


**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:** Sam Zimbabwe   
Associate Director

**DATE:** September 16, 2016

**SUBJECT:** BZA Case No.19343 – 1355-1657 U Street, NW

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**APPLICATION**

GS U St LLC (the “Applicant”), requests variances from the public open space requirements under § 633, the rear yard requirements under § 636, the open court requirements under § 639, and the off-street parking requirements under § 2102.1, to permit the construction of an eight-story mixed use building with 23 residential units and 11,587 square feet of retail. The site is located in the ARTS/CR District at premises 1355-1357 U Street, NW (Square 236, Lots 64-65). The Applicant is providing three off-street parking spaces and requesting relief from 12 zoning required off-street parking spaces.

**SUMMARY OF DDOT REVIEW**

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is committed to achieve an exceptional quality of life in the nation’s capital by encouraging sustainable travel practices, safer streets, and 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.

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 mitigations that are commensurate with the action. After an extensive review of the case materials submitted by the Applicant, DDOT finds:

- The Applicant is required to provide 15 off-street parking spaces by zoning (eight parking space for residential and seven parking spaces for retail);
- The Applicant is proposing to provide 29 long-term bicycle parking spaces (19 more space than required by zoning) and six short-term bicycle parking spaces as requested by DDOT;
- Curbside parking in the surrounding area is highly utilized;

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- The site is well served by transit and existing transit service should have capacity to accommodate future demand;
- The site is located in a Residential Parking Permit (RPP) eligible zone; and
- The Applicant's proposed TDM plan is not sufficiently robust to influence travel behavior

DDOT has no objection to requested variances and special exceptions with the following conditions:

- Modify the proposed TDM plan to include an annual Capital Bikeshare and car sharing memberships to each residential unit and each employee for five years; or provide a pool of \$12,650 for alternative transportation incentives that can be used for an annual membership for Capital Bikeshare, an annual carshare membership, or carshare driving credit. This benefit shall be codified in rental or condominium documents for all of the residential units planned within the project. This fund must be exhausted within ten years of Certificate of Occupancy, otherwise will be disbursed to a TDM-related entity or organization at DDOT direction;
- Install a TransitScreen or similar device displaying real-time transportation schedules that show the availability and location of Bikeshare stations, local buses, commuter buses, Metrorail, carshare vehicles, and any other public transportation options located within 0.5 miles of the site; and
- Install short-term bicycle parking near the primary entrance along U Street.

### **Continued Coordination**

The Applicant is expected to continue to work with DDOT outside of the Board of Zoning Adjustment process on the following matters:

- Public space, including proposed short-term bicycle parking spaces, curb and gutter, street trees and landscaping, street lights, sidewalks and lead walks, and other features within the public rights of way, are expected to be designed and built or maintained to DDOT standards.

## **TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS**

### Site Design

Site design, which includes site access, loading, and public realm design, plays a critical role in determining a proposed action's impact on the District's infrastructure. While transportation impacts can change over time, the site design will remain constant throughout the lifespan of the proposed development, making site design a critical aspect of DDOT's development review process. Accordingly, new developments must provide a safe and welcoming pedestrian experience, enhance the public realm, and serve as positive additions to the community.

### Site Access and Loading

The site is bounded by U Street to the south and public alleys to the north, east, and west. Access to parking, loading, and trash services is proposed from the rear of the building via the surrounding public alley system. The primary entrance for residential and retail is from U Street.

Per DCMR § 2201.1 loading facilities are not required for buildings with less than 50 residential units. In addition, loading facilities for retail are not required due to the site being a historic resource. Though loading facilities are not required, loading type activities such as trash services are proposed to be from the rear of building via the public alley system, which DDOT supports.

### Off-Street 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, and proximity to transit.

The Applicant is providing three off-street parking spaces for residential use and seeking relief from 12 off-street parking spaces. The Applicant is required to provide 15 off-street parking spaces per zoning (eight parking spaces for the residential use and seven parking spaces for the retail use). In addition, the site is located in a Residential Permit Parking (RPP) eligible zone.

Typically, DDOT requires Applicants seeking parking relief of five or more spaces to provide a parking occupancy study to determine if the streets surrounding the site have the capacity to meet parking demands generated by the requested relief; however, a recent parking occupancy study was conducted for a mixed use development at 1921 14<sup>th</sup> Street (BZA Case No. 18632) that showed curbside parking occupancy at more than 90 percent near the Applicant's site, indicating that curbside parking is highly utilized.

In lieu of requiring a parking occupancy study, DDOT requested the Applicant provide a robust Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan. The proposed TDM plan is not sufficiently robust, and DDOT requires modifications that will be discussed further in the mitigation section of this report.

