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

DATE: October 21, 2014

SUBJECT: **BZA Case No. 18839** – 4700-4704 Wisconsin Avenue NW

APPLICATION

47th Avenue LLC (the "Applicant") requests a parking variance pursuant to the off-street parking space requirements as well as variance from the size of provided parking spaces to allow the construction of a new four-story apartment building with 16 residential units and retail space in the C-2-A District at premises 4700-4704 Wisconsin Avenue NW (Square 1733, Lots 800, 833, and 834) at the corner of Wisconsin Avenue and Chesapeake Street (the "Site").

RECOMMENDATION

The purpose of DDOT's review is to assess the impact of the proposed action on the District's transportation network and, as necessary, propose appropriate mitigations. After review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- A robust network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure exists in close proximity to the proposed development;
- On-street parking utilization was not determined, however the proposed development is expected to generate minimal new vehicle trips and nearby parking facilities exist;
- Residents are likely to heavily utilize non-automobile modes of travel;
- The Applicant proposes a basic Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan intended to further promote the use of non-auto travel options;
- The Applicant does not adequately design for nor address loading needs, resulting in unsafe back-in loading maneuvers.

As such, DDOT has reviewed the Applicant's request and determined that based on the proposal and information provided, this proposed project will likely have adverse impacts on the travel conditions of the District's transportation network caused by back-in movements on Chesapeake Street.

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.18839
EXHIBIT NO.29

In regards to this action, the parking as provided infringes on the ability to provide safe loading access, and DDOT cannot support the approval of the requested variance as currently proposed. However, DDOT would not object to any level of parking variance sought contingent upon the proposal providing adequate accommodation for the requisite loading elements.

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 that impacts from new developments are manageable within, and take advantage of, the District's multimodal transportation network.

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. Here, however, the Applicant did not coordinate on an agreed-upon scope for the CTR, nor follow standard scoping procedure for their transportation review. The transportation technical memorandum was submitted on October 14, which is not consistent with the typical timeline for this review. An outline of this project's impacts follows below.

Pedestrian, Bicycle, and Transit Facilities

Automobile ownership is expected to be minimal, while transit, walking, and bicycling are expected to be the predominant modes of transportation for this development. The development is located less than ¼ mile to the Tenleytown Metro station, with several major bus routes operating adjacent to the Site. Adequate pedestrian and bicycle facilities are available via the surrounding transportation network. The Applicant is proposing provision of six long-term bicycle parking spaces within a bicycle storage room, which provides more than the necessary one bicycle parking space per three residential units and corollary retail requirements. These measures are adequate, however short-term bicycle parking will also be necessary. Full site accommodations for bicycles as well as pedestrians will be coordinated, and a more in depth analysis may be required, during public space permitting process. The Applicant will be expected to address any non-standard treatments in the vicinity at that time.

Vehicle Parking

The proposed building requires ten parking spaces, eight for the 16 residential units and two for the 3,724 sf of retail proposed. The development as designed provides eight spaces. The Applicant did not provide existing parking utilization information. However, DDOT has no objection to the reduced parking provision in this area due to the close proximity to transit, provided bicycle storage, and the overall relatively minor increase in vehicular, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle trips. DDOT would support any level of parking variance down to no provision of parking at this location. Likewise, the compact nature of these spaces is acceptable if, as part of the Applicant's TDM measures, regulation of the use of these spots to appropriate vehicles is maintained. Further, the Applicant has proposed other TDM measures including provision of a transportation management coordinator who will ensure compliance.

Loading

DDOT's practice is to accommodate vehicle loading in a safe and efficient manner, while at the same time preserving safety across non-vehicle mode areas and limiting any hindrance to traffic operations. For new developments, DDOT requires that loading take place in private space and that no back-up maneuvers occur in the public realm. This often results in loading being accessed through the alley network.

However, the variance being sought negatively impacts the ability of the Applicant to meet other elements needed for a project. Here, access to the building for loading and unloading, deliveries, and trash pickup is an important consideration due to its restaurant use, and will be an important part of the public space permitting process. Review will include a loading management plan.

Currently, the building is served by an alley with public easement off Chesapeake Street, but for which the public portion dead ends. The easements provide an eight-foot space for public use, although the alley currently functionally operates more widely. See Figure 1 for a view of the existing alley configuration.

Figure 1. Existing Alley View (source: Google Street View)

While through access in this alley in existing conditions could allow appropriate loading and unloading conditions, its potential future closure (due to its private nature past the easement portion) means that

all access would come in and out of the Chesapeake alley curb cut. This would necessitate back-in loading maneuvers, which are not suitable for the reasons noted above. The building could be designed to accommodate these loading maneuvers, but has not been. Note the proposed alley layout in Figure 2, which does not show a loading zone or accommodation.

DDOT expects the Applicant to comply with DDOT's standards for loading, the design of which will be addressed as part of the permitting process for this property. Loading can be accomplished in a safe manner with a better design and planning. Thus, DDOT would prefer an updated design that accommodates an appropriate loading area, which might further reduce parking spaces.

