

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia, Board of Zoning Adjustment

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

DATE: February 26, 2013

SUBJECT: BZA Case #18508, 2201 Georgia Ave, NW

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APPLICATION

Howard University (the Applicant), pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3103.2, is seeking a variance from the off-street parking requirements under subsection 2101.1, to allow the construction of an interdisciplinary research building in the C-M-3 District at premises 2201 Georgia Avenue, N W (Square 3065, Lot 833). The proposed building is 80,670 gross square feet and requires 41 vehicle parking spaces, per Zoning. The variance requests relief from all 41 vehicle spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

The purpose of DDOT's review is to assess the potential safety and capacity impacts of a project on the District's transportation network.

This project incorporates a variety of positive features. For example, the Applicant is proposing to set back their building property structure from the property line along both Georgia Avenue and on W Street, in order to create a wider pedestrian clear zone to accommodate the existing pedestrian traffic as well as expected pedestrian traffic generated by the Site. While DDOT agrees with this critical site design element, the latest sidewalk plans show a minor pinch point in the sidewalk network along Georgia Avenue, where the minimum clear zone width is not met. The Applicant and DDOT have been coordinating on the design of the Georgia Avenue sidewalk design and will continue to do so. Given that this site will be improved with a new academic/research building in an established urban campus setting, DDOT believes there will be a significant demand for bike parking. The Applicant is proposing multiple public space bike racks along W Street and Georgia Ave to accommodate short term bike parking needs, typical of an academic building on a college campus.

After an extensive multi-administration review, DDOT has no objection to the parking variance request.

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

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BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

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services. As one means to achieve this vision, DDOT works through the zoning process to ensure that impacts from new developments are manageable within, and take advantage of, the District's multimodal transportation network.

Methodology

As part of the transportation impact assessment, DDOT requests that applicants evaluate the impacts to the pedestrian, transit, and roadway system resulting from the development. Accordingly, an applicant is expected to show the existing conditions for each transportation mode affected, the proposed impact on the respective network and any proposed mitigations, along with the effects of the mitigations on *other* travel modes. A Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) should be performed according to DDOT direction. The evaluation should consider guidance from relevant documents including guidance on the public realm, the pedestrian system, the bicycle system, as well as neighborhood based studies. The Applicant and DDOT coordinated on an agreed-upon scope for the CTR. An evaluation of the basic elements and assumptions of the Applicant's CTR follows.

Site Access

The following figure shows proposed site access to the Howard University Interdisciplinary Building for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.

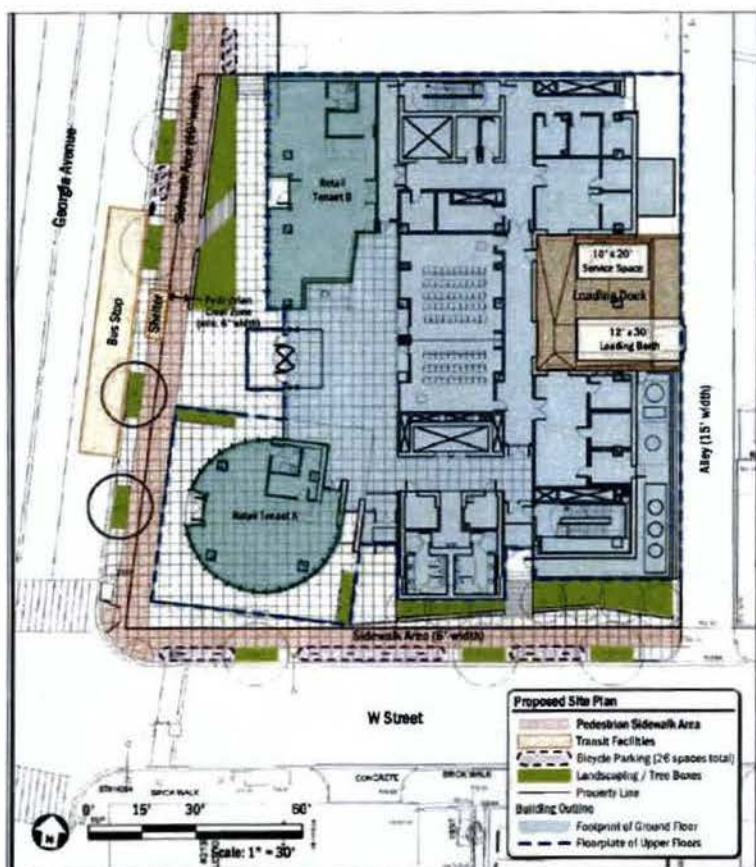


Figure 1: Proposed Site Layout and Access.

