

Government of the District of Columbia


Department of Transportation



d. Planning and Sustainability Division

MEMORANDUM

TO: Sara Bardin
Director, Office of Zoning

FROM: Anna Chamberlin, AICP
Associate Director 

DATE: June 11, 2021

SUBJECT: ZC Case No. 20-33 – University of the District of Columbia (UDC) Van Ness Campus Plan

APPLICATION

University of the District of Columbia (the “Applicant”), seeks approval for a proposed 10-year Campus Plan. The 2020-2029 Campus Plan encompasses the area covered by the Van Ness campus of the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). The proposed Campus Plan outlines anticipated site development, vehicle parking, multimodal access, and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies for the campus. The Applicant’s goal is to accommodate current and future population levels on the campus without adding more parking spaces or roadway capacity.

SUMMARY OF DDOT REVIEW

The District Department of Transportation (DDOT) is committed to achieving 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:

Site Design

- The Campus Plan proposes to renovate and repurpose existing buildings, and construct approximately 160,000 SF of new buildings;

- Increase enrollment from 6,500 to 7,000 students and a cap of 450 employees;
- Reduce parking from 837 spaces to 836 spaces;
- All development proposed in the Campus Plan will be on existing University-owned parcels; and
- The Applicant is proposing changes to several access points to campus.

Travel Assumptions

- The surrounding pedestrian network is not adequate with a missing sidewalk on the southern side of Veazey Terrace NW and substandard sidewalks on Van Ness Street and Yuma Street. Several roads within the neighborhood surrounding campus locations do not have sidewalks on either one or both sides of the street;
- The only street adjacent to campus with bicycle lanes is Van Ness Street NW;
- The Applicant will install short- and long-term bicycle parking as required by ZR16 with each new building. DDOT requests a condition that existing buildings to be renovated will be required to meet the ZR16 parking requirements for long-term bicycle parking even if the renovations or expansions would not typically trigger the bicycle parking requirements;
- There is one (1) Capital Bikeshare station adjacent to campus, with two (2) other stations nearby; and
- The site is connected to transit service with the Van Ness-UDC Metrorail station, two (2) Metrobus routes, and a campus shuttle service.

Analysis

- The Applicant is proposing a TDM plan informed by the previous TDM plan approved with the 2011 UDC Campus Plan that renews, modifies, or replaces the commitments made in the previous plan;
- The Applicant should continue to provide annual transportation monitoring reports to DDOT including data on parking utilization, campus mode share, TDM benefits participation, and shuttle operations;
- The Applicant submitted a Transportation Report, dated March 22, 2021, outlining the various transportation aspects of the proposed Campus Plan;
- The Applicant utilized sound methodology to perform the analysis; and
- DDOT concurs with the Applicant's analysis that there will not be significant impacts to the roadway network due to the development changes contemplated in the Campus Plan, assuming the TDM and Performance Monitoring Plans are in effect and there is no increase in parking.

Mitigations

- The TDM plan included in the March 22, 2021 report, along with DDOT's proposed revisions, is sufficiently robust to encourage non-auto travel to and from the campus. The TDM measures will be subject to yearly review as part of ongoing performance monitoring; and
- The Applicant is proposing several changes to access points, specifically geometric design changes at Van Ness Street NW, Van Ness Street NW/International Drive NW, Windom Place NW, and Veazey Terrace NW. These will be further reviewed as part of public space permitting but are intended to improve multimodal safety and access to campus. If any are closed to vehicles, the Applicant must maintain pedestrian and bicycle access at these points.

