

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: June 9, 2015

SUBJECT: **BZA Case No. 19017** – 3401 4th Street SE, Ballou High School

APPLICATION

The Department of General Services (the “Applicant”) requests a loading variance to exclude construction of two loading spaces at the new school premises at 3401 4th Street SE (Square 5978, Lot 0059) (the “Site”).

SUMMARY OF DDOT REVIEW

DDOT is committed to achieving an exceptional quality of life in the nation’s capital by encouraging sustainable transportation and preserving the District’s public space. As one means to achieve this vision, DDOT works through the zoning process to ensure that impacts from new proposals are in fitting with DDOT’s policy and standards.

After an extensive review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

Proposed Design Findings

- The Applicant originally proposed three loading locations, but is now proposing elimination of two of these from their plans.
- This project already proceeded through the public space permitting process, and was approved by the Public Space Committee with loading areas as originally proposed. The provided drawings do not match the final agreed to plans, specifically at the driveway entrances to the loading locations;
- With only one loading location, DDOT is concerned loading needs for this building expressed during the public space permitting process will not be met; and
- A previously prepared loading management plan will require revisions for any loading modifications.

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Recommendations

- DDOT recommends that the proposed loading spaces be maintained to allow full loading service to the building, and as such does not support the variance request;
- If the variances are approved, DDOT would seek an updated loading management plan; and
- DDOT requests updated drawings showing the final agreed to public space permit plans be uploaded to the record.

Continued Coordination

The Applicant is expected to continue to work with DDOT on the following matters:

- An updated loading management plan if loading plans change; and
- Provision of updated plans showing the agreed to public space 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.

This project's loading operations are discussed below.

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.

The Applicant previously proposed one 30'x12' loading berth with a 9'x12' loading platform, one 20'x10' service/delivery space, and one 55'x12' loading berth with a loading platform. As part of this action, the Applicant proposes eliminating from the plan the former two spaces, leaving only the 55'x12' loading berth.

Access to this building for loading and unloading, delivery, and trash pickup is an important consideration, and DDOT expected the Applicant to comply with DDOT's standards for loading. However, during an extensive public space permitting process, resolution on loading accommodations was made, with the three loading locations as shown on the exhibits in this zoning application. Substandard accommodations featuring back-in loading and a driveway wider than per standard exist at the 55' loading berth. Modifications to the driveway designs at each entrance were made to minimize pedestrian conflicts, but the loading needs for all three spaces were made clear at that time by the Applicant.

FexEx or UPS type deliveries are expected to be accommodated in the 20' service/delivery area. Beverage and food trucks, likely expected at least bi-weekly, are anticipated in the 30' berth, along with use by a broadcast vehicle. Additionally, the 30' berth serves as a backup for when the 55' space is filled.

The berths would allow loading operations to be completed onsite, and not on the adjacent streets. Trash and recycling trucks are anticipated to utilize the trash location adjacent to the 55' berth.

If the two smaller loading areas are not available, it is likely that some loading would need to occur on the street, which could conflict with potential parking needs and pedestrian activity. Additionally, DDOT is concerned with how vendors for the stadium, events, and uses at the other end of this large campus will access that location from the 55' loading berth.

Based on the zoning code requirements for a facility of this size, previously expressed loading needs, a lack of information regarding modified proposed loading management plans, and DDOT's desire to conduct loading in private space, DDOT objects to this loading variance request.

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