

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Sara Bardin  
Director, Office of Zoning

**FROM:** Samuel Zimbabwe *sz*  
Associate Director, PPSA  
District Department of Transportation

**DATE:** September 13, 2012

**SUBJECT:** BZA Case 18397. Florida Avenue Residential LLC, 810 Florida Avenue, NE

RECEIVED  
D.C. OFFICE OF ZONING  
2013 SEP 17 PM 2:32

**Project Summary**

(Area Variance) Pursuant to 11 DCMR §§ 3103.2 and 3104.1, for variances from the parking (subsection 2101.1) loading (subsection 220.1) and lot occupancy (subsection 772.1) requirements and special exceptions from the roof structure (subsection 770.6) and streetwall (subsection 1903.3) requirements to allow the development of a six-story mixed-use residential building with ground floor retail/service uses in the ARTS/C-2-B District at premises along Florida Avenue, N.W., 8th Street, N.W., and 9th Street, N.W. (Square 393, Lots 41, 44, 45, 46, and 826).

The Applicant is proposing a mixed use residential and retail building on the north end of the block bound by 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Florida Avenue, and 8<sup>th</sup> Street NE consisting of 163 apartment units and 22,000 square feet of retail. To serve the parking demand, the Applicant is proposing 69 parking spaces.

**Summary of DDOT Review**

The purpose of DDOT's review is to assess the impact of the proposed project on the District's transportation network and, as necessary, propose appropriate mitigations. After a thorough review of the analysis submitted by the Applicant, DDOT concludes:

- The requested loading variance should be granted
- The requested parking variance should be granted
- A traffic signal should be installed at Florida Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW
- A vehicle trip generation monitoring program should be required.

## **Transportation Analysis**

DDOT is committed to achieving an exceptional quality of life in the nation's capital by encouraging sustainable travel practices, constructing safer streets and providing outstanding access to goods and services. As one means to achieve this vision, DDOT works through the zoning process to ensure alternative modes are adequate to accommodate new travel demand while discouraging single occupancy vehicle trips.

### **Parking**

The overall parking demand created by the development is primarily a function of land use, development square footage, and price/supply of parking spaces. However in urban areas, other factors contribute to the demand for parking such as the availability of nearby high-quality public transit. With the Site in proximity to such transit, DDOT expects a low demand for on-site parking.

The Applicant is proposing 69 on-site parking spaces. While the parking is not restricted to specific uses, the proposed supply is approximately 0.3 spaces per residential unit and one space per 1000 square feet of retail space. These parking ratios are generally consistent with the area's high transit and alternative travel environment.

### **Mode Split**

Each trip a person makes is made by a certain means of travel such as vehicle, bicycle, walking, etc. The means of travel is referred to as a 'mode' of transportation. A variety of elements impact the mode of travel including density of development, diversity of land use, design of the public realm, availability and cost of parking, among many others. The Applicant estimates a non-auto, residential mode split of 65%, of which 40% are transit and 25% are walking/biking. For the *retail* portion of the proposed development, the Applicant estimates that 35% of the trips will be via transit and 30% will be walking/biking.

Given that the project site is in the high transit environment of the U Street corridor and the low level of on-site parking, DDOT believes that these mode split assumptions are achievable. In fact, these mode splits are likely conservative and assume more vehicular trips than are likely to materialize given the high transit environment and low level of site parking.

### **Vehicle Trip Generation**

The Applicant provided trip generation estimates, utilizing the Institute of Traffic Engineers (ITE) Trip Generation Manual as a starting point and included qualifiers for transit reduction, walk/bike trips, and internal capture. DDOT generally agrees with this methodology provided that the Applicant can show justification and documentation for the applied reduction factors.

The Applicant has appropriately utilized relevant guiding document to demonstrate the vehicle trip reduction factors utilized are appropriate. Specifically, the Applicant cited the *WMATA Development-Related Ridership Study* and the results of the *2009 American Community Survey* for their reduction factors. In addition to these data sources, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments is collecting household travel data in the vicinity. Preliminary results released in recent months support the assumptions made by the Applicant.

