

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: September 6, 2019

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 20110 – 2483-2491 Alabama Avenue SE

APPLICATION

Alabama Apartments LLC (the “Applicant”), pursuant to Title 11 (2016 Zoning Regulations) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Subtitle X, Chapter 9, seeks approval of a special exception under the new residential development requirements of Subtitle U § 421, to construct a new, three-story, 86-unit apartment building with 14 parking spaces. The site is located in the RA-1 zone at 2483-2491 Alabama Avenue SE (Square 5730, Lots 7, 9, 11, 118-126, 800, 801, 861, 863, 869, 871, and 918).

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:

- DDOT concurs with the Applicant’s proposal to close two (2) curb cuts on Alabama Avenue SE and provide all vehicular and truck access from the future 20-foot public alley and the existing 16-foot alley;
- The project meets or exceeds zoning requirements for bicycle parking and loading facilities;

- Loading and trash facilities meet DDOT standards for being located off of an alley and allowing for head-in/head-out movements at intersections with public streets;
- The Applicant proposes an excellent parking ratio by taking the eligible 50% reduction for being located within ¼ mile of a Priority Network Corridor Metrobus route with no adjacent blocks of Residential Permit Parking (RPP), per 702.1(c);
- The Applicant has proposed a robust TDM program to support non-automotive modes of travel for future residents (see Recommendation section below for specifics); and
- A Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR) study was not required because the proposed development did not meet DDOT's trip threshold. Per the Applicant's August 5, 2019 Transportation Statement, the site is projected to generate a maximum of 17 vehicle trips during a commuter peak hour.

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. In addition, the project may slightly reduce the amount of available on-street parking within the immediate area.

Despite these minor impacts, DDOT has no objection to the approval of this application, on the condition that the Applicant implement the following TDM Plan, as proposed in the August 5, 2019 Transportation Statement:

- 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. There will be a Transportation Coordinator for the entire site. The Transportation Coordinators will act as points of contact with DDOT, goDCgo, and Zoning Enforcement;
- Will provide Transportation Coordinators' contact information to goDCgo and report TDM activities 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) 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, Capital Bikeshare 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 (MWCOC) or other comparable service if MWCOC 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 free SmarTrip card to every new resident and a complimentary Capital Bikeshare coupon good for one ride;
- Will meet or exceed ZR16 short- and long-term bicycle parking requirements. The development will provide 30 long-term spaces in the rear of the property and four (4) short term spaces on the Alabama Avenue frontage; and
- Long-term bicycle storage rooms will accommodate non-traditional sized bikes included cargo, tandem, and kids bikes.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Vehicle Parking

The Applicant is proposing to provide 14 surface parking spaces in the rear of the property, accessed via a 20-foot public alley to be constructed by the Applicant which will connect to Alabama Avenue SE. It is noted that the Applicant is pursuing an alley closure application (SO 19-45936) with the Office of the Surveyor in parallel with this BZA application to close a short section of the unimproved "paper alley" at the southern end. This closure will allow the Applicant to better design the site and connect to the future alley with a private driveway. DDOT will continue to work with the Applicant through that process.

Subtitle C § 702.1 of the Zoning Regulations requires a minimum of 14 vehicle parking spaces (1 per 3 spaces in excess of 4 units) with the eligible 50% vehicle parking reduction for being located within ¼ mile of Priority Corridor Metrobus Routes 32, 34, and 92 (Subtitle C, 702.1.c). To be eligible for this reduction the site must also be located on a street in which participating in the District's Residential Parking Permit (RPP) program is not permitted. DDOT has confirmed that there is no signage establishing an RPP zone along the site's Alabama Avenue SE block face, nor along any of the nearby side streets.

Per the 2019 *Guidance for Comprehensive Transportation Review (CTR)*, DDOT's Preferred Vehicle Parking Rates indicate that a maximum vehicle parking ratio of 0.40 spaces per unit (34 total) is appropriate for this project, given the proximity to nearby Priority Corridor Network Metrobus routes. The Applicant's proposed parking ratio of 0.17 spaces per unit is excellent. However, to help support non-automotive traveling options for future residents, a "Baseline" Transportation Demand Management (TDM) plan should be implemented. DDOT concurs with the Applicant's proposed TDM plan in the August 5, 2019 Transportation Statement (see Recommendation section above for specifics).

Bicycle Parking

Subtitle C § 802.1 of the Zoning Regulations requires 29 long-term bicycle parking spaces and four (4) short-term bicycle parking spaces. The Applicant proposes to meet or exceed both the requirements by providing 30 long-term bicycle parking spaces and four (4) short-term spaces. The long-term bicycle parking spaces will be located in basement level at the eastern end of the building and short-term spaces will be located in public space (to be determined during public space permitting). Additionally, the Applicant has proposed setting aside space on the Alabama Avenue SE frontage to accommodate the future installation of a Capital Bikeshare station by DDOT.

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, to which this building is adjacent. 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 these requirements by providing one (1) 38-foot berth and one (1) 20-foot delivery space at the western end of the building and a trash pick-up berth at the eastern end of the building. The trash berth will be accessed via the existing 16-foot public alley along the eastern edge of the site, while the loading facilities will be accessed by the future 20-foot alley connecting to Alabama Avenue SE.

As demonstrated in the Applicant's August 5, 2019 Transportation Statement, all truck movements will be made head-in/back-out from the loading and trash facilities. However, the trucks are able to maneuver and turn around on private property or within the alley network so that they enter the public street network with head-in/head-out movements, consistent with DDOT standards.

PUBLIC SPACE

DDOT's lack of objection to this application should not be viewed as an approval of public space design. All elements of the project proposed in public space require the Applicant to pursue a public space permit through DDOT's permitting process. DDOT expects the proposed public space design to meet all District standards. The Applicant will need to apply for the elements identified below and any other features proposed:

- Curb cuts – DDOT supports the closure of two (2) existing curb cuts and all vehicular and truck access being from the public alley networks;
- Proposed north-south public alley – determine final design of alley to be constructed by the Applicant from the site all the way to Alabama Avenue SE, if not completed by others. Applicant must meet all DDOT stormwater regulations and mitigation, as required;

- Building entrance – the building entrance on Alabama Avenue SE must be at-grade with the existing sidewalk to minimize the need for stairs, ramps, and paving in public space. Any necessary stairs or ramps should be moved onto private property or within the building;
- Short-term bicycle parking – determine final location for the four (4) bicycle spaces (2 inverted U-racks) that meet ZR16 siting and design requirements;
- Street trees – install missing street trees and tree boxes along Alabama Avenue SE and in the location of the curb cuts to be closed;
- Sidewalk – ensure sidewalk along Alabama Avenue SE is a minimum of 6-feet wide. Currently, the sidewalk reduces to 4 or 5 feet as it passes larger trees;
- Bus shelter – incorporate the existing bus shelter into the final public space design and ensure it is ADA accessible. Accommodate the shelter and keep it open during construction;
- Capital Bikeshare station pad – determine final location along Alabama Avenue SE for the proposed bikeshare station pad; and
- Pavement and grading – remove all paving (i.e., driveways, leadwalks, stairs, etc.) associated with houses to be demolished. This space should be returned to green space. Public space and greenspace along Alabama Avenue SE should maintain the natural topography of the land.

The Applicant is encouraged to participate in a Preliminary Design Review Meeting (PDRM) prior to filing a public space permit application to obtain feedback from the Office of Planning (OP) and DDOT staff.

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

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