

Government of the District of Columbia


Department of Transportation



d. Planning and Sustainability Division

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Board of Zoning Adjustment

FROM: Anna Chamberlin
Neighborhood Planning Manager 

DATE: March 10, 2020

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 20242 – 3401-3403 Water Street NW

APPLICATION

IDI Water Street, LC (the “Applicant”), pursuant to Title 11 (2016 Zoning Regulations) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Subtitle X, Chapter 9, requests a special exception under Subtitle C §710.2(a) to allow vehicle parking within 20 feet of all lot lines, and pursuant to Subtitle X, Chapter 10, requests a variance from the driveway width requirement of Subtitle C §711.6(a), the minimum dimensions for full-sized parking spaces and aisles of Subtitle C §712.5, and the minimum dimensions for compact parking spaces and aisles of Subtitle C §712.6, to construct a 54-unit residential building. The site is located in the MU-13 Zone at 3401-3403 Water Street NW (Square 1183, Lot 813).

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 multi-modal 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:

- Each of the requests for relief are to accommodate more on-site vehicle parking than required, which DDOT does not support because additional on-site parking induces additional driving;

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- The project is providing 42 parking spaces (0.78 spaces/unit ratio), 25 more spaces than the 2016 Zoning Regulation's parking minimum of 17 spaces. Because the subject site is located a ¼-mile from a Metrorail Station and less than a ¼-mile from a DC Circulator stop, DDOT prefers that the project provide no more than 22 vehicle spaces (0.40 spaces/unit ratio) to meet the off-street parking guidelines established in the *Guidance of Comprehensive Transportation Review (2019)*;
- If the project provided slightly more units to require only three more parking spaces (20 total spaces vs 17 spaces), the proposal would exceed the ZR16 parking maximums and trigger mandatory transportation demand management (TDM) mitigations per §707.3(a) for sites significantly in excess of the parking minimum;
- DDOT encourages the Applicant to reduce the number of parking spaces so that the requested special exception from Subtitle C §710.2(a) is not needed. Furthermore, more residential units or amenities could possibly be included in the project in lieu of the proposed parking;
- The Applicant is requesting two curb cuts in the proposal. Absent a compelling need, DDOT's policy is that there should be no more than one curb cut per building. The steep changes in topography and narrowness of the site, however, illustrate the need for more than one curb cut into the property if two decks of parking are to remain;
- If both curb cuts remain, DDOT supports the variances from Subtitle C §711.6 to reduce the width of the driveways to 19 feet and 14 feet, and from Subtitle C §712.5 and §712.6 to reduce the two-way drive aisle width to 16 feet in order to accommodate the existing fabric of the historic building, including the existing exterior openings and interior columns; and
- If both decks of parking are to remain, DDOT requests an Enhanced TDM Plan be implemented to off-set the potential for induced vehicular travel to/from the site (see Recommendation section below).

RECOMMENDATION

DDOT has reviewed the application materials and has determined that the proposed action may lead to a minor increase in vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle trips on the localized transportation network. Despite these minor impacts, DDOT does not object to the approval of this application, on the condition that the Applicant implements the following TDM plan for the life of the project:

- Unbundle the cost of vehicle parking from the lease or purchase agreement for each residential unit and charge a minimum rate based on the average market rate within a quarter mile.
- Identify Transportation Coordinators for the planning, construction, and operations phases of development. The Transportation Coordinators will act as points of contact with DDOT, goDCgo, and Zoning Enforcement.
- Provide Transportation Coordinators' contact information to goDCgo, conduct an annual commuter survey of employees on-site, and report TDM activities and data collection efforts to goDCgo once per year.

- Transportation Coordinators will develop, distribute, and market various transportation alternatives and options to the residents, including promoting transportation events (i.e., Bike to Work Day, National Walking Day, Car Free Day) on property website and in any internal building newsletters or communications.
- Transportation Coordinators will receive TDM training from goDCgo to learn about the TDM conditions for this project and available options for implementing the TDM Plan.
- Provide welcome packets to all new residents that should, at a minimum, include the Metrorail pocket guide, brochures of local bus lines (Circulator and Metrobus), carpool and vanpool information, CaBi coupon or rack card, Guaranteed Ride Home (GRH) brochure, and the most recent DC Bike Map. Brochures can be ordered from DDOT's goDCgo program by emailing info@godcgo.com.
- Provide residents who wish to carpool with detailed carpooling information and will be referred to other carpool matching services sponsored by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) or other comparable service if MWCOG does not offer this in the future.
- Transportation Coordinator will subscribe to goDCgo's residential newsletter.
- Post all TDM commitments on website, publicize availability, and allow the public to see what commitments have been promised.
- Provide a SmarTrip card to every new resident and a complimentary Capital Bikeshare coupon good for one ride.
- Long-term bicycle storage rooms will accommodate non-traditional sized bikes including cargo, tandem, and kids bikes.
- Install a Transportation Information Center Display (electronic screen) within the lobby containing information related to local transportation alternatives. At a minimum the display should include information about nearby Metrorail stations and schedules, Metrobus stops and schedules, carsharing locations, and nearby Capital Bikeshare locations indicating the availability of bicycles.
- Fund the installation of a Capital Bikeshare (CaBi) expansion plate at a nearby station to be selected by DDOT.
- Will not lease unused residential parking spaces to anyone aside from tenants of the building (e.g., will not lease to other nearby office employees, single-family home residents, or sporting events).
- Provide an annual CaBi membership to each resident for the first year after the building opens.
- Provide four (4) additional short-term bicycle parking spaces (two inverted U-racks) in the vicinity of the site.
- Provide a bicycle repair station in each long-term bicycle parking storage room.

