



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 16, 2008
FROM: Chris Shaheen
ADDRESS: 455 Massachusetts Avenue, NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafe

Site Information

Zone:
Historic District:
CFA:
Neighborhood Character:

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 17, 2010. This café is for the adjacent restaurant Buddha-Bar.

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 Mount Vernon Triangle neighborhood on Massachusetts Avenue, NW, between 4th and 5th streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned CC/C-2-C. There is moderate and increasing level of pedestrian activity during working hours at other times of the day. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as mixed-use with office and high-density residential.

The sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed located along Massachusetts Avenue and is over 53 feet wide. The adjacent business has no shop window projections. The streetscape for this site was designed to follow guidelines established for Mount Vernon Triangle, including approximately

25 feet along the building for outdoor seating. The proposed seating area includes 23 tables and 76 seats in an area that is approximately 2,025 square feet.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 2,025 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 135 seats; the application is for 76 seats.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 25 feet. As per the Mount Vernon Triangle streetscape guidelines, this leaves one 10 feet wide unobstructed clear pedestrian paths in the remaining 28 feet between the café and the curb. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial area. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. The proposed café is a welcome addition to this neighborhood.

The Office of Planning's recommends the sidewalk café be approved as submitted.