

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



d. Planning and Sustainability Division

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sara Bardin
Director, Office of Zoning

FROM: James Sebastian
Associate Director

DATE: August 31, 2018

SUBJECT: FMBZA Case No. 19798 – Hungarian Embassy – 1500 Rhode Island Avenue NW

PROJECT SUMMARY

State of Hungary, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, (the “Embassy” or the “Applicant”) pursuant to Subtitle X, Chapter 2 of the 2016 Zoning Regulations (“DCMR 11”), seeks to renovate the existing Hungarian Chancery and surrounding public space at 1500 Rhode Island Avenue NW (Square 195S, Lot 800) in the MU-15 Zone. The Applicant proposes to renovate the exterior of the site, with no change to the existing use.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

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:

- There are currently three (3) vehicle parking spaces and 26 tandem spaces. The Applicant is proposing to reconfigure the current parking to provide eight (8) vehicle parking spaces, which meets the Zoning requirement;
- The Applicant is proposing to continue to use three (3) on-street diplomatic parking spaces on N Street NW;
- The Applicant is proposing the removal of one (1) metered vehicle parking space on Rhode Island Avenue NW for a “no parking” entrance zone and may need to compensate DDOT for its removal;

- The Applicant is not required to provide bicycle facilities with this action, but intends to maintain four (4) existing long-term bicycle parking spaces in the lower level;
- The Applicant is proposing several public space changes:
 - There is existing excessive paving in the public parking area on the Rhode Island Avenue NW frontage which the Applicant is moderately reducing and changing to a permeable surface;
 - The Applicant is modifying three (3) non-compliant existing curb cuts which DDOT finds appropriate;
 - The Applicant is adding a leadwalk to the facility via the porte-cochere and has worked with DDOT and OP to come up with an appropriate design;
 - The new fence and wall combination exceeds the 42 inches that is allowed for fences in public space (DCMR 24-103) and the 6 foot 6 inch exception that is occasionally permitted for embassies. The fence and wall combination should be reduced to a maximum of 6 feet 6 inches; and
 - Trash is proposed to continue to be stored in public space off of N Street NW. The new proposed trash enclosure exceeds 42 inches. While the enclosure is not 50% open as required, it can be viewed as public art, but should be lowered to 42 inches.

Continued Coordination:

The Applicant should continue to work with DDOT on the following matter:

- Final designs of the perimeter fence and wall combination and the trash enclosure;
- Signage and possible compensation for the “no parking” entrance zone of one (1) car length on Rhode Island Avenue NW and the proposed new metered parking space on N Street NW will need be coordinated via the State Department; and
- Any additional changes to public space not included in the FMBZA package may require public space permits from DDOT.

RECOMMENDATION

The proposed action should not lead to an increase in vehicle, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle trips as the site is already functioning as a Chancery. The project should not reduce the amount of available on-street parking within the immediate area since the Applicant is removing one (1) metered parking space but proposing one (1) space in the near vicinity. Despite these minor impacts, DDOT has no objection to the approval of the requested renovations with the following conditions:

- The Applicant reduce the proposed fence and wall perimeter enclosure to meet a maximum height of 6 feet 6 inches; and
- The Applicant reduces the height of the trash enclosure on N Street NW to 42 inches in height.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Site Access

The site is bounded by Corregidor Street NW to the west, Rhode Island Avenue to the north, 15th Street NW 1 to the east, and N Street NW to the south. Pedestrian access will be from Rhode Island Avenue

NW. There are three (3) existing curb cuts which the Applicant plans to maintain with some modifications:

- All existing curb cuts are within 60 feet of an intersection, which does not meet DDOT standards.
- The existing curb cut on Corregidor Street NW provides access to the building's porte-cochere and is intended to be used approximately once a week for ceremonial purposes. The Applicant is not proposing any modifications to this curb cut.
- The main access for the parking area is off of Rhode Island Avenue NW, and the Applicant is proposing to widen the curb cut to 18 feet for two-way traffic and relocate the curb cut 60 feet from the intersection to meet DDOT standards.
- The existing curb cut on 15th Street NW will serve two (2) parking spaces used exclusively for the Ambassador's vehicles. The Applicant is proposing to reduce the 15th Street NW curb cut from 33 feet to 18 feet and move it further from the intersection.