- Provide one (1) collapsible shopping cart (utility cart) for every 25 residential units, for a total of two (2) carts to encourage residents to walk to the grocery store and for other shopping errands.
- Expand the sidewalk space along the building's entire Water Street NW frontage to ensure the pedestrian realm is ADA accessible, subject to DDOT approval.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Vehicle Parking

The Applicant is proposing to provide 42 parking spaces internal to the property, accessed via two, separate unconnected entrances: 1) a curb cut on Water Street NW to 13 vehicle parking spaces, and 2) a curb cut along 34th Street NW to 29 vehicle parking spaces.

Per the 2019 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR)*, DDOT's Preferred Vehicle Parking Rates indicate that a vehicle parking ratio of 0.40 spaces per unit (22 total) is appropriate for this project, given the proximity to the DC Circulator stop at 34th Street NW and M Street NW. The Applicant's proposed parking ratio of 0.78 spaces per unit is well above DDOT's preferred ratio and exceeds the ZR16 parking maximums. If the site were slightly larger, mandatory TDM mitigations per §707.3(a) would be triggered. To help support non-automotive traveling options for future residents and mitigate the potential for induced demand for driving, an "Enhanced" TDM plan should be implemented.

Due to the significant overprovision of off-street vehicle parking spaces, additional safety measures and amenities for bicyclists and pedestrians are needed. DDOT is currently designing a streetscape plan along Water Street NW to improve the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. The Applicant should work with DDOT to implement the streetscape plan by widening the sidewalk dimensions along Water Street NW along their property frontage. The Applicant should coordinate the design of this section with DDOT's Planning and Sustainability Division.

Bicycle Parking

Subtitle C §802.1 of the Zoning Regulations requires 18 long-term bicycle parking spaces and three (3) short-term bicycle parking spaces. The Applicant proposes to meet or exceed both the requirements by providing 18 long-term bicycle parking spaces and three (3) short-term spaces. The long-term bicycle parking spaces will be located on the first-floor level at the eastern end of the building and short-term spaces will be located in public space along 34th Street NW. As part of the TDM plan, DDOT requests an additional four (4) short-term parking spaces for a total of seven (7) spaces.

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, however the subject site does not have access to an alley. Access to this building for loading

and unloading, delivery and trash pick-up is an important consideration, and DDOT expects the Applicant to comply with DDOT's standards for loading.

Per Subtitle C §901.1 of the Zoning Regulations, buildings with more than 50 units must provide at least one (1) 30-foot loading berth and one (1) 20-foot delivery space. The Applicant is proposing to meet the loading requirement by providing one (1) 30-foot berth adjacent to the entrance on Water Street NW. A delivery space has not been identified.

PUBLIC SPACE

All elements of the project proposed in public space require the Applicant to meet all District design regulations and pursue a public space permit through DDOT's permitting process. The Applicant will need to apply for the elements identified below and any other features proposed in public space:

- **Canopies:** The Applicant is proposing canopies on Water Street NW that project four (4) feet into public space. Per DCMR §12A-3202.6, projections are *not* permitted along Water Street NW from Wisconsin Avenue NW westward to the termination of the street. The canopies along 34th Street NW meet the five (5) foot maximum for projecting into public space [DCMR §12A-3202.12.2].
- **Curb Cuts:** Two curb cuts are currently proposed; one (1) on Water Street NW and one (1) on 34th Street NW. Per Section 31.5 of the [Design and Engineering Manual \(DEM\)](#), the maximum number of curb cuts must be no more than three for a property abutting two or more streets; however, despite these limits, absent a compelling need, there should be no more than one curb cut per building. The Applicant justifies this need based on the narrowness of the length of the property and the steep topographical slope running north to south. The dimensions of the proposed curb cuts should be consistent with the following requirements: the curb cut along Water Street should have a width of eight (8) to 12 feet and the curb cut along 34th Street NW should have a width between 18 and 24 feet wide. If the Applicant were to eliminate a deck of parking, as suggested by DDOT, one of these two curb cuts could be eliminated.
- **Streetlights:** The Applicant should work with DDOT to identify the best solution for streetlights along Water Street NW.

The Applicant should refer to Titles 11, 12A, and 24 of the [DCMR](#), and the most recent version of DDOT's [Design and Engineering Manual \(DEM\)](#), and DDOT's [Public Realm Design Manual](#) for public space regulations and design guidance. A permit application can be filed through the DDOT [Transportation Online Permitting System](#) (TOPS) website.

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