

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 18, 2015

SUBJECT: **BZA Case No. 19021** – Amazing Love Health Services – 702 15th Street, NE

APPLICATION

Amazing Love Health Services (the “Applicant”), requests a special exception from the off-street parking requirements under Section 2108 to allow a medical office use in the HS-A/C-2-A District at premises 702 15th Street, NE (Square 1050, Lot 0033). The Applicant proposes 23 of the 42 zoning required parking spaces. Nine of these 23 proposed parking spaces are in public space.

SUMMARY

The purpose of District Department of Transportation’s (DDOT) review is to assess the potential safety and capacity impacts of the proposed action on the District’s transportation network and, as necessary, propose mitigations that are commensurate with the action. DDOT finds:

- The action is expected to generate a low number of new vehicle trips and a moderate number of transit, pedestrian, and bicycle trips;
- A robust network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure exists in close proximity to the proposed development;
- Vehicle parking demand is expected to be minimal;
- Details are missing on the existing transit subsidy;
- The nine parking spaces shown in public space have not been approved by the Public Space Committee and are not supported by DDOT; and
- Additional on-street metered parking spaces can be created with the elimination of parking in public space to accommodate visitors.

DDOT has no objection to the special exception request with the following conditions:

- Create a TDM plan that clearly defines the Applicant’s transit subsidy program; and
- Install at least one long-term bicycle parking space and one short-term inverted-U bicycle parking rack in the public space. The exact location of the short-term bicycle parking rack will be determined during the public space permitting process.

CONTINUED COORDINATION

- The Applicant should remove the nine off-street parking spaces shown behind the sidewalk on G Street and restore the public space, including landscaping and curb.

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. DDOT determined that the previous use (a charter school) had higher trip generation and parking demand than the existing use, which is currently operating under a temporary Certificate of Occupancy. As such, a CTR was not required for this project.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Automobile usage is expected to be minimal, while transit, walking, and bicycling are expected to be the predominant modes of transportation for this development. Based on recent inventories of the pedestrian and bicycle facilities (i.e., sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes) for other projects within the vicinity of the site, the study area intersections and roadway network provide excellent pedestrian and cycling connections to nearby land uses and transit facilities. The Applicant will be expected to bring all adjacent pedestrian facilities up to current standards, which includes the restoration of public space on G Street.

Multiple Capital Bikeshare stations are located nearby. North-south bicycle lanes are provided on 14th Street and 15th, while nearby G Street and I Street provide low-volume east-west connections. The site is also nearby north-south bicycle lanes on 4th Street and 5th Street and the Metropolitan Branch Trail. The site is within ¼ miles of three Capital Bikeshare stations, with the two closest locations each one block away at the intersection of 15th Street with F Street NE and Benning Road with Bladensburg Road NE.

The Applicant does not propose any secure long-term bicycle parking spaces on-site and is expected to provide at least one long-term bicycle parking space, as well as one short-term bicycle parking rack in the public space.¹ The exact location of the short-term bicycle parking spaces will be determined during the public space permitting process.

Transit Services

DDOT and the Washington Metropolitan Transportation 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.

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.

The site is currently served by nine bus routes within close walking distance; headways for each of the routes range from six to about 20 minutes during peak hours on weekdays. The closest Metrobus stop is located 500 feet away from the site at the intersection of H Street and Bladensburg Road, with numerous additional bus stops within one to four blocks from the site. The frequency of each of these routes provides excellent bus service to the site. Additionally, the site is located near the H Street Streetcar route.

DDOT finds that the proposed development will be well served by transit, thus facilitating transit use and minimizing demand for vehicle parking.

Vehicle Parking

The overall parking demand created by the development is primarily a function of land use, development square footage, and price and 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, composition of nearby land-uses, and the demographic composition of the potential residents and patrons.

The Applicant proposes to provide 23 vehicle parking spaces, which includes nine parking spaces in public space, in lieu of the 42 required spaces. The nine parking spaces on G Street, NE behind the sidewalk are located in the public space known as the “public parking” area. “Public parking” is the area of public space devoted to open space, greenery, or parks that lies between private property and the sidewalk. Since the intent of the public parking area is to exhibit a park-like setting, vehicular parking is not permitted in public space. Parking in public space is under the purview of the Public Space Committee to approve. However, DDOT, as a reviewer of public space permitting, will not support parking in public space and expects the curb cuts to be closed. As such, DDOT considered the provision of 14 parking spaces for this application.

The proposed parking provision is generally consistent with other new developments in walkable, transit-rich areas. These types of developments take advantage of the District’s multimodal transportation options and typically generate few vehicle trips and low demand for vehicle parking.

According to the Applicant, peak hours of operation do not conflict with peak parking demand. The traffic and parking demand of workers, which is low with seven to ten employees who drive, is higher than the demand of individuals the site serves. According to the Applicant, the site serves low income individuals, who are not generally driving. The majority of these individuals live within walking distance of the site; they either walk or use Metro Access. Additionally, DDOT finds that the 14 existing off-street parking spaces will adequately serve demand. Should demand exceed these 14 spaces, parking can be accommodated through on-street metered and Zone 6 Residential Permit Parking spaces on multiple blocks within the vicinity. The proposed project is a daytime use. Based on observation while the use has been operating with a temporary Certificate of Occupancy, parking occupancy in the vicinity of the site is low during daytime use. Finally, by closing the curb cuts to the nine parking spaces on G Street, new on-street parking streets will be created and could be metered.

Transportation Demand Management

As part of all major development review cases, DDOT requires applicants to produce a 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 utilizing the following TDM strategy:

- Providing public transportation assistance through the distribution of tokens. It is not clear what these tokens are, how they are distributed, and their value.

Although DDOT finds the Applicant's TDM measure is a good basis that would generally encourage use of alternative modes of transportation and reduce the demand for vehicle parking, the following items need to be addressed to strengthen the proposed program:

- Create a TDM plan that clearly defines the Applicant's transit subsidy program; and
- Install at least one long-term bicycle parking space and one short-term inverted-U bicycle parking rack in the public space. The exact location of the short-term bicycle parking rack will be determined during the public space permitting process.

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 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. DDOT staff will be available to provide additional guidance during the public space permitting process.

As previously discussed, the public parking area is intended to create park-like settings in front of residential and commercial buildings. Instead of landscaping along G Street in front of the site, the public parking area is currently paved over with concrete. G Street is intended to have 14.5 feet of sidewalk and 15.5 feet of landscaping. Since the intent of the public parking area is to exhibit a park-like setting, vehicular parking is not permitted in public space. Parking in public space is under the purview of the Public Space Committee to approve. However, DDOT, as a reviewer of public space permitting, will not support parking in public space. The Applicant should remove the nine off-street parking spaces shown behind the sidewalk and restore the public space, including landscaping and curb.