

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**



MEMORANDUM

TO: Lloyd Jordan
Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Samuel Zimbabwe *SZ*
Associate Director

DATE: November 25, 2014

SUBJECT: BZA Case Nos. 18852 & 18853 - 90 & 91 Blagden Alley NW

APPLICATION

SB-Urban LLC (the "Applicant"), pursuant to 11 DCMR §§ 3104.1 and 3103.2, seeks relief for two related projects: 1) 90 Blagden Alley NW, variances from the court (section 776.3), lot occupancy (section 2604.2) and special exceptions from parking spaces for historic resources (section 2120.6) and roof structure provisions (section 411.11), to allow a new apartment community in the C-2-A District at premises 90 Blagden Alley, N.W. (Square 368, Lot 165), and 2) 91 Blagden Alley NW, variances from the side yard (section 775.5) and parking section 2101.1) and a special exceptions from roof structure provisions (section 411.11), to allow a new apartment community in the C-2-A District at premises 91 Blagden Alley, N.W. (Square 368, Lot 16). In total, the projects are proposed to include 126 furnished studio apartments, 1,100 square feet of ground floor retail, and zero vehicle parking spaces in lieu of the required 63 spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

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 an extensive, multi-administration 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;
- The sites are not currently in the District's Residential Permit Parking (RPP) system nor are the locations consistent with the program's eligibility criteria;
- The Applicant proposes to prohibit residents from applying for RPP permits;
- On-street parking in the vicinity is either limited to RPP permit holders or metered, and is therefore unsuitable for long-term parking by the proposed project's future residents;

- Nearby private parking facilities are available in the event a resident requires long-term parking;
- The proposed development will generate minimal new vehicle trips;
- Residents are likely to heavily utilize non-automobile modes of travel; and
- The Applicant has proposed a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan intended to further promote the use of non-auto travel options.

The site's proximity to the Mt Vernon/7th Street – Convention Center Metro Station, extensive bus service, Capital Bikeshare stations, quality of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure in the subject area, along with the commitment to a strong TDM program, and provision of adequate bicycle parking will lead to low levels of auto ownership and use. As such, DDOT has no objection to the requested special exception for parking with the following conditions:

- Provide a minimum of two (2) transit screens (one for each building) to be placed in the lobby or common areas of each building. Transit screens provide real-time information on transportation options which support residents' travel needs;
- The Applicant should offer the Capital Bikeshare membership to all tenants rather than only tenants that do not own personal bicycles. Personal bicycles and bikeshare trips serve different purposes. Many Capital Bikeshare users who also own personal bicycles may elect to use Capital Bikeshare when a round trip bicycle trip may not be practical or feasible;
- The Applicant should offer *annual* memberships rather than memberships of another time duration (e.g. daily, monthly, etc.). If the lease duration is shorter than one year, the memberships in the bikeshare and carshare program may be reduced to match the duration of the lease. The success of bikeshare and carshare membership incentives as trip reduction measures depend on the continuous use of the programs; and
- The Applicant should provide a minimum of 4 short-term bicycle parking spaces in public space near each building's entrance for a total of at least 8 short-term bicycle parking spaces.

Further Coordination

Given the complexity and size of the action, the Applicant is expected to continue to work with DDOT on the following matters:

- Final language for the sign directing private courier services to utilize the commercial loading zone on 9th Street will need to be approved by DDOT; and
- The design of a proposed pedestrian connection/bridge over Blagden Alley connecting the two properties.

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 that impacts from new developments are manageable within, and take advantage of, the District's multimodal transportation network and ultimately discourage single occupancy vehicle trips.

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 Applicant and DDOT coordinated on an agreed-upon scope for the CTR that is consistent with the scale of the action.

