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GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
OFFICE OF PLANNING



**PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW**

**DATE:** April 20, 2010  
**TO:** Public Space Committee  
**FROM:** Joshua Ghaffari, Citywide Planner  
**SUBJECT:** 5542 Connecticut Avenue, NW

**APPLICATION-IN-BRIEF**

**Applicant:** Jeremy Busse (Authorized Agent)  
**Location:** The site of the proposed unenclosed sidewalk café is on west side of Connecticut Avenue NW between Morrison Street NW and McKinley Street NW. It is located in a C-1 zoning district. It is an active commercial area with moderate pedestrian and vehicular activity.  
**Proposal:** The applicant is requesting to install a canopy over an existing unenclosed sidewalk café with 12 tables and 28 chairs and to repave the seating area with concrete that matches the existing sidewalk.

**BACKGROUND**

A sidewalk café for this site was first submitted to be considered by the Public Space Committee at the January 2010 meeting. At that meeting, the applicant withdrew the application for consideration. The applicant reapplied for a café at this site, and the Office of Planning received the second application for review on April 1, 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 existing unenclosed sidewalk café consists of 12 tables and 28 chairs. The sidewalk café area is approximately 475 square feet, which allows for a maximum of 31 chairs. However, based on the requirement that there be 15 square feet for every seat within a café area, with a proposed café of 475 square feet the number of chairs needs to be reduced and/or the layout of the seating needs to be adjusted for safety reasons. As proposed, there is only 3' of space in the path of the main entrance. All egress points must have a clear path that is at least the width of the door, in this case a minimum of approximately 6'. The unusual width of the sidewalk would permit the café to be extended 2'-6" further into public space to accommodate additional seating but still maintain required clear sidewalk widths.

As proposed the canopy is made of metal and is supported by 8 metal poles. The proposed canopy follows the footprint of the existing café and does not reduce the 12'-6" clear pedestrian walkway. In addition, the proposal includes the replacement of the existing concrete pavers with the same size and style of pavers within the 475 square feet café area covered by the new canopy. The total sidewalk width from the property line to the curb is 37'-10". The width of the pavers from the property line to the edge of the new canopy is approximately 20'.

The District's Comprehensive Plan encourages incorporating sidewalk cafes into public space in a way that compliments the streetscape and maximizes the animation they bring to public space. Enclosures, such as fixed roofs and sides, should be limited. A retractable awning or umbrellas should be considered as an option to solid, fixed canopy that is proposed in this application.

### **SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION**

The sidewalk café is a welcome addition to the neighborhood. However, some minor adjustments are needed. There needs to be a minimum of a 6' wide path for the front egress point, the number of seats may need to be reduced, and the café area could be increased. In addition, the proposed canopy needs to be retractable.

**The Office of Planning recommends that this application be approved with the condition that the number of seats approved complies with area requirements, that there is at least 6' clear width for the front entrance/egress point, and that all options for a retractable canopy or umbrellas have been fully explored as an alternative to the fixed canopy.**