


**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
Project Review Manager 

DATE: June 1, 2018

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 19689 – 1630 Crescent Place NW & 2300 16th Street NW (Meridian International Center)

PROJECT SUMMARY

MIC9 Owner, LLC (the “Applicant”), pursuant to Title 11 (2016 Zoning Regulations) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Subtitle X, Chapter 9, requests a special exceptions from the private school regulations under Subtitle X § 104.1, from the bulk extension regulations under Subtitle A § 207.2, and from the retaining wall requirements under Subtitle C § 1402.1. The Applicant proposes to construct new office space and a nine-story apartment house on a campus that currently contains an existing private school. The site is located in the RA-2 and RA-4 Zones at 2300 16th Street NW (Square 2568, Lots 806, 808, and 809). Based on the Applicant’s statement and plans dated December 13, 2017, the Applicant proposes the following development program:

- 111 residential dwelling units;
- 9,226 SF of office and meeting space;
- 72 vehicle parking spaces serving the residential units and 47 vehicle parking spaces serving the office and meeting space;
- 38 long-term and 14 short-term bicycle parking spaces; and
- One (1) 30-foot long loading berth, one (1) service and delivery space, and one (1) loading platform.

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. 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:

Site Design

- The Applicant proposes to develop its existing surface parking lot and will restore vehicle parking spaces serving the private school use in the below grade garage and nearby garage;
- The site is located on a one-way loop in which vehicles enter the loop by turning from the unsignalized intersection of Belmont Street NW and exit by traveling northward on 17th Street NW or by continuing around the loop to the signalized intersection of Crescent Place NW;
- A small segment of Belmont Street NW at the southern portion of the loop between 16th Street NW and the Beekman Place driveway is two-way;
- The Applicant proposes to close and relocate its existing site access from Crescent Place to the Belmont Street side of the loop so vehicles and trucks can take advantage of the two-way segment;
- The curb cut relocation will provide shorter travel distance for vehicles accessing the site and will reduce traffic around the loop;
- The relocation will require the removal of on-street parking spaces to increase the width of the existing travel lanes and accommodate truck turns out of the site;
- The Applicant has prepared a curbside signage plan for DDOT's preliminary consideration, which, accounting for the closure of the site's existing curb cut, results in a net loss of three (3) on-street spaces around the loop; and
- Loading and trash operations will occur on private property in the 30-foot loading berth required by zoning, and the internal court allows for front-in and front-out truck maneuvers.

Travel Assumptions

- 60% of the trips generated by the proposed residential units are anticipated to be vehicle trips, equating to 34 morning and 39 evening peak hour vehicle trips;
- 40% of the trips generated by the residential units are anticipated to be non-vehicular, equating to 22 morning and 26 evening non-vehicular trips;
- The site is adjacent to a WMATA Metrobus station on 16th Street NW, and DDOT anticipates that future high-capacity bus service will improve bus reliability and performance along the corridor;
- The site is roughly six (6) blocks from the U Street/African American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo Metrorail Station and is within a half mile walk of multiple Capital Bikeshare stations;
- The site is required to provide 125 vehicle parking spaces for its residential and private school uses, and will provide a total of 158 self-park vehicle parking spaces across the two garages.
- The Applicant anticipates hosting events, subject to limitations based on agreements with the adjacent community. On event days, the two (2) garages' capacity can be expanded to 177 spaces by using a valet service that stacks vehicles;

- 36 of the 125 required vehicle parking spaces are for the residential use. The Applicant proposes to dedicate 72 spaces to its residential property, which is one (1) space below the mitigation requirements of Subtitle C § 707.3; and
- The site is required to provide 38 long-term and 14 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The Applicant proposes to accommodate the long-term spaces in a bicycle room within the proposed building's garage and can provide 7 inverted U-racks within 120 feet of the building's entrance to meet its short-term requirement.