Pedestrian and Bicycle 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. Based on the Applicant's field observations and inventory of the pedestrian and bicycle facilities (i.e., sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes), the study area intersections and roadway network provide excellent pedestrian and cycling connections to nearby land uses and transit facilities. While the pedestrian infrastructure in the vicinity generally meets current DDOT standards, the Applicant's analysis identified several deficiencies in the pedestrian network near the site such as substandard crosswalks and curb ramps. Adjacent to the site at the intersection of 9th Street and M Street, the curb ramp at the northwestern corner of the intersection does not meet current DDOT standards, and DDOT expects the Applicant to improve the condition during the public space permitting process. DDOT may require additional improvements to the pedestrian network in the vicinity as part of the public space permitting process.

The site is within close proximity to multiple bicycle lanes. Bicycle lanes on both sides of the street on 11th Street and 7th Street provide northbound and southbound connections and a northbound bicycle lane is provided on 12th Street. Bicycle lanes on New York Avenue NW offer eastbound and westbound connections. Additionally, the site is located within two blocks of two existing Capital Bikeshare stations, one at the intersection of 11th Street and M Street and one at the intersection of 7th Street and M Street. Multiple other Bikeshare stations are located a short walk away from the site.

The Applicant is proposing 42 bicycle parking spaces in a bicycle room, which meets the current District regulations¹ requiring one bicycle space for every three residential units. In addition, the Applicant is proposing an on-site bicycle repair facility. The Applicant is expected to provide at least 4-short term bicycle parking spaces in the public space adjacent to 90 Blagden Alley and at least 4-short term bicycle parking spaces in the public space adjacent to 91 Blagden Alley. The exact location of short-term bicycle parking spaces will be determined during the public space permitting process.

Transit Services

DDOT and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority have partnered to provide extensive public transit service in the District. DDOT's vision is to leverage this investment to increase the share of non-automotive travel modes with minimal infrastructure investment.

The Applicant evaluated the proximity of the subject site to the Mt Vernon/7th Street – Convention Center Metro Station and the adequacy of the bus service along the routes that serve the subject area. The proposed development will be located approximately 800 feet of the Mt Vernon/7th Street – Convention Center Metro Station, which is approximately a four minute walk.

The site is currently served by seven bus lines, including the Georgetown – Union Station Circulator line. Short headways particularly during the peak periods offer frequent bus service to connect the site to multiple destinations. The nearest Metrobus stop is located adjacent to the site at the intersection of 9th Street and M Street and services the G8 and 79 lines. The nearest Circulator stop is approximately a six minute walk away at the intersection of 11th Street and K Street.

¹ Section 8 of the Bicycle Commuter and Parking Expansion Act of 2007, effective February 2, 2008 (D.C. Law 17-103; D.C. Official Code § 50-1641.07) (2012 Supp.) and Mayor's Order 2011-149, dated September 6, 2011.

Vehicle Parking & Impacts

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, proximity to transit, connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the vicinity of the development, and the demographic composition and other characteristics of the potential residents.

A minimum of 63 parking spaces are required by zoning. The Applicant is seeking full relief from the parking requirement. The subject site offers excellent non-auto travel options that facilitate car-free living.

The proposed development program is intended to attract a group of tenants that are unlikely to own cars. Specifically, the lease terms and the furnished units will appeal to residents who are new to the District or only in town for several months. The product type will attract tenants who desire to live in neighborhoods where automobile ownership is not necessary and daily needs can be met with walking, bicycling, and transit.

The Applicant changed both addresses of the projects to Blagden Alley addresses. Blagden Alley is not currently in the District's Residential Permit Parking (RPP) system nor is its location consistent with the program's eligibility criteria. In addition, curbside parking in the vicinity is either metered or signed as RPP parking. Given these restrictions, the action's impact on the District's road network is expected to be insignificant. Additionally, the Applicant has committed to prohibit residents from applying for RPP. DDOT notes that it is unlikely that this restriction is enforceable by relevant District agencies, and therefore the restriction may not realize its intended outcome.

While it is highly unlikely that tenants would own vehicles, there are multiple private parking garages within a short distance of the location. The Applicant's analysis indicated that at least 125 monthly parking passes are available within ½ mile of the site.

