

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Policy, Planning and Sustainability Administration

MEMORANDUM

TO: District of Columbia Zoning Commission

FROM: Sam Zimbabwe
Associate Director 

DATE: May 19, 2014

SUBJECT: **ZC 13-18** – Wheeler Renaissance, 4129-4131 Wheeler Road SE

APPLICATION

Application of WBG Wheeler Road, LLC for a consolidated review and approval of a Planned Unit Development (“PUD”) and a zoning map amendment to rezone Lots 820 and 821 in Square 5925 from the C-1 district to the C-2-B district. The proposed development includes 85 affordable residential units, 14,241 square feet of ground floor retail, and 25 vehicle parking spaces. The Applicant is seeking partial relief from parking requirements and full relief from loading requirements. Three of the existing retail establishments currently located on the site are expected to occupy a portion of the new retail space.

RECOMMENDATIONS IN BRIEF

The purpose of DDOT’s review is to assess the potential impacts of the project on the District’s transportation network. After an extensive multi-administration review, DDOT finds:

- A robust network of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit infrastructure exists in close proximity to the proposed development;
- The Applicant proposes to provide at least 30 long-term bicycle parking spaces in a bicycle storage room and at least 24 short-term bicycle parking spaces in front of the building.
- Residents are likely to heavily utilize non-automobile modes of travel, reducing the need for auto ownership. Retail establishments are expected to be neighborhood-serving and primarily accessed via non-auto modes;
- The site is not currently in the District’s Residential Permit Parking (RPP) system nor is its location consistent with the program’s eligibility criteria;
- The availability of curbside spaces in the vicinity would provide sufficient parking if parking demand should exceed available on-site parking supply.
- The Applicant plans to request of DDOT a curbside loading zone to meet the project’s loading needs. DDOT’s lack of objection to the loading variance request does not constitute approval for the curbside loading zone. Should the request for a curbside loading zone be denied, the adjacent alley network and DDOT Emergency No Parking signs are available to meet the project’s loading needs;
- The proposed Loading Management Plan needs to be strengthened to minimize the impacts of site-generated loading activities;

- The Applicant has proposed a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan intended to minimize auto ownership and support a high non-auto mode split; and
- The commitment to reserve an area within public space for a future Capital Bikeshare station is appropriate; however, as proposed, the location is too small to accommodate a station. DDOT will work with the Applicant through the public space permitting process on final design.

DDOT has no objection to the action provided the Applicant adopts a Loading Management Plan as outlined in this report.

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 and take advantage of the District's multimodal transportation network.

As part of the transportation impact assessment, DDOT requests that applicants evaluate the impacts to the pedestrian, transit, and roadway system resulting from the development. 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. The evaluation should consider guidance from relevant documents, including guidance on the public realm, the pedestrian system, the bicycle system, as well as neighborhood-based studies. The Applicant and DDOT agreed on a scope of work for the CTR. An evaluation of the basic elements and assumptions of the Applicant's CTR follows.

Site Access

The figure below shows the proposed site access for pedestrians, trucks, and private vehicles.

The site is bordered by alleys on the north and west that will serve as the vehicle access points to the 25 vehicle parking spaces located at the rear of the proposed building.

The main pedestrian access points for the residential use are at the corner of Wheeler Road and Barnaby Street and along Barnaby Street. The main pedestrian access points for the retail spaces are from Wheeler Road. Secondary entrances are available at the rear of the retail spaces to connect to the vehicle parking spaces.