### Study Area and Data Collection

The Applicant, in conjunction with DDOT, identified nine intersections where detailed counts would be conducted and a level of service analysis would be performed. These intersections include two site driveways (one for the east building and one for the west building) along with seven other intersections immediately adjacent to the site along Florida Avenue and T Street from 9<sup>th</sup> Street to their intersection at Florida Avenue. DDOT acknowledges that not all affected intersections are included in the study area and there will be intersections outside of the study area which realize new trips. However, DDOT expects minimal to no increase in delay *outside* the study area as a result of the proposed project.

### Trip Distribution and Assignment

The Applicant assumed that trips related to the project would travel to and from different parts of the region in a manner specific to the time of day. Therefore, the Applicant created unique trip distribution rates for both the AM and PM peak periods. DDOT believes that these assumptions are appropriate.

### Background Developments and Regional Growth

As part of the analysis of future conditions, DDOT requires applicants to account for future growth in traffic on the network or what is referred to as background growth. The Applicant utilized an annual growth factor of 1.6% increase in vehicle volume and assumed construction of land development projects in the immediate vicinity. DDOT is in general agreement with the methodology.

### Site Access

The Applicant is proposing vehicle access from a new alley connected to 9<sup>th</sup> Street. As part of the project, the Applicant is moving through the alley closure process to close the northern portion of the alley on the site connecting to Florida Avenue and establish an alley connecting to 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The alley will serve as access to an underground parking garage that serves the site as well as the loading facilities. Further, the Applicant is proposing to widen the alley from 10' to 20' along sections adjacent to the property by providing easements and setbacks. This change should provide significant utility to the site as well as the adjacent businesses by allowing a larger rear loading area for the adjacent businesses.

### Roadway Capacity and Operations

DDOT aims to provide a safe and efficient roadway network that provides for the timely movement of people, goods and services. As part of the evaluation of the impacts of the site on the transportation network, DDOT requests analysis of traffic conditions for the agreed upon study intersections for the current year and after the facility opens both with and without the site development. The analysis incorporates assumptions related to parking, mode split, trip generation, trip distribution and assignment, as well as site access.

The Applicant performed the level of service evaluation for the combined conditions of both the east building, BZA case 18375, and the west building being reviewed in this submission. Analysis shows that most intersections and approaches currently operate at an LOS of E or better. Only westbound Florida Ave at 7th Street operates at an LOS F. In the no-build 2015 scenario, this approach gets demonstrably worse, with average vehicle delay increasing from 95 seconds to 143 seconds. This approach further

degrades with the Applicant's development, with the average delay increasing to 168 seconds. With this increase, the Applicant's development pushes the overall intersection into an LOS F scenario.

The Applicant's study also concluded that the northbound approach of 8th Street at Florida improves from an LOS F scenario with the inclusion of the background development and the proposed Site development. However, DDOT believes this to be a coding quirk in the software utilized to determine LOS. It is expected that intersection, and the approach in question, will further degrade in the background scenario and in the 2015 build-out scenario.

In addition, the Applicant reviewed 95% queue length changes from the background no-build scenario to the build-out scenario. This review showed only very minimal changes in queue lengths due to the Applicant's development.

To alleviate the delay and LOS degradation, the Applicant has suggested signal re-timing at Georgia and Florida Ave. DDOT is in agreement that signal timing will likely be necessary, and will make adjustments to the coordinated network as needed.

### Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The District of Columbia is committed to enhancing the walk-ability and bike-ability of the city by ensuring consistent investment in pedestrian and bike infrastructure on the part of both the public and private sectors. DDOT expects new developments to serve the needs of all trips they generate, including pedestrian and bicycle trips.

As part of this project, the Applicant is providing 60 bicycle spaces in the parking garage. This equates to roughly one space per three residential units in addition to 5% of retail parking. In addition, it will be necessary for the Applicant to install bicycle facilities in the public space to serve guests and retail patrons. Details on these facilities will be addressed with the Applicant in the public space permitting process. In addition, pedestrian facilities adjacent to the site, including striping of study intersections, will be addressed in the public space permitting phase as well.

### Transit Service

The District and Washington Metropolitan Transportation Authority (WMATA) have partnered to provide extensive public transit service in the District of Columbia. DDOT's vision is to leverage this investment to increase the share of non-automotive travel modes so that economic development opportunities increase with minimal infrastructure investment.