### Transit Service

The District and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) have partnered to provide extensive public transit service in the District of Columbia. DDOT's vision is to leverage this investment to increase the share of non-automotive travel modes so that economic development opportunities increase with minimal infrastructure investment.

The site is located approximately 0.2 miles, approximately a five-minute walk, from the U Street/African-Amer Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metro Station that serves the Green and Yellow lines.

In addition, the site is served by the 90s high-frequency bus route that connects Congress Heights and Adams Morgan. The closest bus stop is located approximately 140 feet, roughly a one-minute walk, at 14<sup>th</sup> Street and U Street. Additional bus routes include:

- 96 – East Capitol Street-Cardozo Line
- 52,53,54 – 14<sup>th</sup> Street Line

- X3 – Benning Road Line

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### Bicycle Facilities

The District is committed to enhance bicycle access by ensuring consistent investment in bicycle infrastructure by both the public and private sectors. DDOT expects new developments to serve the needs of all trips they generate, including bicycling trips.

Per the 2016 Zoning Regulations, the Applicant is required to provide 10 long-term bicycle parking spaces (eight spaces are required for residential and two spaces are required for retail) and six short-term bicycle parking spaces (two parking spaces are required for residential use and four parking spaces are required for the retail use) located in public space.

The Applicant is proposing to provide a minimum of 29 long-term bicycle parking spaces (23 spaces for residential and six spaces for retail; 19 more than what is required by zoning) and six short-term bicycle parking spaces (two spaces for residential and four spaces for retail).

The Applicant proposes short-term bicycle parking spaces at the rear of the building. Zoning requires the Applicant to locate short-term bicycle parking spaces within 120-feet of the primary entrance per § 804.2. The Applicant is required to pursue approval of short-term bicycle parking in public space through DDOT's public space permitting process. During this time, the exact location of short-term bicycle parking spaces will be determined.

The closest Capital Bikeshare Station, with 26 docks, is located approximately 490 feet from the site at 14<sup>th</sup> Street and V Street. Another Capital Bikeshare Station, with 31 docks, is located approximately 0.2 miles from the site at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and U Street.

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### Transportation Demand Management

DDOT requires the Applicant to produce a comprehensive Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan to help mitigate an action's transportation impacts. 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 mass transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and reduce single occupancy vehicle trips during peak periods. The Applicant's proposed TDM measures play a role in achieving the desired and expected mode split.

The specific elements within the TDM plan vary depending on the land uses, site context, proximity to transit, scale of the development, and other factors. The TDM plan must help achieve the assumed trip generation rates to ensure that an action's impacts will be properly mitigated. Failure to provide a robust TDM plan could lead to unanticipated additional vehicle trips that could negatively impact the District's transportation network.

The Applicant proposes the following TDM strategies:

- Offer a Capital Bikeshare and car sharing memberships to each initial purchaser of a unit for the period of one year;
- Provide at least 29 long-term and six short-term bicycle parking spaces;
- Provide a bike repair station within the indoor bicycle storage room;
- Reserve one space for Zipcar or car sharing service for one of the three parking spaces on the property;
- Designate a TDM coordinator who will work with goDCgo, DDOT's TDM arm, to verify the installation and implementation of TDM measures. Provide the TDM coordinator's full name, email, and telephone number to DDOT;
- Provide at least two shopping carts with wheels for use by residents; and
- Provide a packet with transportation information and TDM requirements to all new residents and employees.

DDOT does not agree that the TDM measure to offer an annual Capital Bikeshare and carsharing memberships for a one year period is long enough to influence travel behavior. In addition, it is unclear whether the residential units are apartments or condominiums. DDOT expects the Applicant to:

- Offer annual Capital Bikeshare and car sharing memberships to each residential unit and each employee for five years; or provide a pool of \$12,650 for alternative transportation incentives that can be used for an annual membership for Capital Bikeshare, an annual carshare membership, a carshare driving credit. This benefit shall be codified in rental or condominium documents for all of the residential units planned within the project. This fund must be exhausted within ten years of Certificate of Occupancy, otherwise will be disbursed to a TDM-related entity or organization at DDOT direction; and in addition
- Install a TransitScreen or similar device displaying real-time transportation schedules that show the availability and location of Bikeshare stations, local buses, commuter buses, Metrorail, carshare vehicles, and any other public transportation options located within 0.5 miles of the site.

### 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 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.

This review pertains only to zoning issues and does not consider potential impacts to District owned public space. DDOT's lack of objection to these zoning variances should not be viewed as an approval of public space elements. Short-term bicycle parking spaces located within public space is required to be

approved through DDOT's permitting process. The Applicant may refer to the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations and DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual for specific controls of public space. A summary can be found in the Public Realm Design Manual.

JH:rj