



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: August 10, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 2600 Tilden Street, NW
APPLICATION: Over-height fence with a height of 8' for the Embassy of China

Site Information

Zone: FH-TSP/R-1-A
Historic District: No
CFA: Yes
Neighborhood Character: Single-family residential, with significant landscaping

Background:

The Office of Planning received this public space application for review on August 2, 2010.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Policy HP-2.5.2: Historic Landscapes (Comprehensive Plan)

Preserve the distinguishing qualities of the District's historic landscapes, both natural and designed. Protect public building and monument grounds, parks and parkway systems, government and institutional campuses, gardens, cemeteries, and other historic landscapes from deterioration and incompatible development.

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.

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.

KEY ISSUES

The subject site is approximately 108,770 square feet and is located on Tilden Street and Linnean Avenue, NW. The application is for an 8' high iron fence along the perimeter of the Embassy of China. Part of the building includes high retaining walls with fences along the top and located on private property; these provide the building with some security. Although the existing public space regulations allow fences, the maximum height for fences is 42". The applicant does not provide any justification for the need to construct an over-height fence or why a property of this size cannot accommodate an over-height fence on private property.

Tilden Street is a secondary street, but it has connections with major arterials: Connecticut Avenue and Wisconsin Avenue. The site is also located along a visually prominent entrance to Rock Creek Park, and the building restriction line along this property is meant to maintain its character as a greenway. The character of the immediate neighborhood is single family homes within a landscaped setting. Immediately to the west is the Cleveland Park neighborhood commercial district.





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SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Tilden Street is a secondary street that is an important gateway into Rock Creek Park from Connecticut and Wisconsin avenues. In addition, it is immediately adjacent to the extensive Rock Creek Park greenway. The existing landscaped and open character along this street should be maintained. Fences in public space or within building restriction lines should be built to 42", the maximum height allowed by regulation, and fifty percent open as a way to maintain the open landscaped character of this roadway. This is a large site and there should be ample space for the fence to be located on private property.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the height of the fence be reduced to 42", or that the fence be relocated to the property line or building restriction line. In addition, sign off is needed from HP and CFA.

