

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DISTRICT DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

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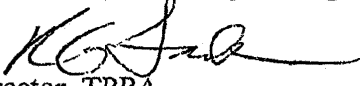
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Transportation Policy and Planning Administration

MEMORANDUM

To: Jerrily R. Kress, Director
Office of Zoning

ATTN: Beverly Bailey, Board of Zoning Adjustment

From: Ken Laden 
Associate Director, TPPA

Date: February 2, 2006

Subject: BZA Case No. 17521
601-645 H Street, N.E. – Variance Special Exception

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I. Executive Summary

Prior to the public hearing held November 21, 2006, the District Department of Transportation (DDOT) provided a preliminary report to the DC Board of Zoning Adjustment (BZA) with regards to the proposed development at 601-645 H Street NE, and requested that the BZA keep the record open to allow DDOT a sufficient opportunity to review the case and related documentation. At the community's request, DDOT met with the Applicant and various neighborhood stakeholders (including representatives from Advisory Neighborhood Commissions 6C and 6A) on December 14, 2006 to discuss transportation facilities at the site. The conversation at this meeting focused on the possibility of a mid-block traffic signal at the intersection of H Street and the new site entrance, onsite parking spaces, and Transportation Demand Management expectations. DDOT requested that the Applicant provide additional analysis evaluating the utility and feasibility of a mid-block signal. DDOT received this study report on January 25, 2007.

This memorandum attempts to synthesize information and input furnished over the last couple of months including preliminary exchange with the Applicant's traffic consultant, Wells & Associates, the primary *Traffic Impact Study (TIS)* dated November 17, 2006, a *TIS Supplement Memorandum* dated December 4, 2006, and the *H Street Mid-Block Signal Analysis* dated January 25, 2006, and finally, feedback from the surrounding community.

BOARD OF ZONING ADJUSTMENT
District of Columbia

CASE NO. 17521

EXHIBIT NO. 110

Board of Zoning Adjustment
District of Columbia
CASE NO.17521
EXHIBIT NO.110

In weighing all of these elements, the District of Columbia Department of Transportation (DDOT) finds the impacts to the surrounding traffic network acceptable subject to the following conditions, described in greater detail in the body of the report.

1. Maintenance of one-way operations on 7th Street, southbound
2. Closure of curb cuts to existing surface parking lot on H Street
3. Reduction in parking spaces provided on-site
4. Development of and commitment to a Transportation Demand Management Plan
5. The provision of funds in escrow for a potential mid-block traffic signal and pedestrian crossing at the intersection of H Street and the site entrance.

II. Project Background

The applicant, 601-645 H Street Ventures, LLC, seeks variance relief from §772 of the Zoning Regulations, in order to permit more than the required lot occupancy in the construction of a new, mixed-use residential and commercial building at premises 601-645 H Street, N.E., Square 859, Lot 177. This site has six thousand square feet or more of land area in the H Street Northeast Neighborhood Commercial Overlay District. The applicant also seeks a special exception under §1320.4 for modification of the fourteen-foot clear floor-to-ceiling height requirement on the ground floor level.

The project site is located on the south side of H Street, between 6th and 7th Streets, in the Northeast section of Washington, D.C. The site is split-zoned C-2-C and C-2-A, and improved with a one-story, 27,537 S.F. former grocery store, which is now used as an office building. This building is flanked by two, five-story office buildings with a combined total of 168,778 S.F. Vehicular access to an existing surface parking lot is provided by two driveways on H Street and by a public alley network with driveways on 6th, 7th, and G Streets.

601-645 H Street Ventures, LLC, proposes to demolish the existing 27,537 S.F. office building and replace it with a new building that will contain 5,179 S.F. of ground floor retail space, 30,394 S.F. of second floor office space, and 240 residential apartment units. 601-645 H Street Ventures, LLC, also proposes to convert 8,297 S.F. of office space to retail in the ground floor of two existing office buildings that will remain. In sum, this proposal would add 13,476 S.F. of retail space, reduce office space by 5,440 S.F. and add 240 residential apartments to the subject site.