RECOMMENDATION

DDOT has no objection to the approval of this Campus Plan application with the following conditions included in the final Zoning Order:

- The Applicant will implement the TDM and Performance Monitoring Plans, for the life of the project. The plan will carry forward the TDM commitments from the previous 2011 Campus Plan with the modifications identified by DDOT (see end of report) and by the Applicant in their submitted materials. As part of these plans, the Applicant will continue the shuttle program and will submit detailed annual performance monitoring reports to DDOT that will include additional information such as parking utilization. Prior to approval by the Zoning Commission, DDOT requests the Applicant submit a clean document outlining the final TDM and Performance Monitoring Plans for DDOT to review and concur with to be included in the final Zoning Order. DDOT may have additional comments and edits at that time;
- If approved by DDOT during permitting, the Applicant will fund the construction of the proposed access modifications described above. If the Veazey Terrace NW closure is approved by DDOT, the Applicant will maintain bicycle and pedestrian access to the Campus in this location; and
- Each existing building to be renovated will install long-term bicycle parking and showers/lockers consistent with the amounts required in ZR16 Subtitle C 802.1, even if the renovations or building expansions would not typically trigger the bicycle parking requirement.

CONTINUED COORDINATION

DDOT looks forward to coordinating with the Applicant in the public space permitting process. The Applicant is expected to work with DDOT further on the following elements:

- Any proposed public space improvements, including curb and gutter, street trees and landscaping, streetlights, sidewalks, and other features within the public rights of way, are expected to be designed and built to DDOT standards. Careful attention should be paid to pedestrian and bicycle connections along the site's perimeter and adjacent infrastructure;
- Coordinate with DDOT's Planning and Sustainability Division (PSD) on the ongoing Van Ness Commercial Corridor Project and the Connecticut Avenue NW Reversible Lane Safety and Operations Study;
- Coordinate with PSD on the proposed access modifications;
- Coordinate with PSD and goDCgo regarding the implementation of the TDM plan; and
- Submit future performance monitoring reports to DDOT's TDM team for review and concurrence.

TRANSPORTATION ANALYSIS

DDOT requires applicants requesting an action from the Zoning Commission complete a CTR to determine the action's impact on the overall transportation network. Accordingly, an applicant is expected to show the existing conditions for each transportation mode affected, the proposed impact on the respective network, and any proposed mitigations, along with the effects of the mitigations on other travel modes. A CTR should be performed according to DDOT direction. The Applicant and DDOT coordinated on an agreed-upon scope for the CTR that is consistent with the scale of the action.

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

The planned campus will continue to consist of primarily public streets and alleys. The Site is accessible, via surrounding streets including Connecticut Avenue NW, Van Ness Street NW, Yuma Street NW, Veazey Terrace NW, and Windom Place NW. The Applicant is proposing changes to several access points on campus, including Van Ness Street NW, Van Ness Street NW/International Place NW, Veazey Terrace NW, and Windom Place NW. These modifications are geometric in nature and are intended to improve safety and multimodal access to the campus. DDOT is generally supportive of the modifications but will continue to work with the Applicant through the permitting process to refine the final designs.

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 modes 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.

The Applicant has four existing loading facilities:

- Three (3) 12 foot by 30 foot loading berths under Building 38, accessed from Veazey Terrace NW. This is the only designated waste removal and delivery location for the campus;
- A driveway at Windom Place NW adjacent to buildings 43 and 46E allowing brief loading by smaller vehicles, but no marked service/delivery spaces;
- A surface loading area at Building 38 with room for smaller loading vehicles to park nearby, but no marked service/delivery spaces, accessed from Veazey Terrace NW; and
- A surface loading area at Building 42 with room for smaller loading vehicles to park nearby, but no marked service/delivery spaces, accessed from Veazey Terrace NW.

Access to loading facilities via Veazey Terrace NW would be impacted by the Applicant's proposed changes to access points. The Applicant has provided truck turning diagrams that demonstrate that all existing loading activities will still be possible under the proposed changes. The Applicant will need to continue to coordinate with DDOT on proposed changes to access points and show impacts to loading activities as part of the public space permitting process.

Vehicular Parking

The Applicant currently provides parking for students, faculty, and staff in several locations, which results in a total of 837 parking spaces. The Applicant is proposing a supply of 836 parking spaces. This is

due to reductions in surface parking spaces because of the access modifications, and a change in access to garage spaces from the Days Inn hotel to 4250 Connecticut Avenue, which the Applicant recently acquired. DDOT supports this reduction of on-site parking and the continued implementation of priced parking as methods for discouraging travel by personal vehicle and encouraging use of non-automotive modes of travel. The proposed 836 parking spaces should be established as a parking cap for the Van Ness Campus. In future Campus Plan updates, DDOT will work with the University to further reduce parking over time.