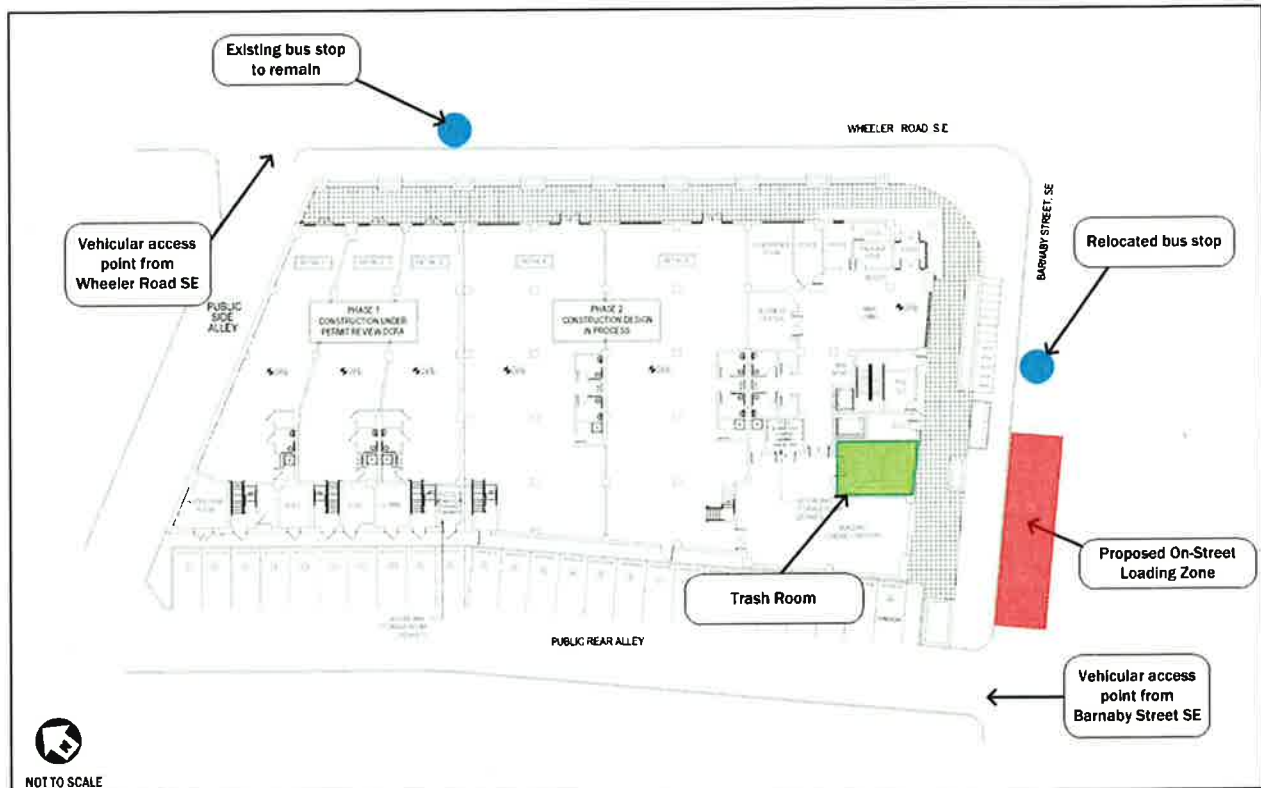


Figure 1: Proposed Site Layout and Access. Source: Applicant's Supplemental Report 5/16/14. Gorove/Slade.

Loading & Trash

Section 2201.1 of the Zoning Regulations requires the Applicant to provide one 30-foot loading berth and one 100 square foot loading platform for the retail portion and one 55-foot loading berth, one 20-foot service space, and one 200 square foot loading platform for the residential component. The Applicant is seeking full relief from the on-site loading requirements.

The Applicant projects approximately one residential truck trip ever 12-13 days and an additional 2-4 van-sized or small box truck retail deliveries each day. To accommodate the site's loading needs, the Applicant proposes to request from DDOT a curbside loading zone on Barnaby Street adjacent where a bus stop is currently located. The Applicant is coordinating with DDOT and WMATA on shifting the location of the bus stop closer to the intersection with Wheeler Road. Relocating the bus stop would allow for approximately 30-35' of additional curbside space. The Applicant must submit a formal loading zone request to DDOT. DDOT will review the request and determine if the need for loading facilities in the vicinity warrants a curbside loading zone. Should the request for a curbside loading zone be denied, the Applicant and/or tenants could apply for DDOT Emergency No Parking signs to establish a temporary loading zone.

DDOT notes that curbside loading on Barnaby Street would not be located in close proximity to the retail establishments. Delivery drivers are likely to attempt to park their vehicles as close to the retail establishments as possible. The Applicant's analysis of truck turning diagrams revealed that trucks up to 28 feet in length are able to navigate the alley system adjacent to the site, which would allow deliveries to occur from the alley network. In addition, 30-foot trucks, which are not atypical for neighborhood serving retail deliveries, would be able to navigate the alley network with one backing maneuver. Accordingly, the alley network is sufficient to accommodate the anticipated loading needs.

Residential and retail trash will be stored in trash bins in a trash room in the residential portion of the building and rolled out to Barnaby Street for pick-up.

