



## **PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW**

**DATE:** July 12, 2010

**FROM:** Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner

**ADDRESS:** 3238 Wisconsin Avenue, NW

**APPLICATION:** Unenclosed and enclosed sidewalk café for 29 tables and 80 seats

### **Site Information**

**Zone:** MW/C-1

**Historic District:** No

**CFA:** No

**Neighborhood Character:** Neighborhood commercial district

### **Background:**

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 24, 2010. This café is for the adjacent Enology Tavern.

### **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 Tenleytown neighborhood on Wisconsin Avenue, NW, between Macomb Street and Woodley Road, NW. It is located in an area zoned MW/C-1. There is a medium level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as residential with neighborhood serving commercial.

The sidewalk where the proposed café is located is along Macomb Street and 22 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projection (but there is an existing enclosed sidewalk café that extends 12’ into the sidewalk). There are 4 feet at the curb set aside for planters and other street

furniture. This leaves 18 feet to accommodate for pedestrians and café seating. The proposed seating area includes 29 tables and 80 seats in an area that is 1,239 square feet.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 12'. This leaves 6 feet of unobstructed sidewalk between the café and the 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 1239 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 83 seats; the application is for 80 seats.

The drawing provided is hard to decipher and the measurements listed above may not be correct. More information is needed from the applicant.

The enclosed sidewalk café that is part of this application does not comply with current District regulations for enclosed cafes. These regulations require that an enclosed sidewalk café may utilize a base wall of opaque material up to a maximum height of 36 inches from the sidewalk level. All enclosing walls, doors, and windows (but not structural members) above the base wall must be a transparent material. To further maximize transparency, both the horizontal and vertical structural members shall be no more than 10 inches wide (DCMR 24-210.2, 24-210.3, and 24-210.4)

In addition, District regulations state that “except for days that are unseasonably cold, unseasonably warm, or rainy, sidewalk cafes may be enclosed from October 15 through May 15 only”.

It is not clear whether or not the existing enclosed café is consistent with what has been previously approved for this site.

### **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 enclosed sidewalk café has been designed in a way that it is closed off from the street and it is not in compliance with the District's regulations for enclosed sidewalk cafes. The enclosed sidewalk café has been built as an addition to the restaurant and it does not possess the flexibility and openness to the street that it should have.

**The Office of Planning does not have enough information at this time to make a recommendation.**