



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: June 15, 2010
FROM: Chris Shaheen
ADDRESS: 801- 9th Street, NW
APPLICATION: Unenclosed Sidewalk Cafe

Site Information

Zone: DD/C-3-C
Historic District: None
CFA: N/A
Neighborhood Character: Center City Commercial

Background:

This application was received by the Office of Planning on May 10, 2010. There are no other sidewalk cafes on this block. This café is for the adjacent restaurant Cuba Libre.

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 is proposed to be on two street fronts: 9th Street and H Street. On both streets, the sidewalk is approximately 15 feet wide. The adjacent business no shop window projections on either street. The proposed seating area includes 29 tables and 90 seats in four areas that total 1,394 square feet.

The property is located in the Chinatown neighborhood on 9th Street, NW, between H and I Streets, NW. It is located in an area zoned DD/C-3-C. There is a moderate level of pedestrian activity during working hours and moderate level of pedestrian activity at other times. This neighborhood is predominantly characterized as part of the District’s central business district.

The Public Space Committee requires that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a dining area. With an area of 1,394 square feet, this sidewalk café has enough space for 93 seats; the application is for 90 seats.

The majority of seats in this sidewalk café are located at the curb (62); the remaining are located at the building façade (28). As positioned in the seating plan, there is at least an 8' clear sidewalk width between seating areas for the entire length of the sidewalk café. The clear sidewalk width on 9th Street is 8'11"; the clear sidewalk width on H Street is 8'4". District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk café, although the Public Space Committee has the authority to approve an adjacent clear pedestrian path of 6 feet.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

Sidewalk cafes are one of the few ways that the District can activate public space in commercial areas. Wherever possible, the Office of Planning supports sidewalk cafes in public space. In this case, the applicant has proposed to use public space the most efficient way possible by locating seating at the curb and between tree boxes, maximizing the available clear sidewalk width to 8 and 9 feet. Although this site is located in the central business district, it is not located on streets known to have high levels of pedestrian traffic, and the proposed sidewalk widths are appropriate.

The Office of Planning's recommends that this application be approved as submitted.