GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DIVISION OF TRANSPORTATION

Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: Jerrily R. Kress, FAIA
Director, Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Kenneth G. Laden
Associate Director

DATE: December 3, 2002

SUBJECT: BZA Application Number 16924; Application of Jemal's Wheel, LLC/1701 Kalorama Road, NW

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The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) has reviewed the proposed project, which entails the construction of fifty-four apartment units in an existing structure. The structure in question is currently used as a warehouse and is proposed for expansion from three to five stories, with 39 garage parking spaces provided within the structure and five additional parking spaces outside.

The Department of Transportation has reviewed the applicant's request for relief from the following requirements: variance from the parking drive aisle width requirements under Section 2117 of the Zoning Regulations, and variance from the loading berth requirements of Section 2201.

Site/Street Description

The site is in a mixed-use neighborhood largely comprised of multi-family and commercial uses, as well as some industrial, office and single-family residential uses. The site in question includes a three-story structure with frontages on 17th Street and Kalorama Road. Primary vehicle access to the existing building is currently provided from Kalorama Road to an existing garage; additional access to the garage is currently provided via the alley. Kalorama Road is a local street providing two-way traffic, with parking allowed on both sides; 17th Street is a two-way local roadway north of Kalorama, and is one-way northbound south of Kalorama. There is a combination of metered and residential permit parking on both sides of 17th Street. The adjacent alley from 17th Street is fifteen feet wide and serves the site in question, the nearby Color Tone building and single-family residential uses on the block. (A north-south alley that intersects with the alley in question is also fifteen feet in width).

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Exhibit No. 64

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.16924
EXHIBIT NO.64

Under the proposed site plan, vehicle access the garage of the proposed residential building would be provided from Kalorama Road. An existing loading berth is currently provided on the north side of the building and is accessed by the fifteen-foot wide alley; however, the applicant does not propose to utilize this berth under the proposed site. Furthermore, the applicant wishes to remove this facility to allow for an additional five parking spaces.

Other multi-family residential projects are currently under development in the area surrounding the proposed site. Other residential and commercial construction is occurring in the neighborhood surrounding the site. Additionally, other major development could occur as a matter of right.

While most roadways and intersections in the project area have a level of service of "B" or "C," the intersection at 16th and Kalorama has a level of service "F" during both AM and PM peak hours. While the proposed project would add some additional traffic to this intersection and the surrounding traffic system, we do not believe it would significantly worsen conditions at any intersection in the surrounding area.

Issue #1: Variance from Parking Drive Aisle Width Requirements of Sec. 2117.5

The applicant is required by Section 2117.5 of the Zoning Regulations to provide parking drive aisles in the parking garage with a clear width of no less than twenty feet. Due to the unique design of the existing structure, the applicant is requesting a variance to permit a drive aisle width of eighteen feet, nine inches (18'9") in one section of the garage. The surrounding neighborhood contains a very limited amount of available on-street parking, and a twenty-foot aisle width requirement would limit the applicant's ability to maximize the space available. Furthermore, the applicant has stated that it is providing additional space between parking spaces, which "(allows) for more maneuverability in the spaces than would be found in a complying garage." Given the nature of uses in the garage, the applicant's attempts to enable maneuverability in the garage and number of parking spaces (13 of 49) that are impacted by the reduction of drive aisle width from 20 feet to 18 feet, 9 inches, the Department of Transportation has no objection to the applicant receiving a variance from this requirement.

Issue #2: Variance from the Loading Berth Requirements of Section 2201

Section 2201 of the Zoning Regulations requires apartment houses with more than fifty dwelling units to have one fifty-five foot loading berth, a two-hundred square foot loading platform and a twenty foot deep service/delivery space. The applicant is requesting a variance from the loading berth and platform requirements.

The applicant attests in their statement that "the Project could incorporate a loading berth along the Site's western edge," but it was eliminated at the request of the community. Reasons cited for the community's request to eliminate the loading berth were "an effort to avoid heavy truck traffic in the alley and (to) permit additional parking to alleviate parking burdens in the neighborhood." As alternatives to meeting this requirement, the

applicant proposes to use the garage for both resident parking and some deliveries. The applicant also proposes a designated loading zone on 17th Street for larger loading and service/delivery activities.

The District Department of Transportation strongly disagrees with the applicant's proposal for a loading zone on 17th Street. The Department believes, where possible, all loading activities should occur in loading facilities accessed by alleys. Curb space on 17th Street should be reserved for appropriate on-street parking. We believe that most deliveries to this residential property would include furniture/resident deliveries and home-related repair services, which tend to utilize trucks of thirty feet in length or less which could be accommodated in a loading dock accessed from the alley.

The width of public alley on the block in question is fifteen feet, which is too narrow to reasonably accommodate large tractor trailers. However, given the configuration of alleyways and the location of the site in question, use of the existing loading berth is feasible for trucks not exceeding thirty feet in length. While traffic in the alley will undoubtedly increase if the alley loading berth is used, DDOT believes that overall traffic impacts will be less if loading occurs through an alley-accessed berth than from 17th Street. Given that alleyways are, among other things, intended expressly for use in loading and unloading (and providing access to facilities intended to achieve these goals), it is not appropriate to relocate these functions to a public street when alley loading facilities are available.

Accordingly, the Department of Transportation does not support the applicant's request for a variance from the above portions of Section 2201, but does recommend a variance from the length requirements of Section 2201 to permit a loading berth length of not less than thirty feet, with vehicles in excess of thirty feet in length being restricted from accessing the site.