Analysis

- Based on the Applicant's January 2018 CTR, the proposed density, which is by-right, is not anticipated to have significant impacts to the District's vehicular transportation network;
- Despite the project's limited impact, the Applicant has worked in good faith with various adjacent community groups and DDOT to address its transportation concerns;
- Based on the Applicant's coordination with the community, DDOT understands that the community desires the installation of a new traffic signal at Belmont Street NW and 16th Street NW. DDOT cannot support a signal at this location as it is too close to the signal at Crescent Place NW and does not meet any signal warrants;
 - If the Applicant chooses to pursue a post-occupancy signal warrant study at its own discretion, any recommendations will be subject to DDOT's review and approval. If any recommended changes are ultimately accepted by DDOT, they should be funded in full by the Applicant; and
 - Any voluntary turn restrictions for exiting site traffic should be placed on private property and should be managed and enforced by the Applicant;
- The Applicant has prepared a curbside parking plan (Figure 2) and should integrate any future proposed pavement marking changes, such as "Do Not Block the Box" striping, into one plan for DDOT's review and approval during the public space permitting process;
- In addition to pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users will make use of the adjacent crosswalks and curb ramps to access the site. Because the Applicant anticipates that 40% of the trips generated by the site will use these modes, the Applicant should ensure adjacent facilities meet DDOT specifications;
- Currently, the intersections of 16th Street NW and Belmont Street NW and 16th Street NW and Crescent Place NW do not meet DDOT standards. The intersections have substandard or are missing curb ramps and crosswalks, and east-west crossings at Belmont Street NW are not advisable because the intersection is not signalized; and
- The Applicant's CTR proposes a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan, which has been supplemented through the requirements of additional Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with adjacent community parties. DDOT finds the plan acceptable given the project's level of impact.

RECOMMENDATION

DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested special exceptions on the condition the Applicant fund and construct improvements that bring the intersections of 16th Street NW and Belmont Street NW and 16th Street NW and Crescent Place up to DDOT's standards. All improvements are subject to DDOT review and approval.

Continued Coordination

Given the complexity and size of the action, the Applicant is expected to continue to work with DDOT outside of the BZA process on the following matters:

- Work with DDOT on the scope of any future warrant studies and/or traffic mitigation plans;
- The Applicant must work closely with DDOT and the Office of Planning 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 circulate around it:
 - Provide a pedestrian facility improvement plan for the intersections of 16th Street NW and Belmont Street NW and 16th Street NW and Crescent Place NW;
 - Provide a signage and marking plan with any all proposed changes for DDOT's review and approval;
 - Address any outstanding comments related to the existing public space application package for lead walks, projections, the proposed curb cut relocation, and fixtures (tracking number #276942); and
 - Locate all vaults on private property.

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 Circulation

The Applicant's site is surrounded by a one-way loop comprised of Belmont Street NW to the south and Crescent Place NW to the north. The Applicant proposes to relocate its existing curb cut from Crescent Place to the southern portion of the loop at Belmont Street, which includes a short two-way segment. Currently, the existing surface parking lot on the site is accessed from Crescent Place NW. The relocation will allow vehicles to enter and exit the site without traveling around the entire loop. Figure 1 depicts the transportation network around the site.



Figure 1 – Existing Travel Conditions (Source: GoogleMaps, taken May 22, 2018)

While the Applicant’s access proposal was intended as a benefit to the adjacent community by reducing circulation around the site’s outer loop, the Applicant received feedback from different HOAs related to potential turn restrictions and the signalization of Belmont Street NW. DDOT cannot recommend the signalization of Belmont Street as it does not currently meet any signal warrant tests and is too close to the nearby signal at Crescent Place and 16th Street NW. The Applicant has agreed to coordinate further with the community regarding circulation around the site for vehicles and trucks, and should continue to coordinate with DDOT regarding the feasibility and desirability of proposed changes to the District’s transportation network. DDOT is open to reviewing post-occupancy signal warrant studies, but anticipates that a signal at Belmont Street NW and 16th Street NW will continue to be unwarranted and undesirable. DDOT notes that any potential future turn restrictions out of the site should be placed on private property and managed by the site’s property management.

Relocating site access to the two-way portion of Belmont Street NW will require changes to existing parking restrictions. The Applicant has submitted a preliminary curbside plan (Figure 2), and has additionally indicated that it plans to submit public space permits for pavement markings to accommodate community requests. DDOT encourages the Applicant to submit a consolidated signage and marking application package for DDOT’s review and approval.