As noted by the Applicant, the Site is located near the U Street Metro Station and is extremely well served by a variety of high frequency bus lines. Transit accessibility and level of service to the site is excellent and is expected to contribute to a very high non-vehicle mode share for the project.

### Loading and Curb Management

DDOT's practice is to accommodate vehicle loading in a reasonable and safe manner while at the same time preserving safety across non-vehicle modes. For new developments, DDOT requires that loading take place in private space and that no back-up maneuvers occur in the public realm. The Applicant is proposing two fully-enclosed loading docks off of the new alley connecting to 9<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate

deliveries and trash pick-up. One of the berths will serve 30' trucks while the other berth will serve 20' trucks neither of which will require back-up maneuvers in public space.

DDOT does not have concern with granting relief for required loading facilities provided that the Applicant be required to aggressively manage the loading facilities such that on street loading will not be needed except for the occasional 55' truck used for long distance residential moves. DDOT does not believe it is appropriate to design loading facilities and driveways in public space to accommodate the rare 55' truck. However, if 55' trucks are to be regularly utilized, more than a couple of times per week, the variance should not be granted. Generally, the public space problems related to the provision of 55' loading facilities are not worth the utility of having the rare 55' truck utilize an off-street loading facility.

### Streetscape

In line with District policy and practice, any substantial new building development or renovation is expected to rehabilitate streetscape infrastructure between the curb and the property lines. This includes curb & gutter, street trees and landscaping, street lights, sidewalks, and other appropriate features within the public rights of way bordering the site.

The Applicant must work closely with DDOT and OP to ensure that the design of the public realm meets current standards and will substantially upgrade the appearance and functionality of the streetscape for public users needing to access the property or circulate around it. The DDOT *Public Realm Design Manual* will serve as the main public realm references for the Applicant. DDOT staff will be available to provide additional guidance during the public space permitting process. Specifically, DDOT suggests that the Applicant participate in a preliminary design review meeting (PDRM) to address design related issues prior to the submission of public space permit applications.

### Safety

Pedestrian safety at the unsignalized intersection of Florida Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> St NW is a safety concern for DDOT. Recently, a pedestrian fatality occurred at this location. To address potential safety concerns with additional pedestrian crossings of Florida Avenue at 8<sup>th</sup> Street, the Applicant has proposed a traffic signal at the intersection. DDOT agrees that this is an appropriate mitigation and believes that signal should be in place prior to the occupancy of the building.

### Transportation Demand Management

As part of all major development review cases, DDOT requires the Applicant to produce a comprehensive transportation demand management (TDM) plan. TDM is a set of strategies, programs, services, and physical elements that influence travel behavior by mode, frequency, time, route, or trip length in order to help achieve highly efficient and sustainable use of transportation facilities. In the District, this typically means implementing infrastructure or programs to maximize the use of mass transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and reduce single occupancy vehicle trips during peak periods.

The Applicant has proposed a basic suite of TDM strategies to encourage not-automotive travel. These measures include unbundling parking, identifying a TDM leader, an on-site business center, an informational kiosk, along with a transportation mobility fair. DDOT believes this suite of TDM measures along with the low levels of vehicle parking and high levels of transit facilities will allow the site to meet site vehicle trip generation projections.

### **Performance Monitoring**

The Applicant has proposed a monitoring plan to evaluate site trip generation. As proposed, the evaluation would occur two years after the site is occupied and would determine if site vehicle trip generation is at or lower than predicted. If site vehicle trips are more than projected, the Applicant has committed to further TDM measures. DDOT believes this is appropriate but in the unexpected case that vehicle trip generation exceeds projections, the Applicant should also be required to repeat the exercise of monitoring and updating TDM measures annually until the site meets its projections:

### **Conclusion**

In summary, DDOT concludes the project will generate minimal impact to area transportation facilities from additional vehicular traffic or from granting the requested variances. Further, the Applicant should be required to construct a traffic signal at Florida Avenue and 8<sup>th</sup> Street NW as they have committed to do and monitor trip generation as described.

SZ|jh