

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF PLANNING



PUBLIC SPACE APPLICATION REVIEW

DATE: May 25, 2010

ADDRESS: 2424 18th Street NW

APPLICATION: Enclosed Sidewalk café in an area of 100 square feet with 10 tables and 20 chairs.

Site Information

Zone: C-2-B

Historic District: Washington Heights Historic District

CFA: No

Neighborhood Character: Active commercial area with very high levels of pedestrian activity

Background:

The Office of Planning received the public space application for review on May 24, 2010.

Relevant Policies of Planning Initiatives

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 Adams Morgan area is a popular commercial and entertainment destination with very high levels of pedestrian activity. The existing sidewalk is 14' wide. This is a narrow sidewalk that does not have enough width to accommodate outdoor seating and an adequate sidewalk width that will accommodate the amount of pedestrian traffic seen during the week and on weekends.

District regulations require a 10' clear pedestrian path adjacent to a sidewalk cafe. As proposed, the seating arrangement includes a 10' clear sidewalk, but this does not take into account the 4 to 6' furniture zone at the curb. Along busy commercial corridors, it is important to maintain the required 10' clear pedestrian path to accommodate significant levels of pedestrian traffic.

Inadequate sidewalk width reduces the viability of commercial businesses in this area, and mitigates the effectiveness of walking as a viable transportation alternative.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

The Office of Planning fully supports sidewalk cafes as a way to enliven public space, but in this case the width of the sidewalk is needed in its entirety to accommodate pedestrian traffic. A sidewalk café can be revisited after future streetscape improvements have been made, which will widen the existing sidewalk.

The Office of Planning recommends that this sidewalk café application be denied.