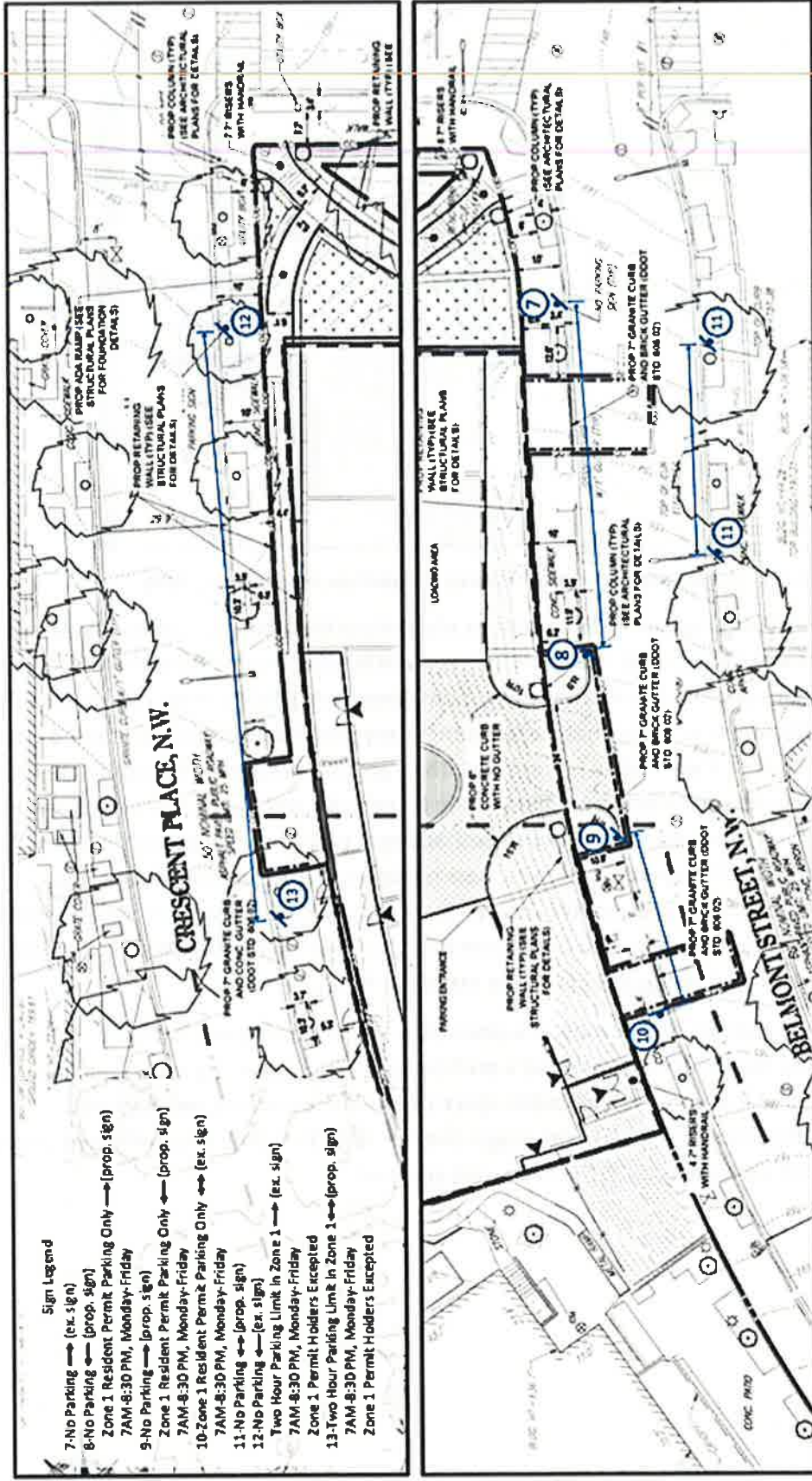


Figure 2 – Preliminary Curbside Plan (Source: Memorandum from Applicant dated February 23, 2018)

The Applicant’s pre-hearing submission includes MOUs with additional circulation-related pavement marking and signage requests. DDOT emphasizes that any item recorded in an MOU that impacts DDOT’s right-of-way is subject to its review and approval.

