

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 16, 2008
FROM: Chris Shaheen
ADDRESS: 3450 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
APPLICATION: Sign

Site Information

Zone: Unzoned
Historic District: Naval Observatory, Admiral's House
CFA: Yes
Neighborhood Character: Single Family Residential

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 10, 2010. The proposed sign has not been reviewed and approved by historic preservation office staff. It is not known if the sign has been reviewed and approved by the Commission of Fine Arts.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

Comprehensive Plan

Policy HP-2.5.2: Historic Landscapes

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 landscaped from deterioration and incompatible development.

Policy UD 3.1.1: Improving Streetscape Design

Improve the appearance and identify of the District's streets through the design of street lights, paves surfaces, landscaped areas, bus shelters, street "furniture", and adjacent building facades.

Building Code

DCMR Title 12

3107.9.5.5 Non-profit organization. Signs for each school, college, hotel, philanthropic institution, non-profit organization, hospital, residential care facility or church, shall be limited to a total area not to exceed 40 square feet (3.73 m²).

KEY ISSUES

The District's regulations that limit signage in public space are intended to provide a consistent appearance and treatment that maintain continuous views along city streets, complement the green and park-like character of "public parking", decrease hidden corners, and consequently improve pedestrian safety.

The height of the sign is 4 feet and the width is 10 feet. The sign has no base and but has a cap stone that is 11 feet wide. The material of the sign is concrete block faces with red brick. There is

text on one side of the sign that is 4 inch and 6 inch cast metal. The total square footage of this sign is 40 square feet. Public space regulations allow for the sign of a non-profit organization to be a maximum of 40 square feet.

The public space where the sign is proposed to be located is at the end of Observatory Circle, between Massachusetts Avenue and Whitehaven Street. The general character of public space in this area is residential, and the surrounding neighborhood is characterized as large single-family homes with landscaped front yards. The proposed sign location is at a dead-end.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning in general discourages signs in public space. However, where appropriate, signs should be located to minimize their appearance and be of high quality design. In this case, the sign is on a street that dead ends at the entrance to the facility that the sign is for and does not impede views along streets or avenues.

The Office of Planning's recommends that this application be approved as submitted with the condition that it is also approved by historic preservation staff and the Commission of Fine Arts.