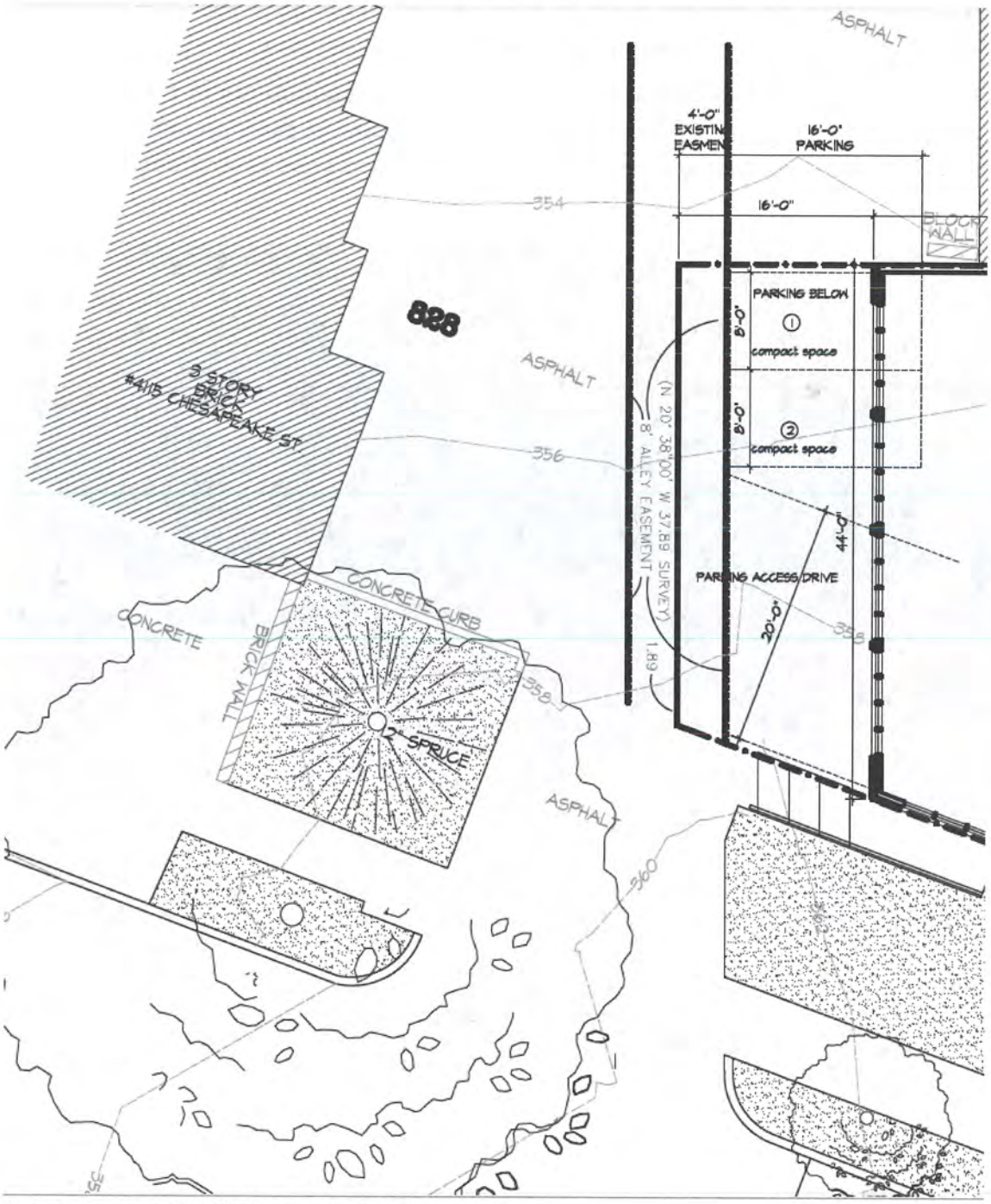

Figure 2. Proposed Alley Plan (source: Applicant documents)

Transportation Demand Management (TDM)

The Applicant proposes some TDM elements DDOT generally supports, including:

- Dispersing information on car sharing services and non-auto transportation options; and
- Provision of a Transportation Management Coordinator (TMC).

These TDM plans would be managed by the TMC. However, the TDM measures are too weak and are missing items typically seen for a project requesting a parking variance. Further, it is also noted the TMC will be responsible for properly coordinating loading activities, and DDOT observes this, without a full loading management plan, will not be sufficient to allow back-in maneuvers.

While DDOT is generally supportive of the Applicant's proposed measures, DDOT requests the following TDM commitments to add specificity, detail, or quantifiable measures:

- Specific planned quantity of short-term bicycle parking spaces provided for public access, greater than 10 spaces
- Offer Capital Bikeshare annual memberships to all new tenants within the first three years of building operation
- Offer car sharing annual memberships to all new tenants within the first three years of building operation
- Unbundling of parking costs and the cost of rental for any unit

Streetscape and Public Realm

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 and gutters, 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 the Office of Planning 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. In conjunction with the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations, DDOT's *Design and Engineering Manual* will serve as the main public realm references for the Applicant. As such, all public space shall be designed and constructed to DDOT standards.

DDOT's lack of objection or discussion of other public space elements as part of the zoning variance should not be viewed as an approval of public space elements. Final design of the public space will be determined during DDOT's public space permitting process.

SZ:rw