

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 15, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 212 7th Street SE
APPLICATION: Enclosed Sidewalk Cafe

Site Information

Zone: CHC/C-2-A
Historic District: Capitol Hill Historic District
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Active commercial area

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 7, 2010. The proposed café needs to be reviewed by historic preservation office staff.

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 sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed is 31 feet wide; the adjacent business has a 3 foot shop window projection. The proposed seating area includes 10 tables and 28 seats in an area that is 545 square feet.

The property is located in the Eastern Market neighborhood on 7th Street, SE, between C Street and North Carolina Streets, SE. It is located in an area zoned CHC/C-2-A. There is high level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as commercial and residential.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 545 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 36 seats; the application is for 28 seats.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 15 feet. This leaves 11 feet of clear pedestrian path and the nearest obstruction is a 4 foot furniture zone. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk cafe.

The application indicates that its for an enclosed café, but from the drawings it appears that the café will be unenclosed. The Public Space Committee will need to clarify with the applicant whether the café will be enclosed or unenclosed. Also a 2'-6'' high wrought iron railing fence is proposed around the edge of the café. The PSC will also need to ensure with the applicant that the fence will be movable, so that it can be removed when the café is not in use.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. The proposed café is a welcome addition to this neighborhood.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved as submitted.