Bicycle Parking

The District is committed to enhancing bicycle access by ensuring consistent investment in bicycle infrastructure by both the public and private sectors. DDOT expects the Campus to serve the needs of all trips they generate, including bicycling trips. The Applicant does not currently provide long-term bicycle parking spaces in existing buildings. There are 75 short-term bicycle parking spaces on campus, with an additional 46 short-term spaces located adjacent to campus.

The Applicant states that they will provide long-term bicycle parking spaces to new buildings as they are constructed. DDOT encourages the Applicant to retrofit long-term bicycle parking into existing buildings as they are renovated and land uses change. DDOT also encourages the Applicant to provide more short-term bicycle parking in many locations across campus. DDOT has heard a need from the community for more short-term bicycle parking adjacent to campus on Yuma Street NW.

Streetscape and Public Realm

In line with District policy and practice, any substantial new building development or renovation is expected to rehabilitate streetscape infrastructure between the curb and the property lines. This includes curb and gutters, street trees and landscaping, streetlights, sidewalks, and other appropriate features within the public rights of way bordering the site.

The Applicant must work closely with DDOT and the Office of Planning (OP) 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. In conjunction with Titles 11, 12A, and 24 of the DCMR, DDOT's most recent version of the *Design and Engineering Manual (DEM)* and the *Public Realm Design Manual* will serve as the main public realm references for the Applicant. Public space designs will be reviewed in further detail during the public space permitting process. DDOT staff will be available to provide additional guidance during these processes and encourages the Applicant to participate in a Preliminary Design Review Meeting (PDRM) to address design related comments provided by DDOT and OP.

The Applicant is proposing changes to four access points: Van Ness Street NW, Van Ness Street NW/International Drive NW, Veazey Terrace NW, and Windom Place NW. These changes will require further analysis and review during public space permitting.

Heritage and Special Trees

Heritage Trees are defined as a tree with a circumference of 100 inches or more and are protected by the Tree Canopy Protection Amendment Act of 2016. With approval by the Mayor and DDOT's Urban

Forestry Division (UFD), Heritage Trees may be permitted to be relocated. As such, the Applicant may be required to redesign the site plan to preserve the Non-Hazardous Heritage Trees. Special Trees are defined as being between 44 inches and 99.99 inches in circumference. Special Trees may be removed with a permit. However, if a Special Tree is designated to remain by UFD, protection is necessary. UFD does not support the removal of healthy street trees. Any proposed changes to street trees because of the Campus Plan or related new buildings requires coordination with UFD. The Applicant should reach out to the appropriate UFD arborist to discuss any potential impacts to trees due to this Campus Plan.

Pedestrian Facilities

The District of Columbia is committed to enhancing the pedestrian accessibility by ensuring consistent investment in pedestrian infrastructure on the part of both the public and private sectors. As such, DDOT requested the Applicant provide a pedestrian analysis of the campus.

The Applicant noted that conditions for pedestrians on streets surrounding campus locations are adequate. DDOT confirms that sidewalks, curb ramps, and crosswalks in the area surrounding campus are mostly installed and mostly meet current standards. Several streets outside of the immediate Campus Plan area do not have sidewalks on either one or both sides of the street. The Applicant is proposing to make geometric changes to several campus entrances to improve pedestrian safety and multimodal access. DDOT is generally supportive of these efforts and will continue to work with the Applicant through permitting to refine the designs. The proposed closure of the Veazey Terrace NW entrance for vehicles should not preclude pedestrian and bicycle access in the future.

The Applicant should work with DDOT during public space permitting to ensure that any new buildings or changes to access points have an updated streetscape with ADA compliant pedestrian facilities, subject to DDOT review and approval. The Applicant should also continue to work with DDOT through the TDM and performance monitoring programs over the plan's 10-year lifespan to look for new ways to improve pedestrian porosity across campus and connectivity with surrounding neighborhoods.

