


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



d. Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lloyd Jordan
Chairperson
Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Samuel Zimbabwe 
Associate Director

DATE: December 30, 2014

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 18890 – 646-654 H Street, NE

APPLICATION

Rock Creek-650, LLC (the "Applicant"), pursuant to 11 DCMR § 3103.2, is seeking a variance from the parking and loading requirements and a special exception to increase the gross floor area of an existing building by more than 50% on a lot that has 6,000 square feet or more of land area in the H Street Northeast Neighborhood Commercial Overlay (HS) District of the HS/C-2-C District at premises 646-654 H Street, NE (Square 858, Lots 800-802 and 1-2). The proposed mixed-use development will be comprised of 26 residential units, 8,878 square feet of retail space, and three parking spaces.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

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

- A robust network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure services the site;
- The proposed development will generate minimal new vehicle trips;
- Residents, retail employees, and patrons are likely to heavily utilize non-automobile modes of travel;
- A sufficient supply of long-term bicycle parking is proposed for the development to meet its proposed mode split;
- The Applicant proposes to install a TransitScreen in the lobby of the residential building to provide real-time transit, car-share, and bike-share updates;
- A commercial loading zone, which is intended for retail and office loading only, exists adjacent to the site on 7th Street. The retail needs of the site can be serviced from this zone;
- Residential loading will not be permitted from an active commercial loading zone;

- Trash will be consolidated into bundles that fit into standard size receptacles, rolled, and immediately returned from the site's trash room to the 7th Street curb by a contracted trash collector. Due to site constraints and since trash compactors will never be left in public space, site design and operations for trash collection are appropriate; and
- Streetcar is soon to open in this corridor, which could impact building operations and other development elements. Construction and Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) should be closely coordinated with DDOT.

Vehicle trip generation is expected to be low as a result of the site's close proximity to the many Metrobus routes, Streetcar route, Capital Bikeshare stations; minimal vehicle parking spaces; commitment to a strong Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan; and provision of adequate bicycle parking. As such, DDOT has no objection to the requested variance for parking and loading relief with the following conditions:

- The Applicant shall provide a minimum of five short-term bicycle parking racks (i.e., ten spaces), the location of which will be addressed in the public space permitting process;
- The Applicant shall notify all residential tenants that the commercial loading zone located adjacent to the site on 7th Street is not permitted to be used for residential moves during loading zone operating hours, and moving vehicles are not permitted anytime on H Street. The Applicant will instruct tenants to apply for Emergency No Parking signs to move in/move out elsewhere on 7th Street;

To strengthen the TDM program, DDOT suggests the Applicant consider the following:

- Bikeshare and car-sharing memberships could be provided to all new residents, either owning or renting, and employees annually for a period of five years; and
- The Applicant could provide a bicycle repair facility within or adjacent to the long-term bicycle storage area.

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.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Automobile use is expected to be minimal, while transit, walking, and bicycling are expected to be the predominant modes of transportation for this development. In general, the intersections and roadway network within a quarter-mile of the site provide adequate and functional facilities to promote connectivity between land uses and transit facilities.

The site is located near several bicycle facilities, including one-way bicycle lanes along 4th and 6th Streets for north-south connectivity and along I and G Streets for east-west connectivity. The site is also near the Metropolitan Branch Trail and bike lanes along 14th and 15th Streets. The site is located within one-

quarter of a mile of four existing Capitol Bikeshare stations. The nearest station is located within 600 feet at the northeast corner of H Street and 6th Street.

The Applicant is proposing ten long-term bicycle parking spaces, which meets DDOT standards for a project of this size. In addition, the Applicant is proposing to include an undetermined number of short-term public bicycle parking spaces. The Applicant should provide a minimum of five short-term bicycle parking racks (i.e., ten spaces), the location of which will be addressed in the public space permitting process. This figure is based on one rack (i.e., two spaces) for each 20 dwelling units and one rack for each 3,500 square feet of retail space.

Transit Services

DDOT and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) 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 nearby bus stops and the adequacy of the bus service along the routes that serve the subject area. The site is currently served by over 10 bus routes, and headways for each of the routes range from six to 30 minutes. The nearest bus stop is located just east of the site at the intersection of H Street and 6th Street, and a second bus stop is located at the intersection of H Street and 8th Street. The proximity of the site and frequency of each of these routes provides adequate bus service to the site. Additionally, the site is located approximately 400 feet from the nearest H Street streetcar stop, located at the intersection of H Street and 8th Street. Finally, the proposed development will be located within one mile of the Union Station Metro Station, which can be transferred to from the many of these bus lines and the streetcar.

