


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: April 25, 2018

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 19745 - 5543-5575 South Dakota Avenue NE

PROJECT SUMMARY

Fort Totten South, 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 exception under the zone boundary line provisions of Subtitle A § 207.2, and under Subtitle G § 409.1 from the side yard requirements of Subtitle G § 406.1 to construct a mixed-use development in the MU-4 and R-2 Zones. The site is located at 5543-5575 South Dakota Avenue NE (Square 5760, Lot 22 and Parcel 125/30). The Applicant proposes the following development program:

- 160-185 townhome units;
- 20,000-30,000 SF of retail;
- 200-292 vehicle parking spaces with eight (8) electric charging and eight (8) carshare spaces;
- 54-68 long-term and 14-19 short-term bicycle parking spaces; and
- Two (2) 30-foot loading bays and platforms shared by the residential and retail uses

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 multimodal 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:

- The mixed use development is proposed in the location of a former South Dakota Avenue NE ramp within DDOT right-of-way that will ultimately be transferred to the Applicant;
- The requested special exceptions do not require a Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) study as they do not directly impact the site's land use, density, or the District's transportation network;
- The Applicant will be required to scope a CTR with DDOT during the public space permitting process to assess the impacts of right-in, right-out site access on Riggs Road NE and South Dakota Avenue NE;
- The Applicant proposes to meet its parking and loading requirements, however, depending on its final development program, the Applicant may be subject to the Transportation Demand Management (TDM) mitigation requirements of Subtitle C § 707.3; and
- The Applicant proposes to fulfill its bicycle parking zoning requirement by providing approximately 68 long-term and 19 short-term bicycle parking spaces. Based on the Applicant's plans, it is not clear where all of the bicycle parking spaces will be accommodated.

RECOMMENDATION

DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested special exceptions.

CONTINUED COORDINATION

DDOT looks forward to coordinating with the Applicant on its CTR during the public space permitting process. Additionally, the Applicant is expected to work with DDOT further on the following public space elements:

- Rather than maintain a flush sidewalk across the site's curb cuts, the Applicant should provide curb ramps designed per the standards of DDOT's 2017 Design and Engineering Manual (DEM) to provide pedestrians with visual and tactile safety cues;
- On South Dakota Avenue NE, there is an existing curb cut adjacent to the site and an additional curb cut just beyond the site that are not necessary for site access and should be closed;
- The location and width of the Riggs Road NE curb cut will need to be assessed and potentially coordinated with adjacent property owners; and
- Any changes to public space, such as the planting or restoration of street trees, installation of inverted-U bicycle parking racks, and location of café seating, require further consideration and public space approval.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Roadway Capacity and Operations

The Applicant proposes to provide between 160 and 185 dwelling units and 20,000 to 30,000 SF of retail. As the requested relief actions are not directly related to the site's land use, density, or the District's transportation network, the Applicant was not required to scope a Comprehensive Transportation Study (CTR) with DDOT. The Applicant will be required to scope a CTR study with DDOT during the public space permitting process to assess the impact of the site's proposed vehicle ingress and egress locations.

DDOT notes that there is a break in the existing median on South Dakota Avenue NE that could potentially provide mid-block U-turns facilitating entries into the proposed site. This movement would not be ideal as it would cause turning vehicles to conflict with a high volume of through traffic. Vehicles would need to pull as far forward as possible in the left-turn pocket and then make a sharp turn across two travel lanes on South Dakota Avenue NE. To make the sharp maneuver, drivers will need to focus on oncoming traffic and may not be able to gauge whether or not there are existing conflicts present in the site's curb cut or adjacent sidewalk. As part of the CTR, the Applicant will be required to study whether or not a mid-block median break is warranted, the location of any proposed break in relation to the site's entrance on South Dakota Avenue NE, and the impact of a permanent closure of the median break. The Applicant will also be required to study the potential impacts and feasibility of U-turn movements at intersections adjacent to the site given the right-in and right-out configuration at the site entrances.

Pedestrian Facilities and Connectivity

The site's curb cuts will bisect existing sidewalks on Riggs Road NE and South Dakota Avenue NE. It is not clear if the Applicant proposes to maintain flush crossings at these locations, or proposes to depress the entry roadway and provide curb ramps. While DDOT typically prefers flush crossings over driveway entrances, based on the volumes anticipated, DDOT recommends depressing the entry roadways and implementing curb ramps and detectable warning strips to provide pedestrians with visual and tactile safety cues.

Vehicle Parking

The Applicant proposes to exceed the vehicle parking requirements of Subtitle C § 701.5 by providing between 200 and 292 vehicle parking spaces. It is not clear how many of the spaces will be designated for each of the proposed uses. Based on its final development program, the Applicant may be subject to the TDM mitigation requirements of Subtitle C § 707.3. DDOT will monitor the Applicant's parking program during the public space and building permit review processes, and will coordinate with the District's Zoning Administrator as necessary.

Bicycle Parking

The Applicant proposes to fulfill the bicycle parking requirements of Subtitle C § 802.1 by providing approximately 68 long-term and 19 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The required number of spaces will be dependent on the Applicant's final development program.

Based on the Applicant's plans it is not clear where all of the bicycle parking spaces will be accommodated. A residential bicycle parking storage area is shown on the Applicant's plans just behind the 6,220 SF restaurant at the corner of Riggs Road NE and South Dakota Avenue NE, but it does not accommodate all of the required bicycle parking and is not clear about whether long-term or short-term storage is proposed. DDOT will monitor the Applicant's bicycle parking program during the public space and building permit review processes, and will coordinate with the District's Zoning Administrator as necessary.

Loading

The Applicant proposes to meet the loading requirements of Subtitle C § 901.1. All loading and trash collection operations will occur internally within the Applicant's network of private streets.

Public Space

DDOT's lack of objection to the requested special exceptions should not be viewed as an approval of public space elements. Beyond the two (2) proposed right-in, right-out curb cuts requiring a CTR study, DDOT notes that all elements proposed in public space, including the closure of the existing curb cuts and restoration of streetscape on South Dakota Avenue NE, required short-term bicycle parking, any proposed street furniture, and the recommended ADA crossings at the site's access points, require public space approval through DDOT's permitting process. 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.