

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Historic District |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | CFA |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other |



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: March 12, 2010
TO: Public Space Committee
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
SUBJECT: 3460 14th Street, NW – Sidewalk Cafe

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

- Applicant:** Suriyah Scorsat (Authorized Agent)
- Location:** The property is located on the west side of 14th Street NW between Newton Street NW and Meridian Place NW. The property is located in a commercial area zoned C-2-A. The proposed seating is in an area along 14th Street, NW. Drawings submitted with the application show the sidewalk width along this block of 14th Street is 12' - 2".
- Proposal:** The applicant is requesting an unenclosed sidewalk café area with 36 tables and 144 seats. The proposed seating area is approximately 135' long with a total square footage of 1620.

BACKGROUND

The application was submitted to the DDOT public space permitting office on February 17th, 2010.

BASIS OF REPORT

The Office of Planning (OP) has reviewed the application, considered existing site conditions, and completed research on the site to prepare this report. OP also referred to several policies in the Comprehensive Plan and other District regulations as part of completing this report:

Policy UD-3.1.2: Management of Sidewalk Space

Preserve the characteristically wide sidewalks of Washington's commercial districts. Sidewalk space should be managed in a way that promotes pedestrian safety, efficiency, comfort, and provides adequate space for tree boxes. Sidewalks should enhance the visual character of streets, with landscaping and buffer planting used to reduce the impacts of vehicle traffic.

Policy UD-3.1.7: Improving the Street Environment

Create attractive and interesting commercial streetscapes by promoting ground level retail and desirable street activities, making walking more comfortable and convenient, ensuring that

sidewalks are wide enough to accommodate pedestrian traffic, minimizing curb cuts and driveways, and avoiding windowless facades and gaps in the street wall.

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 number of seats proposed for the café exceeds the amount allowed in the size of the proposed space. The proposed unenclosed sidewalk café has an area of 1620 square feet and proposes 36 tables and 144 seats; a seating area this size allows only 108 seats, 36 less than the number included in the application.

It is also not clear if the proposed seating area is in front of adjacent businesses, or if the applicant maintains control of all adjacent ground-floor retail. If so, a letter of approval needs to be provided from the respective business owner(s).

Another issue is that certain egress points to the building appear to be blocked by seating. All required egress points must have a clear path that is as wide as the doorway. A clear pathway must be maintained between fire exits and the clear sidewalk at the curb.

The proposed café is located in an area that is already separated from the sidewalk by a low brick wall and a grade change that places the seating area one step above the adjacent sidewalk. The existing layout of public space and proposed location of the café does not take away any space from the existing clear pedestrian walkway, which is 12'-2" and includes an approximately 4' furniture zone.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The location of the café as proposed is appropriate, but the excessive size being proposed for the number of seats requested should be evaluated. Fire exits from the building need to be identified to ensure clear egress pathways to the adjacent sidewalk, and fire exits are not identified on the application. In addition, all egress points must maintain a clear path that is the width of the doorway. It is also not clear if any of the proposed café space is located along the frontage of neighboring businesses.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the following conditions:

- 1. The applicant reduces the number of seats to the appropriate number based on the size of the approved seating area;**
- 2. The applicant verify that they control the entire ground-floor retail space adjacent to the proposed café; and,**
- 3. That all required egress points have a clear pathway to the adjacent pedestrian path in the sidewalk.**