



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 15, 2010
FROM: Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner
ADDRESS: 4940 Wisconsin Avenue NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafe

Site Information

Zone: C-2-A
Historic District: No
CFA: No
Neighborhood Character: Active commercial corridor

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 7, 2010.

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 sidewalk where the sidewalk café is proposed is 35’-6’’ wide on the Wisconsin Avenue side and 44’-9’’ wide on the Fessenden Street side; the adjacent business has no shop window projections. The proposed seating area includes 13 tables and 50 seats in an area that is 609 square feet.

The property is located in the Tenleytown neighborhood on Wisconsin Avenue, NW, between Fessenden and Ellicott streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned C-2-A. There is a moderate level of pedestrian activity during working hours and at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as commercial and residential.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 609 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 41 seats; the application is for 50 seats.

The café area extends into the sidewalk 13'-6" on the Wisconsin Avenue side and 23' on the Fessenden Street side. This leaves 13' clear pedestrian path on the Wisconsin Avenue side and 12' clear pedestrian path on the Fessenden Street side between the seating area and the adjacent furniture zones. District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk cafe.

Also the applicant proposes to have a 3' high fence around the edge of the sidewalk café. The fence needs to be movable, so that it can be removed when the café is not in use.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. The proposed café is a welcome addition to this neighborhood. However, the number of seats needs to be reduced to accommodate for the appropriate number within the square footage. A maximum of 41 seats is allowed within the proposed square footage.

The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the applicant reduces the maximum number of seats to 41.