The Applicant is proposing a Loading Management Plan to minimize the impact of loading activities. However, DDOT notes that the Loading Management Plan assumes that a curbside loading zone would be approved by DDOT, which is not a certainty. Therefore, the Loading Management Plan should include the following elements:

- Designate a loading management coordinator to coordinate all loading and trash activities for the building;
- Require all residential tenants to notify the loading coordinator before moving in or out;
- Limit delivery trucks to no greater than 30 feet in length. In the rare instance when larger truck deliveries are unavoidable, deliveries will be scheduled between the hours of 10am – 3pm and 8pm – 6am;
- Tenants requiring a moving truck must provide the loading coordinator the following information: time and date that the truck is anticipated to arrive, size of truck being used, and name of the moving service, if applicable; and
- In the absence of a curbside loading zone, the loading management coordinator or tenant will apply for DDOT Emergency No Parking signs to establish a temporary loading area, if necessary.
- All tenants and retailers will be provided with information regarding loading restrictions, rules, and suggested truck routes at lease signing.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Facilities

Due to the affordable housing program and neighborhood-serving retail, automobile ownership and use is expected to be minimal, while transit, walking, and bicycling are expected to be the predominant modes of transportation for this development. Based on the Applicant's field observations and inventory of the pedestrian and bicycle facilities (i.e., sidewalks, crosswalks, bicycle lanes), the study area intersections and roadway network provide adequate pedestrian and cycling connections to nearby land uses and transit facilities.

The site is within close proximity to the Oxon Run Trail, and low volume streets provide bicycle connections to nearby destinations. There are no existing Capitol Bikeshare stations within the vicinity. The closest stations are approximately 1 mile from the site.

The Applicant is proposing to supply 30 long-term bicycle parking spaces in a bicycle storage room located on the ground floor, which exceeds the minimum required by District law. DDOT encourages the Applicant to provide as many long-term bicycle parking spaces as possible to support the parking relief.

In addition, the Applicant proposes to provide 24 short-term spaces in the public space. The amount of short-term parking is sufficiently generous and its location will be addressed in the public space permitting process.

Transit Service

DDOT and 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.

The Applicant evaluated the proximity of the subject site to nearby Metro station and the adequacy of the bus service along the routes that serve the subject area. The site is approximately one mile from both the Congress Heights and Southern Avenue Metro stations, which is approximately a 22 minute walk. This is outside of the typical “walkshed” of a rail station; however walking to the Metro stations is not infeasible and bus feeder service provides frequent service to both stations.

The site is currently served by 7 WMATA Metrobus lines that provide excellent connections to popular destinations, including the Congress Heights and Southern Avenue Metro stations. The routes offer peak hour headways of about 10-30 minutes and off-peak headways of 20-30 minutes. In addition to the Metrobus lines, two The Ride bus routes serving destinations in Prince George’s County are located within a short walk of the site. Collectively, the robust bus network in the vicinity provides high frequency transit service.

There are four bus stops in the immediate vicinity that provide bi-directional service to seven bus routes. These bus stops have several access deficiencies and lack bus shelters, benches, and other amenities that enhance the bus riding experience. The Applicant proposes to provide a bus shelter at the existing Barnaby Street stop. DDOT reviews bus shelter installation requests to determine if one is warranted and oversees bus shelter installations. Private entities such as developers are not eligible to purchase and/or install bus shelters. The Applicant should submit a bus shelter installation request for DDOT’s review.

The Applicant is required to coordinate with DDOT and WMATA on temporary construction-related changes to bus stops.

Roadway Capacity and Operations

The Applicant coordinated with DDOT on the development of the traffic study scope and relevant study area intersections. The Applicant’s methodology for evaluating existing traffic conditions and future traffic conditions is generally consistent with DDOT procedures as defined in *the Design and Engineering Manual*.

The Applicant’s analysis assumes reasonable rates of non-auto travel for the residential and retail uses that accounts for the affordable housing program and neighborhood-serving retail uses.

If the desired mode splits are achieved, the proposed development would not result in a noticeable increase in intersection delay at the study area intersections with the exception of the northbound approach at Southern Avenue and Wheeler Road. However, this approach is expected to operate at a Level of Service (LOS) F in the future background scenario. Site generated traffic is expected to add minimal delay to the approach. The Applicant has proposed that DDOT implement minor signal timing adjustments to improve the operations of the intersection. The Applicant must coordinate with DDOT on the signal timing change, and DDOT approval is required for such a change to be made.