Vehicle Parking

The site currently contains (3) vehicle parking spaces and 26 tandem spaces on-site with three (3) reserved diplomatic parking spaces on N Street NW. The Applicant is required to provide six (6) vehicle parking spaces and proposes eight (8) vehicle parking spaces accessed from two (2) existing curb cuts: 15th Street NW and Rhode Island Avenue NW.

Curbside Parking

The Applicant is reducing the width of the curb cut on 15th Street NW and reconfiguring the on-street parking on N Street NW which will allow for the addition of at least one (1) on-street metered parking space. The curb cut on 15th Street NW is proposed to reduce from 33 feet to 18 feet, which is small for a standard 20 foot parking space, but may allow for a compact car. The Applicant is proposing to maintain the existing 60 feet of embassy vehicle parking on N Street NW. By optimizing the on-street parking on N Street NW, the Applicant will create an additional on-street metered space. The Applicant will need to work with DDOT to coordinate the metered parking spaces and possible compensation for the "no parking" entrance zone on Rhode Island Avenue NW.

Bicycle Parking

The Applicant currently provides four (4) long-term bicycle parking spaces in the lower level, but is not required to provide bicycle facilities with this action.

Loading & Trash Collection

Dedicated loading is not required by zoning. Given security concerns of the Embassy, loading is not proposed on-site. There are two (2) commercial loading zones within the block of the Embassy, one on N Street NW and one on 15th Street NW that the Applicant can use. All trash operations will continue to take place off of N Street NW.

Public Space

The Applicant is proposing several public space changes:

- There is existing excessive paving in the public parking area on the Rhode Island Avenue NW frontage which the Applicant is moderately reducing and changing to a permeable surface;
- The Applicant is modifying three (3) non-compliant existing curb cuts, which DDOT finds appropriate;
- The Applicant is adding a leadwalk to the facility via the porte-cochere and has worked with DDOT and OP to come up with an appropriate design;
- The new fence and wall combination exceeds the 42 inches that is allowed for fences in public space (DCMR 24-103) and the 6 foot 6 inch exception that is occasionally permitted for embassies. The fence and wall combination should be reduced to a maximum of 6 feet 6 inches; and
- Trash is proposed to continue to be stored in public space off of N Street NW. The new proposed trash enclosure exceeds 42 inches. While the enclosure is not 50% open as required, it can be viewed as public art, but should be lowered to 42 inches.

The existing public parking area is paved near the Rhode Island Avenue NW vehicle entrance and covered with grass in front of the main pedestrian entrance. The public parking area is to be vegetated and “park-like” in nature. The Applicant is proposing to minimize the paving in the vehicle parking area but is adding more paving near the pedestrian entrance. While DDOT would prefer more vegetation the Applicant is using pervious pavement and providing a pedestrian entrance pathway that does not currently exist.

There are three (3) existing curb cuts which the Applicant plans to maintain. As discussed above, the Applicant proposes to maintain these curb cuts with some modifications, which DDOT finds appropriate.

Fences in public space are not to exceed 42 inches in height and are to be 50 percent open in nature (DCMR 24-103). DDOT is aware of the security concerns associated with embassies and permits taller fences, but does not normally permit fences over 6 feet 6 inches. The new fence and wall combination is 7 feet 6 inches, which exceeds the height that is occasionally permitted for overheight fences in public space. While the Applicant did reduce the fence/wall height from the original submission, the combined fence and wall height should be reduced to 6 feet 6 inches to be more in line with what is typically permitted for this type of use.

Trash is not permitted to be stored in public space. The Applicant is currently handling trash on N Street NW and is not proposing to change operations with this action. The Applicant is proposing a trash enclosure that matches the height of the perimeter fence and functions more as an impervious wall. While the proposed enclosure is not 50% open in nature, DDOT can view it as public art, but recommends it be lowered to the 42 inch standard for fences in public space.

The porte-cochere is existing and a historic component of the building thus DDOT does not have any objection to maintaining the structure. The Applicant is adding a leadwalk to the facility via the porte-cochere and has worked with DDOT and OP to come up with an appropriate design.

No changes are proposed to the existing sidewalk area. Any additional changes to public space not included in the FMBZA package may require public space permits from DDOT.

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