Loading

Zoning requires the Applicant to provide dedicated loading, and the Applicant proposes to meet its requirement by providing one (1) 30-foot loading berth, one (1) service delivery space, and one (1) loading platform located off of the porte-cochere. All loading and trash collection operations will take place on private property, and the design of the porte-cochere allows trucks to circulate through the site without any backing or reverse movements through public space.

Public Space

All elements of the project in public space require the Applicant to pursue a public space permit through DDOT’s permitting process. DDOT notes that the Applicant has already filed for some of its anticipated public space elements, including retaining walls, lead walks, staircases, the proposed curb cut relocation, and a canopy (tracking number #276942). Should it be the pleasure of the BZA to condition the recommended pedestrian improvements, the Applicant will need to submit an additional permit application. Any proposed signage and pavement marking changes resulting from the BZA’s decision or subsequent monitoring will also require DDOT’s coordination and approval.

The Applicant may refer to Titles 11, 12A, and 24 of the DCMR and DDOT’s recently released 2017 Design and Engineering Manual (DEM) for specific controls of public space. A summary can also be found in DDOT’s Public Realm Design Manual.

Travel Assumptions

The purpose of the CTR is to inform DDOT’s review of a proposed action’s impacts on the District’s transportation network. To that end, selecting reasonable and defensible travel assumptions is critical to developing a realistic analysis.

Trip Generation

The Applicant provided trip generation estimates utilizing the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) *Trip Generation Manual*, and then applied a non-automode split of 40% based on Census data to determine the number of auto and non-auto trips. DDOT generally finds this method appropriate, although the project was initially scoped in 2014, and DDOT now requires the conversion of base vehicular trips to base person trips using average auto occupancy data and then back to vehicular, transit, walking, and biking trips. Table 1 below shows the Applicant’s assumed trip generation.

Trip Type	AM Peak Hour			PM Peak Hour		
	In	Out	Total	In	Out	Total
Total Trips	10	46	56	44	21	65
Non-auto Trips (40%)	4	18	22	18	8	26
Transit (24.4%)	3	11	13	12	5	16
Bicycle (3.1%)	-	1	2	1	1	2
Pedestrian (12.5%)	1	6	7	6	3	9
Vehicle Trips	6	28	34	26	13	39

Table 1 – Trip Generation (Source: Applicant’s CTR, dated January 2018)

Background Developments and Regional Growth

As part of the analysis of future conditions, DDOT requires applicants account for future growth in traffic on the network or what is referred to as background growth. The Applicant coordinated with DDOT on the appropriate travel forecasting methodology to include in the analysis. Specifically, the Applicant used DDOT's historical average daily traffic volumes, which suggested a growth rate of .09% was appropriate for the analysis. In coordination with DDOT, the Applicant increased the growth rate to one percent (1%) to generate a more conservative analysis. The Applicant also accounted for pipeline developments anticipated within the vicinity of the site, which were projected to generate a total of 79 morning and 90 evening peak hour trips.

Off-Street Vehicle Parking

For its residential program, the Applicant proposes to exceed its § 701.5 zoning requirement of 36 vehicle parking spaces by providing 72 spaces in a below grade garage. The Applicant's project will eliminate the existing surface parking lot, which is used by the private school facility operating on the site. To replace the school's parking, the Applicant is required to provide 89 vehicle parking spaces for the private school use and proposes to provide 47 on-site spaces in the new garage. The Applicant has secured 39 additional vehicle parking spaces in the nearby 2200 17th Street NW garage. Stacking vehicles allows the Applicant to increase its capacity from 86 spaces to 105 spaces across the two (2) garages. In total, the Applicant proposes to provide 158 self-park spaces with an additional 19 stacked vehicle parking spaces, which will primarily be use to accommodate events. Table 2 summarizes the Applicant's vehicle parking program.

Use	Required Parking	Proposed Parking
Residential	36 spaces	72 spaces
Private School	89 spaces	On-Site: 47 self-parked spaces w additional 13 stacked spaces
		2200 17th: 39 self-parked spaces w additional 6 stacked spaces
Total	125 spaces	158 spaces w additional 19 stacked spaces

Table 1 – Parking Program (Source: Applicant's CTR dated January 2018)

DDOT understands that the Applicant has agreed to provide the community with the Right-of-First-Offer to purchase any of the parking spaces not sold to the proposed building's future residents.

