

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

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MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia, Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Samuel Zimbabwe *[Signature]*
Associate Director, PPSA
District Department of Transportation

DATE: September 20, 2013

SUBJECT: DDOT Review of BZA Case #18619, Square 737 LLC, 800 New Jersey Avenue, SE

APPLICATION

The Applicant, Square 737 LLC, 800 New Jersey Avenue, SE requests a variance from the requirement that parking spaces located within an above-grade structure must be set-back at least 20' from all lot lines that abut public streets. The proposed project is a mixed-use, 11 story building with a full service 35,000 square foot grocery store on the ground floor, 326 residential units, 188 above-grade parking spaces, and 121 below-grade parking spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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 memorandum relates only to the variance request for the set-back of an above-grade parking garage. Per current zoning regulations, the proposed parking garage is required to have a 20' set-back from all lot lines that abut public streets. Based on a multi-administration review, DDOT has no objection to the requested variance. The above-grade parking garage is entirely on-site, and the variance requested does not impact safety, capacity of the transportation network, or public space.

DDOT has several concerns with the Applicant's intended use of public space to support the proposed project that will be addressed during the public space permitting process but could affect the design of the project as currently proposed:

- Two curb cuts, one for loading and one for a parking garage, are currently proposed on H Street; DDOT would prefer access through the loading court that runs parallel to H Street.
- The Applicant has proposed on-site loading that will require backing movements in public space. Backing movements are not consistent with DDOT's driveway standards per the

District's *Design and Engineering Manual*¹ (DEM). Due to the location of this driveway and the potential for multi-modal conflicts, DDOT will work with the Applicant during the public space permitting process to evaluate their loading and access plan.

- The Applicant has proposed three-lanes of access for passenger vehicles to the parking garage on H Street, creating a 30' wide curb cut and driveway. The size of this curb cut is not consistent with DDOT's driveway standards per the DEM.

DDOT's lack of objection to the zoning variance should not be viewed as approval of public space elements. The Applicant will need to work through DDOT's public space permitting process to develop a satisfactory solution to public space concerns.

PUBLIC SPACE

DDOT has management and oversight responsibility for the use and occupancy of the public space. The goal of DDOT is to achieve and maintain safe and beautiful streets. Public space is defined as all the publicly owned property between property lines and includes, but is not limited to, the roadway, tree spaces, sidewalks, and alleys. During the public space permitting process, DDOT staff, as well as staff from other District agencies and members of the local Advisory Neighborhood Commission, review applications for the use and occupancy of the public right-of-way. Reviewers often work with applicants to ensure compliance with DDOT design and engineering standards or find mutually agreeable solutions when compliance cannot be met. Depending upon the permit sought, the Public Space Committee makes the final determination of public space permit applications. Currently, DDOT is evaluating public space elements for this project through the public space permitting process and expects to resolve any outstanding concerns through this process.

While DDOT is not opposed to the variance requested, DDOT is concerned about the proposed curb cuts on H Street. The Applicant proposed two curb cuts on H Street to serve two loading bays for the ground floor grocery store and three-lanes of egress/ingress to the above-grade parking garage. DDOT's preferred treatment of vehicular access is off of an alley, when one is available, in order to reduce safety hazards and create a continuous sidewalk that enhances the pedestrian experience. The two curb cuts would break up the natural continuous pedestrian activity along H Street.

DDOT's goal is to ensure that the site's loading is done in a safe manner. The proposed loading bays will require delivery trucks to back into the site across a sidewalk, unload, and then pull out to exit the site. This type of access is inconsistent with DDOT requirements for head-in and head-out loading operations as it introduces an unnecessary pedestrian safety concerns, as well as unsafe conditions for bicyclists and motorists. Although H Street will have a low volume of vehicles, backing movements will have particularly deleterious impacts on the safety of pedestrians.

The proposed site plans show a 30' wide vehicle access configured as one-lane in and two-lanes out of the grocery store parking garage. As previously stated, DDOT's preferred access to parking

¹ The DEM requires driveways to be no greater than 24' wide.

garages is off of an alley. If access is on a street, then the maximum width of a curb cut is 24' per the DEM. The Applicant's proposed 30' curb cut is not consistent with DDOT standards. A 24' curb cut will accommodate two 12' lanes, which will sufficiently serve the grocery store's customers' needs. Considering the location of the grocery store on a low traffic volume street, queuing to exit the site is not anticipated. Therefore, there is not a reasonable need for two-lanes to exit the parking garage. DDOT suggests that the Applicant consider alternative design options.

Additionally, DDOT expects to see vaults appropriately addressed, either in the alley or elsewhere on private space, as well as the size and location of areaways and cafe seating, during the public space permitting process.

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