III. Traffic Operations on 7th Street NE

In its Traffic Impact Study dated November 17, 2006, Wells & Associates proposes an option of converting 7th Street NE from one-way operations to two-way operations between H Street and the garage entrance / alley off 7th Street. Such a change could alleviate increased vehicular traffic on local roads by providing vehicles exiting the site

with direct access to H Street via a left-out option. DDOT traffic engineers, however, do not support this conversion of 7th Street for several reasons:

- At only 30 feet, the existing width of the 7th street roadway does not comply with city codes required for two-way streets. To introduce two-way operations would require the movement of curb lines or the removal of parking, neither of which is desirable.
- There is not adequate precedent in the District for midway conversion of a one-way street into two directions. DDOT traffic engineers are wary of the safety implications for motorists and pedestrians.
- It is DDOT's understanding that delivery trucks must back into the loading areas accessed via 7th Street due to geometric constraints related to the building configuration. Therefore a truck entering the alley must maneuver into the secondary lane on 7th Street to execute the turn. Should this lane be converted for northbound traffic, the delivery trucks would have to pull into oncoming traffic, which is dangerous and generally prohibited.

IV. Traffic Operations on H Street

In its preliminary report to the Board of Zoning Adjustment, DDOT determined that the proposed garage entrance on H Street was only acceptable according to certain provisions. First, the entrance would be required to operate as a right in / right out only in order to avoid queuing on H Street and preserve progression along the corridor. Second, because the H Street Zoning Overlay calls for the avoidance of all new curb cuts on H Street, DDOT would only accept the entrance in conjunction with the closure of two existing curb cuts on site.

Following the issuance of DDOT's preliminary report, both the Applicant and community representatives have appealed for a mid-block signal and pedestrian crossing at the intersection of the garage entrance and H Street. The *H Street Mid-Block Signal Analysis* requested by DDOT and conducted by Wells & Associates provides findings of 67 mid-block crossings on H Street in the AM peak hour, 95 mid-block crossings in the PM peak hour, and more than 1,100 mid-block crossings over a 13-hour period. These numbers relate compelling evidence that a mid-block signal could provide a safer, controlled crossing location for pedestrians currently jay walking across H Street.

Further, the *H Street Mid-Block Signal Analysis* concludes that with signal optimization a full movement signalized intersection at the site entrance would not hinder progression or degrade Level of Service at proximate intersections along H Street. While this assessment appears sound, DDOT has residual concern about a number of indefinite factors associated with the reconstruction of the H Street corridor including (1) new traffic signal timings associated with streetcar operations (2) the impact of a new, planned signal at 5th & H Street (3) relocation of the DC Employment Services and possible movement of bus stops,

which generate the majority of mid-block pedestrian traffic, and (4) coordination of crosswalk and signal installation with reconstruction work along H Street.

Despite these reservations, DDOT is willing to tentatively support the mid-block signal and crossing, but wishes to reserve the right to reassess its value and appropriateness as operational plans for H Street become clearer. Therefore, in order to facilitate this arrangement, DDOT recommends that the Applicant place a to-be-determined sum in an escrow account for the complete design and installation of a the traffic signal and mid-block crossing. The estimated cost of this infrastructure is in the range of \$250,000 - \$270,000. If possible, the installation of the traffic signal and crossing should be executed in combination with the corridor reconstruction of H Street.

Finally, if the Applicant intends to install a gate or otherwise controlled access point at the entrance on H Street, it must be set a significant distance back from the public right of way inside the garage to ensure that vehicles do not queue out into the sidewalk or roadway.

V. Traffic Operations on 6th Street

DDOT concurs with the Wells & Associates recommendation to install a separate northbound left turn lane and signal optimization at the intersection of 6th Street and H Street to ease congestion. Because the Traffic Impact Study assumes this improvement as part of the analysis, DDOT would require the Applicant to be responsible for designing and implementing all necessary modifications at the intersection.

According to the Traffic Impact Study, the proposed mixed-use program of residential, retail, and office uses at 601-645 H Street would generate 74 net additional AM peak hour trips and 140 net additional PM peak hour trips. While the study does not show the exclusive impact of the 601-645 H Street project on existing intersection infrastructure, the raw data indicates that site generated traffic plays a significant role in degrading the Level of Service at the intersection of H Street and 6th Street – particularly the northbound leg in the evening peak period. Therefore, DDOT deems it the Applicant's responsibility to mitigate the impacts on the intersection at 6th & H Street, NE as proposed in the original *Traffic Impact Study*.