Bicycle Parking

Zoning requires the Applicant to provide 38 long-term and 14 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The Applicant proposes to accommodate the long-term spaces in a bicycle room within the proposed building's garage and can provide 7 inverted U-racks within 120 feet of the building's entrance to meet its short-term requirement. If the short-term spaces are proposed within public space, DDOT will review the location of the new short-term bicycle parking spaces during the public space permitting process.

Analysis

To determine the action's impacts on the transportation network, a CTR includes an extensive multi-modal analysis of the existing baseline conditions, future conditions without the proposed action, and

future conditions with the proposed development. The Applicant completed their analysis based on the assumptions described above.

Roadway Capacity and Operations

DDOT aims to provide a safe and efficient roadway network that provides for the timely movement of people, goods and services. As part of the evaluation of travel demand generated by the site, DDOT requests analysis of traffic conditions for the agreed upon study intersections for the current year and after the facility opens both with and without the site development or any transportation changes.

Analysis provided by the Applicant shows that the site will have no significant vehicle traffic impacts from the action as measured by level of service (LOS) and linear feet of queuing. DDOT notes that at some intersections, the queue lengths and delay of some approaches are anticipated to increase, but are generally attributed to the combined impacts of background development and traffic growth rather than directly attributable to the proposed project.

Pedestrian Facilities

The site is located roughly six blocks from the U Street/African American Civil War Memorial/Cardozo WMATA Metrorail Station and is within a half mile of multiple Capital Bikeshare stations. Additionally, DDOT anticipates future high-capacity bus service on 16th Street NW. As such, DDOT anticipates that roughly 40% of the trips generated by the site will make use of adjacent pedestrian facilities by either walking, walking to transit, or walking to nearby bikeshare facilities. The Applicant should bring the existing intersections into compliance with best practices and DDOT standards. Because there is no signal at the intersection of Belmont Street NW and 16th Street NW, DDOT recommends removing the existing crosswalks and closing the curb cuts facilitating east-west travel across 16th Street. The Applicant should additionally reconstruct the northwestern curb with detectable warning strips and stripe new crosswalk markings across Belmont Street NW. At the intersection of 16th Street and Crescent Place NW, the Applicant should provide the missing southeastern curb ramp, retrofit the northeastern curb ramp with detectable warning strips, and ensure the northwestern and southwestern legs of the intersection have two (2) separate ramps at each corner with detectable warning strips. Implementing the additional ramps may require the Applicant to either shift existing utilities or pavement markings. DDOT will review all curb ramp improvements through the public space permitting process.

Transportation Demand Management

As part of all major development review cases, 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 submitted a limited TDM plan as a component of its CTR, which DDOT finds acceptable given the anticipated level of impact to the District's Transportation Network. The plan includes the designation of a TDM coordinator, the installation of screens with transportation-related information and resources, and coordination with local businesses and services to replace errand-type trips to and from the site with delivery services.

The Applicant has also drafted MOUs with the community, which dictates that the Meridian shall subsidize employees who take public transit to work and offer a stipend to employees who bicycle. While DDOT supports this arrangement as a mechanism to incentivize non-auto trips, the MOU also dictates that the Meridian shall charge employees subsidized rates in an effort to encourage individuals to park internally on Campus, which is contrary to TDM best practices.

In total the Applicant's TDM strategies include:

- The designation of a member of the property management team as the Transportation Management Coordinator (TMC) to ensure transportation information is disseminated to residents;
- The installation of electronic display boards providing information about nearby transit options and schedules, carsharing locations, as well as Capital Bikeshare information;
- The addition of links to the property management's web site about transportation options;
- Coordination with adjacent local businesses and service providers and a centralized area where residents can arrange for delivery services;
- The restriction of all deliveries and pick-up and drop-offs to the proposed porte-cochere;
- Subsidies for Meridian employees who take public transportation to work;
- Stipends for Meridian employees who bicycle to work;
- The geolocation of the proposed residential building's address within the proposed entry court; and
- The reservation of two (2) car-sharing spaces in the proposed development, subject to a signed agreement with a car-sharing service.

AC:pr