

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

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Memorandum

TO: Jamison L. Weinbaum, Director
DC Office of Zoning

FROM: Karina Ricks
District Department of Transportation

DATE: March 1, 2011

SUBJECT: Z.C. Case # 06-11A/12A (Application of GW University)

In addition to the comments the District of Columbia, Department of Transportation (DDOT) has provided on January 27, 2011, DDOT wishes to provide the additional following information.

BACKGROUND

At the conclusion of the February 3, 2011 public hearing, the DC Zoning Commission requested George Washington University (the "Applicant") review two alternatives to the proposed vehicle access scheme: (1) accessing the proposed parking garage through a curb cut on G Street, and (2) converting the alley to one-way traffic eastbound.

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A CURB CUT DRIVEWAY LOCATED ON G STREET

DDOT profoundly objects to this option. A mid-block curb cut contradicts DDOT policy for installing new curb cut driveways. The curb cut policy states, "*DDOT may grant a public space permit for a curb cut when the applicant for the permit submits information that sufficiently demonstrates that there is no alternative way to access on-site parking or a loading dock through existing or proposed paved alleys, or there is a special need as detailed in 18 DCMR 2710.1 (a)-(d).*" In this instance, the subject property has sufficient alley access with the Applicant agreeing to expand the existing 16' alley by an additional four feet. The installation of a driveway on G Street means a vehicle driver will need to turn from 20th Street across a busy and hectic intersection located at 20th and G Streets, N.W. The vehicle will need to wait for pedestrians to clear the crosswalk and intersection to complete the turn from 20th Street to one-way G Street. Once the vehicle turn has been completed, the vehicle driver will need to cautiously begin their turn into the G Street parking garage driveway. The turning action means the driver will need to ensure the driveway is free of all oncoming pedestrians and cyclists on the sidewalk. A new curb cut on G Street introduces yet another conflict point for pedestrians in an urban context. All in all, the G Street curb cut would result in twice as many potential pedestrian-vehicular conflicts at surrounding intersections. Furthermore, the G Street curb cut is unsafe because vehicle drivers will dart out of the parking garage exit on to G Street with little restraint or caution. Another DDOT policy is to consider transportation share and how it is balanced between modes (pedestrian, bicycle, mass transit and personal passenger vehicle). A mid-block curb cut on G Street does not foster a fair balance of the transportation modes.

ONE-WAY EASTBOUND or WESTBOUND OPERATION

DDOT does not support changing the existing two way alley operation for vehicles, to a one-way eastbound or westbound operation. One-way streets and alleys tend to contribute to increased driving speeds and all around unsafe conditions for all transportation users (e.g. bicyclists, pedestrians, etc.) in the alley. Opposite traveling vehicles cause drivers to pay more attention to oncoming traffic and the surrounding environment, including the right of way. With the parking garage egress location, a driver could travel in the proposed one-way alley to gain enough momentum to cause a significant amount of injury to any number of people and massive property damage. However, a two way operation forces a driver to cautiously operate their vehicle through the relatively narrow alley to 20th Street or 21st Street.

TRAFFIC CONTROL IN THE ALLEY

DDOT is content to see GW offer a number of options to keep drivers cautioned while driving through the alley and exiting on to 20th or 21st Street. The pavement markings and traffic signs will be needed at each end of the alley where it intersects with 20th and 21st Streets. The markings and signs will significantly assist with maintaining the pedestrian right of way where the end of the alley is located. A special alley paving will include both darker concrete immediately adjacent to the sidewalk contrasting with the rest of the alley color. GW has offered to install a stamped concrete with a texture similar to that of cobble stone. A number of safety measures will be installed in the alley that will serve as a visual, audible, and tactile cue to drivers that pedestrians are ahead and they should slow down. All of the traffic control devices, that GW will install, and their appropriate locations will need final approval from DDOT staff members. DDOT will have the flexibility to modify or add to these safety measures during the public space application process if DDOT finds changes are warranted.

DDOT JANUARY 21, 2011 SITE VISIT

A DDOT staff member visited with a West End Citizens Association resident member on Friday, January 21, 2011. During this meeting that occurred in the alley located adjacent to Square 103 in Foggy Bottom, the resident inquired about the safety of the alley operations. The staff member was on site for a different project purpose unassociated with the Square 103 development proposal. In dialogue with the resident, the staff member made certain casual observations that lacked any knowledge of the project or formal assessment in any way and should not be recorded as official DDOT review.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

DDOT continues to support the Applicant's proposal for a second stage PUD on the Foggy Bottom Campus. The options for a one-way eastbound alley or a mid-block curb cut to serve the new underground parking garage will introduce a host of new concerns and safety problems that will eventually need remedies. The two way alley operation to access the underground parking garage is the best and most practical approach to serve all of the transportation users.

KR:jj