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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: December 28, 2009
TO: Public Space Committee
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
SUBJECT: 3566 14th Street, NW

APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF

Applicant: Jose Esteves (Authorized Agent)
Location: The site of the proposed unenclosed sidewalk café is on west side of 14th Street, NW at the south corner of Perry Place, NW. It is located in a C-2-A zoning district. It is an active commercial area with moderate pedestrian and vehicular activity.
Proposal: The applicant is requesting to install an unenclosed sidewalk café with 6 tables and 24 chairs.

BACKGROUND

The Office of Planning received the public space application for review on October 27, 2009.

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 as part of completing this report:

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-3.1.8: 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 compliment the street environment, and should not impede pedestrian movement.

KEY ISSUES

The proposed unenclosed sidewalk café consists of 6 tables and 24 chairs. The sidewalk café area is approximately 140 square feet, which allows for a maximum of 9 chairs. The total sidewalk width from the property line to the curb is 29'. As part of a vibrant 14th Street commercial area, the sidewalk adjacent to this sidewalk café should maintain the 10' clear sidewalk width as required in current regulations. As proposed, the sidewalk café accommodates an approximately 8' clear pedestrian walkway. The size of the sidewalk café needs to be reduced to provide an adequate adjacent sidewalk width, taking into consideration existing tree boxes, furniture zone, and the café. The proposal also includes a 3' fence along the perimeter of the café area. The fence needs to be movable, so that it is able to be removed when the café is not being used.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The sidewalk café is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. However, its location in an active commercial area that warrants a clear 10' adjacent sidewalk width is provided and that the café area be reduced in size. The square footage of the café as proposed only allows for a maximum of 9 chairs.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the applicant reconfigures the sidewalk café to provide an adequate adjacent sidewalk width and that the number of seats be reduced accordingly.