Land-Use/Mode	Trip Generation by Mode						Daily Total
	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour			
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total	
Vehicle Trips							
Residential	2	7	9	8	5	13	128
Retail	3	3	6	8	10	18	228
Total New Vehicle Trips	5	10	15	16	15	31	356
Transit Person-Trips							
Residential	6	25	31	28	15	43	434
Retail	6	4	10	16	16	32	418
Total New Transit Person-Trips	12	29	41	44	31	75	852
Walking Person-Trips							
Residential	1	4	5	5	2	7	72
Retail	3	2	5	9	8	17	226
Total New Walking Person-Trips	4	6	10	14	10	24	298
Bicycling Person-Trips							
Residential	1	4	3	5	2	7	72
Retail	1	1	2	3	3	6	79
Total New Bicycling Person-Trips	2	5	7	8	5	13	151
Total Trips*	23	50	73	82	61	143	1,657

* - Combination of person-trips and vehicle-trips

Figure 2 Proposed Trip Generation. Source: Applicant's CTR 4/16/14. Gorove/Slade.

Safety

DDOT requires that the Applicant conduct a safety analysis to evaluate the crash rates at intersections within the study area over a 3-year period. The Applicant noted one intersection with high crash rates. If the proposed project meets its intended non-auto mode split, it is unlikely to substantially exacerbate the safety and operations of the vicinity. However, a number of the crashes involved pedestrians. Given the importance of walking, bicycling, and transit to the subject project, improving pedestrian safety at the intersection is necessary. The Applicant proposes that DDOT consider implementing leading pedestrian intervals. The Applicant must coordinate with DDOT on the signal timing change, and DDOT approval is required for such a change to be made.

Intersection	Rate per MEV	Right Angle	Left Turn	Right Turn	Rear End	Side Swiped	Head On	Parked	Fixed Object	Ran Off Road	Ped. Involved	Backing	Unspecified	Total
Southern Avenue SE & Wheeler Road SE	2.35	4	11	3	12	13	1	3	3	0	2	0	0	59
		7%	19%	5%	20%	22%	2%	5%	5%	0%	3%	0%	0%	

Figure 3 High Crash Rates Intersection. Source: Applicant's CTR 4/16/14. Gorove/Slade.

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, proximity to transit, connectivity of bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the vicinity of the development, and the demographic composition and other characteristics of the potential residents.

The Applicant is proposing to provide 25 vehicle parking spaces in lieu of the 85 spaces required by zoning. The parking spaces are anticipated to primarily serve the retail establishments, though parking is proposed to be available to residents during off-hours of the retail establishments.

The site is not currently in the District's Residential Permit Parking (RPP) system nor is its location consistent with the program's eligibility criteria. Accordingly, it is unlikely that future tenants would be eligible for RPP passes.

The Applicant conducted a curbside parking utilization study in an area surrounding the site to determine the availability of parking. The inventory noted a total of 174 curbside parking spaces in the vicinity; 6 RPP Zone 8 spaces, 14 school zone restricted spaces, and 154 unrestricted spaces. The RPP spaces are located adjacent to the site on Barnaby Street. The parking inventory is illustrated in *Figure 4*.