In addition, the project is expected to generate minimal vehicle trips due to the level of parking provision. The vast majority of trips associated with the projects are expected to be generated from taxis, other ridesharing services, and carsharing.

Transportation Demand Management

As part of all major development review cases, DDOT requires applicants 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 public transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, and reduce single occupancy vehicle trips during peak periods.

The Applicant proposes implementing the following TDM strategies:

- Assign a Transportation Management Coordinator to provide transportation information to residents and coordinate all loading activities;
- Prohibit residents from applying for RPP through a lease provision;
- Provide information and/or links to various alternative transportation providers and services;

- Install a transit screen in a common, shared space showing real-time alternative transportation information;
- Provide at least 42 long-term bicycle parking spaces;
- Provide a bicycle repair facility;
- Pay the cost of installing a new Capital Bikeshare station (27 docks and 14 bikes), and one year of its operating expenses, within ¼ mile of the project site;
- For the life of the project, offer a Capital Bikeshare membership for the initial term of the lease to all residents who do not own a bike;
- Provide a minimum of 10 bicycle helmets for use by residents; and
- For the life of the project, offer a carshare membership for the initial term of the lease. The Applicant may register for a corporate carshare membership in order to facilitate offering memberships to tenants.

DDOT finds the Applicant's TDM measures are an excellent basis for encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation. However, the following enhancements and/or clarifications are needed to further strengthen the plan:

- Provide a minimum of two (2) transit screens (one for each building) to be placed in the lobby or common areas of each building;
- Personal bicycles and bikeshare trips serve different purposes. Many Capital Bikeshare users who also own personal bicycles may elect to use Capital Bikeshare when a round trip bicycle trip may not be practical or feasible. Therefore, the Applicant should offer the Capital Bikeshare membership to all tenants rather than only tenants that do not own personal bicycles.
- The success of bikeshare and carshare membership incentives as trip reduction measures depend on the continuous use of the programs. Accordingly, the Applicant should offer annual memberships rather than memberships of another time duration (e.g. daily, monthly, etc.). If the lease duration is shorter than one year, the memberships in the bikeshare and carshare program may be reduced to match the duration of the lease.

Loading and Curbside Management

Due to the inclusion of a historic structure and the size of the project, no on-site loading facilities are required. Loading activities associated with the site are expected to be minimal because the units are furnished. Site-generated truck traffic will be primarily related to commercial parcel service and trash pick-up.

In the rare instance that residential moving trucks are needed, the Applicant has proposed a Loading Management Plan that includes the following elements:

- Designate a loading management coordinator to coordinate all loading activities of the building;
- Require all tenants to notify the loading coordinator before moving in or out;
- Tenants requiring a moving truck shall provide the loading coordinator the following information: time and date that the truck is anticipated to arrive, size of truck being used, and name of the moving service, if applicable; and
- In the event that a moving truck is required, the loading management coordinator or tenant will apply for DDOT Emergency No Parking signs to establish a temporary loading area.
- Direct all private courier services to park in the provided loading spaces on 9th Street and post a sign stating, "NO DELIVERY PARKING. DELIVERY PARKING ONLY IN LOADING SPACES PROVIDED ON 9TH STREET. DELIVERIES MAY BE LEFT AT PACKAGE DELIVERY ROOM ON 9TH STREET."

DDOT finds the loading management plan appropriate but notes that the final language for the sign directing private courier services to utilize the commercial loading zone on 9th Street will need to be approved by DDOT.

Trash pick-up is proposed to be from M Street. Building staff will move trash and recycling carts from the trash room in each building to the M Street curbside prior to scheduled pick-up. Trash bins will be promptly returned to the trash rooms after pick-up.

Streetscape and the 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 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 Applicant may refer to the DC Municipal Regulations and DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual for specific controls of public space.

The Applicant's preliminary public space plans show a walkway/bridge over the alley that connects the two buildings. The Applicant will need to coordinate closely with DDOT and other agencies with jurisdiction over the walkway/bridge through the public space permitting process on the final design of the structure.

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