DDOT finds that the proposed development will be adequately served with the existing bus routes and streetcar. These transit facilities in close proximity to the site will facilitate car-free living for residents and commuting by employees and retail patrons.

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

Zoning requires 17 vehicle parking spaces, and the Applicant is seeking relief from 14 parking spaces. The three on-site parking spaces are intended for retail use. The site is not eligible for registration in the Residential Parking Permit (RPP) system due to its address on H Street, a commercial street.

The location of the site on H Street, particularly in relation to transit and bikeshare facilities, will foster transit and bikeshare use by residents, retail employees, and patrons. Additionally, 11 car-sharing vehicles are available within a short walk of the site. A robust Transportation Demand Management plan, few parking spaces provided, high parking utilization in the vicinity, and ineligibility to park in RPP spaces will promote low auto usage and parking.

Given these conditions, the requested parking variance will not adversely impact the parking supply in the area.

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 the following TDM strategies:

- **Bicycle Amenities:** to provide 10 long-term parking spaces for employees and additional short-term spaces;
- **Non-Vehicular Incentives:** the Applicant will provide either a one-year Capital Bikeshare or car sharing membership to first time residential occupants of the for-sale units;
- **On-Site Services:** the Applicant proposes to install a TransitScreen in the lobby of the residential building to provide real-time transit, car-share, and bike-share updates; and
- **Marketing Program:** brochures to include information of biking and transit facilities and ride-matching and ridesharing programs.

DDOT finds the Applicant's TDM measures are a good basis that would generally encourage use of alternative modes of transportation. Long-term bicycle parking is ample for the size of the development. The Capital Bikeshare membership incentive will allow residents to utilize and explore a transportation system that provides quick access to nearby amenities. The Applicant shall provide a minimum of five short-term bicycle parking racks (i.e., ten spaces), the location of which will be addressed in the public space permitting process;

To strengthen the TDM program, DDOT suggests the Applicant consider the following:

- DDOT finds that the success of these trip reduction measures would be aided by the promotion of continuous use of the bikeshare and car-share programs by the prospective residents, rather than the initial residents only. Therefore, DDOT recommends that the Applicant develops a program that would ensure continuous use of the bikeshare and car-share programs, such as providing annual membership fees for the initial and each new resident, either owning or renting, and all employees for a period of five years; and
- The Applicant could provide a bicycle repair facility (air pump and tools necessary to perform basic repairs and maintenance, such as changing a flat tire, adjusting brakes, and derailleurs, securely attached to a stand) within or adjacent to the long-term bicycle storage area.

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 modes 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 an alley network. Similarly, DDOT requires that no back-up maneuvers occur into an alley or from an alley onto a public street.

Due to the size of the combined lots and the narrowness of the alley, loading vehicles entering the alley are unable to turn around in the alley or on-site, thus requiring back-up maneuvers. As such, the use of the commercial loading zone adjacent to the site on 7th Street will be used for all retail deliveries. Additionally, this commercial loading zone will serve the contracted trash collector. Trash will be consolidated into bundles that fit into standard size receptacles, rolled, and immediately returned from the site's trash room to the 7th Street curb by a contracted trash collector. At no time will trash bins be left at the curbside unattended. Due to site constraints and since trash compactors will never be left in public space, site design and operations for trash collection are appropriate.

The Applicant proposed that residential move-ins and move-outs will occur from the commercial loading zone located on 7th Street. Commercial loading zones are not intended for residential moves; they are intended for retail and office loading. Residential loading will not be permitted from an active commercial loading zone. The Applicant shall notify all residential tenants that the commercial loading zone located adjacent to the site on 7th Street is not permitted to be used for residential moves during loading zone operating hours, and moving vehicles are not permitted anytime on H Street. The Applicant will instruct tenants to apply for Emergency No Parking signs to move in/move out elsewhere on 7th Street

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 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 circulating around it. The Applicant may refer to the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations and DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual for specific controls of public space.

Streetcar is soon to open in this corridor, which could impact building operations and other development elements. Construction and Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) should be closely coordinated with DDOT.

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