Bicycle Facilities

The District is committed to enhancing bicycle accessibility by ensuring consistent investment in bicycle infrastructure on the part of both the public and private sectors. DDOT expects new developments to serve the needs of all trips they generate, including bicycling trips. Bicycling is expected to be an important mode of transportation for this development.

The only street adjacent to the campus with bicycle lanes is Van Ness Street NW. DDOT is currently considering changes to this bicycle lane as part of the Van Ness Commercial Corridor Project, and DDOT is considering a protected bicycle lane on Connecticut Avenue as part of the Connecticut Avenue NW Reversible Lane Safety and Operations Study. There is one (1) existing Capital Bikeshare station adjacent to campus, and two (2) stations nearby campus.

The Applicant mentions providing space for a future Capital Bikeshare station as mentioned on page 51 of the Gorove Slade transportation report. This should be further discussed in public space permitting. The Applicant should also ensure that any new bicycle parking installed as part of future developments complies with DDOT's design and spacing standards.

The Applicant should add more long-term bicycle parking to campus and add more short-term bicycle parking adjacent to Yuma Street NW. The Applicant should add more short-term bicycle parking in various locations throughout campus. DDOT's Active Transportation Branch looks forward to working with the Applicant on the best locations on campus for additional short-term bicycle parking.

DDOT requests the applicant explore providing more short-term and long-term bicycle parking sooner, instead of waiting for new buildings to be constructed.

Transit Service

DDOT and Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) have partnered to provide extensive public transit service in the District of Columbia. DDOT's vision is to leverage this investment to increase the share of non-automotive travel modes so that economic development opportunities increase with minimal infrastructure investment.

The closest Metrorail station to campus is the Van Ness-UDC station on the Red Line which is immediately adjacent to campus. There are two (2) Metrobus routes adjacent to campus, as well as a campus shuttle service.

Mitigations

DDOT requires the Applicant to mitigate the impacts of the development to positively contribute to the District's transportation network. The mitigations must sufficiently diminish the action's vehicle impact and promote non-auto travel modes. This can be done through TDM, physical improvements, operations, and performance monitoring.

DDOT preference is to mitigate vehicle impacts first through establishing an optimal site design and operations to support efficient site circulation. When these efforts alone cannot properly mitigate an action's impact, a reduction in parking and implementation of TDM measures may be necessary to manage travel behavior to minimize impact. Only when these other options are exhausted will DDOT consider capacity-increasing changes to the transportation network because such changes often have detrimental impacts on non-auto travel and are often contrary to the District's multimodal transportation goals.

The following analysis is a review of the Applicant's proposed mitigations and a description of DDOT's suggested conditions for inclusion in the Zoning Order:

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) and Performance Monitoring

As part of Campus Plans, DDOT requires the Applicant to produce a comprehensive 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 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 has proposed several recommendations that will enable UDC to effectively minimize its impact and support the transportation network around the university. DDOT concurs that carrying forward and continuing to implement the TDM and performance monitoring plans is appropriate, with the modifications proposed by the Applicant and the following proposed by DDOT:

- The TDM plan should include dates. For example, UDC plans on participating in WMATA's UPass program but has not committed to a start date. Many of the other strategies have a start date;
- While it is appropriate that the Campus is not adding more parking spaces, the parking rates are severely below market rate for the Van Ness area. Students only pay \$75 per semester and teachers only pay \$375 for the year. UDC should increase existing parking rates. "Increasing rates to maintain parking occupancy at 80-90%" is not an adequate TDM strategy;
- UDC is pledging to promote pre-tax transportation benefits. UDC should provide the number of staff enrolled in pre-tax transportation benefits and pledge to reach a participation goal;
- UDC is planning to participate in the "\$20 bicycle commuting benefit" but this has been paused by the federal government until 2024. Instead, they should offer free Capital Bikeshare memberships to students;
- The Applicant should include a TDM coordinator to be a contact for DDOT and goDCgo; and
- The Applicant should commit to a non-SOV mode share. Since UDC is a public university, that should match the 75% non-SOV goal in the Move DC Mobility plan for employees. A goal should also be established for students.

AC:tvh