

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: July 14, 2010

FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner

ADDRESS: 2818 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW

APPLICATION: Unenclosed sidewalk café for 2 tables and 6 seats

Site Information

Zone: C-2-A

Historic District: Georgetown

CFA: Yes

Neighborhood Character: Neighborhood commercial district

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on June 2, 2010. This café is for the adjacent Georgetown Scoops ice cream shop. It is not known whether or not this business has a Certificate of Occupancy for a restaurant or a grocery store. The proposed café has been reviewed and approved by historic preservation office staff. It is not known whether or not CFA has reviewed and approved this application.

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 property is located in the Georgetown neighborhood on Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, between 28th and 29th Streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned C-2-A. There is a high level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as mixed use.

The sidewalk where the proposed café is located is along Pennsylvania Avenue and 20.5 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection. There are 7 feet at the curb set aside for tree boxes and other street furniture. This leaves 13.5 feet to accommodate for pedestrians and café seating. The proposed seating area includes 2 tables and 6 seats in an area that is 54 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 6 feet. This leaves 7.5 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 7 foot furniture zone at the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café, although the Public Space Committee has the authority to approve an adjacent clear pedestrian path of 6 feet.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 54 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 4 seats; the application is for 6 seats.

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. However, the number of seats is too high for the amount of square footage. Only a maximum of 4 seats can be allowed in an area of 54 square feet.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the number of seats is reduced to a maximum of 4.