a new driveway and curb cut for a residence on 13th Street, NW, between S and Riggs Streets. The area of the new driveway is 240 square feet in public space. The width of the proposed driveway is 12 feet.

The block in which this property is located does have an internal alley. However, this particular property does not have access to the alley. None of the other homes in this block have curb cuts to the street. A similar pattern emerges with the surrounding blocks. The surrounding blocks have alleys, the majority of properties do not have curb cuts to the street, and very few do have curb cuts.

The curb cut is requested for an existing building that does not have parking. Zoning regulations do not require that this property add on-site parking to comply with current regulations. It is also not clear whether or not there is enough space on-site to accommodate a parking space. As proposed, it appears that the curb cut could be used to access a parking space in public space, which is not allowed by current regulations.

The property is located in the Greater 14th Street Historic District. The Historic Preservation Review Board has consistently been unsupportive of curb cuts, driveways, and parking pads on or through public space

within the L'Enfant city, finding them incompatible with the continuous, uninterrupted greensward that forms the distinctive character-defining setting for these row house neighborhoods. This greensward is a result of the 1870 Congressional "Parking Act", which was intended to beautify the city's emerging row house neighborhoods with a park-like garden setting, while also absolving the city of the responsibility to improve and maintain the wide right-of-ways created by L'Enfant's plan. In residential areas, the public space greensward provides unity to the architecturally diverse rows of houses and is one of the most important visual characteristics of the L'Enfant city.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

This property is in the Greater 14th Street Historic District. Curb cuts for this site must be reviewed and approved by the Historic Preservation Review Board. The Historic Preservation Review Board typically has an unfavorable view on curb cuts, driveways and parking pads on or through public space within the L'Enfant city.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be tabled until it is reviewed by the Historic Preservation Review Board.