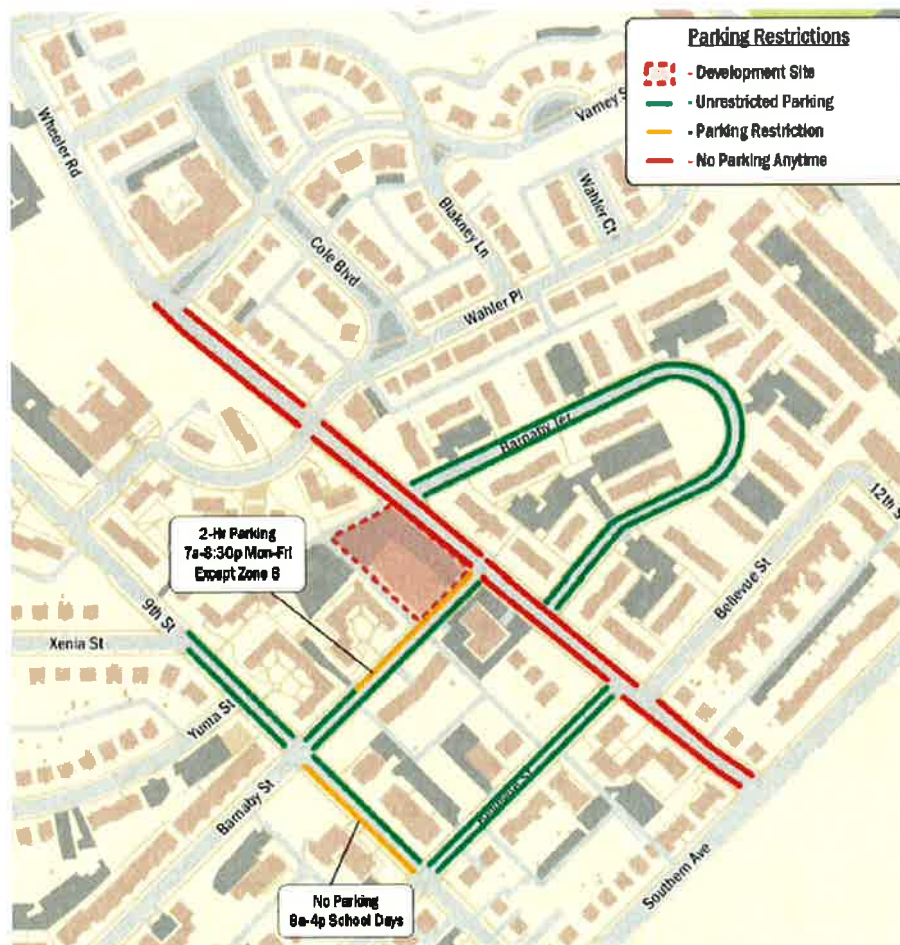


Figure 4 Parking Inventory Map (Source: Applicant's CTR)

The Applicant surveyed parking utilization during a typical weekday morning (6:00am to 10:00am) and evening period (4:00pm to 10:00pm), which is when demand for parking is typically at its highest. Within the observation periods, the peak periods occurred at 6:00am when 49% of available spaces were utilized and at 7:00pm when 45% of available spaces were utilized. Specifically, the 6 RPP spaces were found to be 100% utilized in the morning and evening peak periods while significant availability was noted for the unrestricted spaces in the vicinity during both periods. The amounts of parking availability by parking space type are summarized below:

Space Type	Existing Number of Spaces	AM Peak Period		PM Peak Period	
		Occupancy	Utilization	Occupancy	Utilization
RPP	6	6	100%	6	100%
Unrestricted	168	80	48%	73	43%
All On-Street Spaces	174	86	49%	79	45%

Figure 5 Peak Hour Inventory and Occupancy (Source: Applicant's CTR)

The availability of curbside spaces in the vicinity would provide sufficient parking if parking demand should exceed available on-site parking supply.

Transportation Demand Management

As part of all major development review cases, DDOT requires the Applicant to produce a comprehensive 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 mass transit, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and reduce single occupancy vehicle trips during peak periods.

The Applicant is proposing the following TDM strategies:

- Identify a TDM Leader;
- Provide 30 long-term bicycle parking spaces on the ground floor of the building and an additional 24 short-term bicycle parking spaces outside the building;
- Provide a transportation information screen in the lobby that would show real time arrival / availability for nearby buses, trains, carshare, and Bikeshare;
- Make information available on transportation alternatives and services;
- Provide an on-site business center;
- Reserve a location outside the building for a future Capital Bikeshare station; and
- Provide an enhanced bus shelter adjacent to the site on Barnaby Street

DDOT notes that the proposed location for a future Capital Bikeshare station is too small to accommodate a station. DDOT agrees that a space should be reserved for future installation of a station and will work with the Applicant through the public space permitting process on the final design of the reserved space. Additionally, as noted above, DDOT reviews bus shelter installation requests to determine if one is warranted and oversees bus shelter installations. Private entities such as developers are not eligible to purchase and/or install bus shelters. The Applicant should submit a bus shelter installation request for DDOT's review.

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 and OP 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 DC Municipal Regulations and DDOT's Design and Engineering Manual for specific controls of public space.

The Applicant's preliminary public space plans indicate utility vaults in public space or within the Building Restriction Line. DDOT expects utility vaults to be accommodated on private property. As noted above, DDOT agrees with the commitment to reserve an area within public space for a future Capitol Bikeshare station; however, as proposed, the location is too small to accommodate a station. DDOT also notes that the Applicant is expected to install tree boxes and street trees in the public space and needs to coordinate with DDOT to avoid conflicts with the existing overhead wires. These issues will be addressed during the public space permitting process.

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