VI. Parking facilities

DDOT continues to have serious concerns about the number of parking spaces in the proposed parking facilities. The proposed site is zoned under both C-2-A and C-2-C. Based on these regulations, the proposed mixed-use building requires 206 parking spaces. The applicant proposes, however, that a three-level, underground parking garage with 487 total spaces serve the proposed project and replace the existing 162 spaces (47 underground and 115 surface parking spaces). Of the 487 proposed spaces, 265 would be reserved for residential uses and 222 would be reserved for office and retail uses.

DDOT objects to the number of proposed spaces on the grounds that the total is greater than the project demand or need and undermines the Department's goal of promoting public transportation on a corridor receiving a substantial investment in transit. Moreover, the *Traffic Impact Study* claims a high percentage of trip reductions as a result of substantial transit ridership. Expecting a high incidence of transit ridership while providing an excessive amount of parking is contradictory.

DDOT maintains its position issued in our preliminary report and recommends a maximum of 240 residential spaces and 150 spaces for commercial and retail use. Please see the Transportation Demand Management section below to see further recommendations on parking space assignment.

VII. Loading Facilities

Chapter 22 of the *District of Columbia Municipal Regulations* specifies that within the underlying C-2-A and C-2-C zones, one 20-foot deep loading berth for service/delivery and one 55-foot deep loading berth are required for residential uses. Within the underlying C-2-C zone, office buildings with 20,000 to 50,000 S.F. require one 30-foot deep loading berth, and one 20-foot service/delivery loading space.

Based on previous discussions with the Applicant, DDOT is comfortable with the proposed access to the required loading facilities off 7th Street. In these discussions, the Applicant has agreed to widen the alley opening as much as possible up to 25 feet. DDOT acknowledges that the standard 25 feet may not be entirely achievable due to the location of an existing residential home abutting the south side of the alley.

VIII. Transportation Demand Management

In order to mitigate an anticipated increase in vehicular traffic along H Street and local roads, DDOT recommends that BZA require the applicant, 601-645 H Street Ventures, LLC, develop a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program for the 601-645 H Street, N.E., mixed-use project. *Both the high transit trip reductions assumed in the traffic impact analysis and residents' concerns about spill over traffic into the neighborhood indicate a need for a strong TDM plan.*

TDM involves the establishment of various measures to influence travel behavior by mode, frequency, time, route, or trip length, in order to achieve maximally efficient use of transportation facilities.

DDOT has yet to receive a plan of TDM commitments from the Applicant. Therefore, DDOT recommends the BZA institute the following specific measures as part of its final decision.

1. Provide bicycle parking that equals 5% of vehicle parking, bicycle storage facilities for all residents, and shower and changing facilities for office and residential employees.
2. Preferential parking which equals 7% of vehicle parking for carpools and vanpools that is conveniently located near the elevators and close to the entry/exit points to reduce travel time and distance in the parking garage. If there is a charge for parking, carpool spaces shall be offered at a discount to registered carpools and vanpools.
3. Provide four (4) parking spaces, at no cost, for carsharing vehicles. These spaces shall be located at the garage entrance, available to the public 24 hours a day, seven days a week, without restrictions. Provide appropriate and adequate signage to direct users to them.
4. Provide a one-time \$35 membership fee subsidy in a car-sharing program for each residential unit.
5. Provide website hotlinks to CommuterConnections.com and goDCgo.com on developer and property management websites.
6. Provide an on-site business center to residents with access to copier, fax, and Internet services.
7. Provide complimentary SmartTrip cards with \$20 Metro fare media per person to residential tenants upon move-in, and complimentary \$60 Metro fare media to tenants' employees at initial occupancy.
8. Designate a member of building management as a point of contact who is responsible for coordinating and implementing TDM obligations.
9. Distribute alternative transportation information and brochures via lobby kiosks, welcome packets and bulletin boards.

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
District Department of Transportation
 2000 14th Street, N.W., 7th Floor
 Washington, D.C. 20009

Fax # 202-671-0617 Phone # 202-671-2730/40

TRANSPORTATION POLICY & PLANNING ADMINISTRATION

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COMMENTS: FOR BZA CASE 17521

DECISION TOMORROW

(DDOT REPORT)

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