

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, AICP
Associate Director *A.Z. for*

DATE: December 10, 2020

SUBJECT: BZA Case No. 20341 – 1544 Rhode Island Avenue NE

APPLICATION

4527 Georgia Ave LLC (the “Applicant”), pursuant to Title 11 (2016 Zoning Regulations) of the District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (DCMR), Subtitle X, Chapter 9, for a special exception under Subtitle C § 703.2 from the minimum parking requirements of Subtitle C § 701.5, to raze the existing building and to construct a new 49-unit residential apartment building. The site is located in the MU-4 Zone at 1544 Rhode Island Avenue NE (Square 4021, Lot 15).

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 the curb cut on Rhode Island Avenue NE and provide all vehicular access from the proposed driveway to 16th Street NE;
- The project meets or exceeds zoning requirements for short- and long-term bicycle parking;

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- The sidewalk on Rhode Island Avenue NE should be widened to 10 feet. This should not impact the placement of the building and can be refined during public space permitting;
- DDOT is supportive of the Applicant's request to reduce the amount of vehicle parking on-site below the established minimum since the site is located in a pedestrian-oriented area and the site has access to several bus routes. This is consistent with DDOT's approach to encouraging transit usage, allowing for non-automobile ownership lifestyles, and minimizing traffic congestion in the District;
- The Applicant has proposed and agreed to a TDM program with DDOT to meet the requirement of C § 703.4 (see Recommendation section below for specifics);
- The Applicant is meeting the zoning requirements for loading facilities. Zero (0) berths are required because the number of units proposed is fewer than 50. However, to access the trash storage on-site, a truck must either back-in or back-out or trash bins rolled to the curb, all of which are not in compliance with the DDOT Design and Engineering Manual (DEM); and
- DDOT requests the Applicant implement a Loading Management Plan (LMP) to identify how trash pick-up and move-ins/outs will occur and mitigate any impacts to public space. The plan should be reviewed and approved by DDOT prior to Certificate of Occupancy.

RECOMMENDATION

The District Department of Transportation (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 result in increased pick-up and drop-off activity and slightly reduced availability of on-street parking within the immediate area.

Despite these minor impacts, DDOT has no objection to the approval of this application with the following conditions:

- Implement the following Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan for the life of the project, unless otherwise noted:
 - The Applicant shall 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;
 - The Applicant shall 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;
 - The Applicant shall provide Transportation Coordinators' contact information to goDCgo, conduct an annual commuter survey of employees on site, and report TDM activities and data collection efforts to goDCgo once per year;
 - Transportation Coordinators shall receive TDM training from goDCgo to learn about the TDM conditions for this project and available options for implementing the TDM Plan;
 - Transportation Coordinators shall 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) on property website and in any internal building newsletters or communications;

- The Applicant shall 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, CaBi 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;
 - Transportation Coordinators shall subscribe to goDCgo's residential newsletter;
 - The Applicant shall provide a SmartTrip card to every new resident and a complimentary Capital Bikeshare coupon good for one ride;
 - The Applicant shall provide a bicycle repair station in each long-term parking storage room; and
 - The Applicant shall provide three collapsible shopping carts (utility carts) to encourage residents to walk to the grocery store and run errands.
- Implement a Loading Management Plan (LMP) for the life of the project. The loading plan will identify how trash pick-up and move-ins/outs will occur and steps that will be taken to mitigate any impacts to public space. It will be reviewed and approved by DDOT.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

Vehicle Parking

Subtitle C § 701.5 and § 702.1a of the 2016 Zoning Regulations (ZR16) requires a minimum of 15 vehicle parking spaces. The Applicant applied for relief from 8 of the required 15 parking spaces and instead will be providing 3 physical spaces (counted as 7 spaces in ZR16 since two of the spaces are dedicated for carsharing). Given the site's location within a pedestrian-oriented area and one (1) block away from two bus stops (83 and 86 routes), DDOT supports the Applicant's request for parking relief. Providing little or no parking is consistent with DDOT's approach to encouraging transit usage, allowing for non-automobile ownership lifestyles, and minimizing traffic congestion in the District.

All parking relief requests are required by § 703.4 to be accompanied by a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. The Applicant has proposed and agreed to a TDM plan with DDOT, see Recommendation section above.

Residential Permit Parking (RPP)

The site is located at the corner of 16th Street and Rhode Island Avenue NE. 16th Street is currently in the DDOT/DMV database as RPP-eligible for addresses located on both sides of the street. Whereas, Rhode Island Avenue is considered a commercial corridor and ineligible for the RPP program. Therefore, if a 16th Street address is selected for the project, residents would be eligible to receive an RPP pass. But, if a Rhode Island Avenue address is selected, future residents would not be able to. The remainder of the streets surrounding the site (e.g., Brentwood Road, Girard Street, 15th Street) are generally unrestricted.

Bicycle Facilities

ZR16 Subtitle C § 802.1 requires 16 long-term bicycle parking spaces and 2 short-term bicycle parking spaces. The Applicant is proposing to provide 18 long-term bicycle parking spaces for the 49-unit facility, as well as 6 short-term spaces. Both amounts of bicycle parking exceed ZR16 requirements.

Loading

Subtitle C §901.1 of ZR16 does not require a loading berth or service delivery space because the proposed residential development has less than 50 dwelling units. Since the site has more than three (3) residential units, the Applicant must contract a private trash collection service. Trash is proposed to be stored in a storage room on private property and collected from the private driveway. Move-ins and move-outs should occur from the driveway, if possible. Future residents may also obtain “emergency no parking” signs through DDOT’s Transportation Online Permitting System (TOPS) to reserve an on-street parking space for move-ins/move-outs.

As currently designed, the site necessitates head-in/back-out truck maneuvers in order to access the trash room or trash bins be rolled to the curb. While the Applicant is meeting the zoning requirement for loading berths, the loading design does not meet DDOT Design and Engineering Manual guidance for head-in/head-out trash pick-up. As such, the Applicant should implement a Loading Management Plan (LMP) to identify how trash collection and move-in/move-outs will occur and focus on minimizing conflicts with pedestrians.

PUBLIC SPACE

DDOT’s lack of objection to this application should not be viewed as an approval of the public realm design. All elements of the project proposed within District-owned right-of-way, such as areaways, bay windows, the new curb cut, and closure of existing curb cuts closest to the intersection, require the Applicant to pursue a public space permit through DDOT’s permitting process.

The existing sidewalk on Rhode Island Avenue NE is 3-feet wide. The Applicant should ensure there is a 10-foot pedestrian clear path on Rhode Island Avenue and 6-foot clear path on 16th Street NE. The remainder of the ‘public parking’ area should be restored as green space. Additionally, street trees and treeboxes should be added to the streetscape in the locations where curb cuts are to be closed. DDOT encourages the Applicant to participate in a Preliminary Design Review Meeting (PDRM) with the DC Office of Planning and DDOT to discuss and refine the public realm design.

DDOT expects the adjacent public realm to meet all District standards. The Applicant should refer to Titles 11, 12A, and 24 of the [DCMR](#), the most recent version of DDOT’s [Design and Engineering Manual \(DEM\)](#), and the [Public Realm Design Manual](#) for public space regulations and design guidance. A permit application can be filed through the DDOT [Transportation Online Permitting System \(TOPS\)](#) website.

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