As shown in Figure 1, no vehicle access is proposed because the site will have no on-site parking. The site is served by a 15' north-south public alley that will be utilized for loading and deliveries. Bike access is provided by 26 proposed bike parking spaces in the public space and on private property fronting Georgia

Avenue and W Street Pedestrian access is from one building entrance on W Street and one entrance on Georgia Avenue Two separated retail establishments will have pedestrian access from the Georgia Avenue sidewalk

The Applicant is proposing to eliminate the three curb cuts that provide access to the existing parking lot and rebuild these entrances to DDOT sidewalk standards

Roadway Capacity and Operations

The Applicant did not conduct a capacity analysis for the subject building and its effect on the disaggregation of vehicles from the existing parking lot throughout the campus The proposed building is part of the Howard University Campus master plan that was approved by the Zoning Commission in 2011 (ZC 11-15) The academic/research building was identified in Phase 1 of the Master Plan and the transportation impact of diverted vehicles trips away from the existing parking was previously evaluated by DDOT

Pedestrian and Bike 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 generally expects new developments to serve the needs of all trips they generate, including pedestrian and bicycle trips As noted previously, pedestrian and bike access to will be from Georgia Avenue and W Street sidewalks

Pedestrian and Bike Trip Generation

According to the Applicant, the proposed academic building will contain lab and office space to accommodate existing research departments The Applicant estimated that the site will generate 90 AM peak hour non-vehicle trips to the site (80 in, 10 out) and 84 PM peak hour non-vehicle trips (15 in, 69 out) Of these trips, 95% are expected to be walking trips with the remaining 5% to be made by bike Accordingly, the project will generate additional pedestrian and bike traffic to a streetscape that does not currently have optimal pedestrian conditions. However, the Applicant is providing additional sidewalk width to increase the pedestrian clear zone space to accommodate both the existing pedestrian exposure and future demand generated by the site¹. DDOT acknowledges the Applicant's efforts in accommodating the existing and future pedestrian traffic, through the building setbacks However, the most recent site plan, shown in Figure 1, still shows a pinch point behind the Georgia Avenue bus shelter where the pedestrian clear zone width narrows from ten feet down to six feet DDOT has requested that the Applicant modify its proposed retaining wall design to increase the pedestrian clear zone at this pinch point

With regard to short term bike parking, the Applicant is proposing 13 bike racks (26 spaces) to serve the needs of the academic and retail portion of the project Ten of these racks are proposed in public space along Georgia Avenue and along W Street, with the remainder on private space in front of the retail component of the project DDOT believes that this is in appropriate amount in light of the variance for vehicle parking, as well as the expected bike trip generation to the site

¹ The pedestrian clear zone refers to the amount of sidewalk dedicated to pedestrians – typically the space in between a building façade and tree boxes

Passenger Vehicle 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 high quality transit, frequency of transit service, and proximity to transit.

The Applicant is proposing no parking on the site and is seeking relief from all 41 spaces required per zoning. As noted by the Applicant, the proposed academic building is not expected to generate vehicle trips that are not already served from other parking locations. Because the proposed project is an academic building on an established urban campus, DDOT agrees that it will not generate any measurable demand for new vehicle traffic. Similarly, the minimal ground floor retail component is expected to generate negligible demand for vehicle traffic. Accordingly, DDOT has no objection to the parking variance request, provided the proposed public and private bike parking is provided.

Loading and Curbside Management

The Applicant is proposing to load from the north-south Public Alley that connects W Street and Bryant Street, NW. A 30' loading berth and 20'x10' vehicle service space is being in the loading bay in compliance with Zoning regulations. The expected loading demand is 2-85 cargo vans per day and 0-90 delivery trucks per day. The Applicant conducted turn movement diagrams show that ingress and egress from the Alley onto Bryant and W Streets is feasible. Finally, the Applicant has all back-up maneuvers taking place on-site or in the public alley in accordance to DDOT standards.

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. As part of this process, 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 circulating around it. The DDOT Public Realm Design Manual will serve as the main public realm reference for the Applicant.

The Applicant is eliminating all existing curb cuts and is not proposing any new driveways. This will enhance pedestrian safety along Georgia and W Streets by reducing conflict points with vehicles in the public space. In addition, the Applicant is setting back structures from the property line to create a wider pedestrian clear zone on Georgia Avenue. Per DDOT Standards, the Applicant is providing 10' clear zone between the tree box and any on-site structures, as shown in Figure 1. However, as mentioned previously, a "pinch point" behind the Georgia Avenue bus shelter. The Applicant and DDOT held a Preliminary Design Review Meeting in January 2013 to discuss streetscape issues, including the pedestrian clear zone concerns. DDOT requests that the Applicant shift the proposed wall behind the Georgia Ave bus shelter to retain a 10 foot minimum clear zone space throughout.

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