

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 15, 2010
FROM: Chris Shaheen
ADDRESS: 3102 Mount Pleasant Street, NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafe

Site Information

Zone: C-2-A
Historic District: Mount Pleasant Historic District
CFA: N/A
Neighborhood Character: Neighborhood Commercial

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 17, 2010. The Historic Preservation Office has no record of reviewing or approving this application. This café is for the adjacent Haydee's Restaurant.

Relevant Policies or Planning Initiatives

Comprehensive Plan

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.

Draft Mt. Pleasant Street Revitalization Plan

The Draft Mt. Pleasant Street Revitalization Plan has a top priority to "Capture more of the neighborhood customer base in order to strengthen existing small businesses". One of the ways to accomplish this goal is to increase the number of sidewalk cafes on the street, thereby providing more opportunities for patrons to utilize local businesses.

KEY ISSUES

The property is located in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood on Mount Pleasant Street, NW, between Irving and Kenyon streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned C-2-A. There is moderate to high levels of pedestrian activity during the day and moderate levels of pedestrian activity at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as medium density with row homes and apartment buildings, and a busy commercial area on Mount Pleasant Street.

The sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed is 20 feet wide; the adjacent business has a 3 foot shop window projection. The proposed seating area includes 12 tables and 36 seats in an area that is 168 square feet. There are approximately 4 feet at the curb set aside for tree boxes and other street furniture.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 168 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 11 seats; the application is for 36 seats.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 7 feet. This leaves 6 feet between the café and a tree box as the narrowest point in the adjacent clear sidewalk. 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.

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 proposed café narrows the adjacent sidewalk to 6', is too narrow for a street with as much pedestrian activity as Mount Pleasant Street and for one with a plan to attract more business and customers. The number of seats proposed (36) far exceeds the 11 that would be allowed in the 168 square foot area proposed for the café.

The Office of Planning's recommends that the sidewalk café be approved with the condition that 7 feet of clear adjacent sidewalk is maintained and the number of seats is reduced to 10.