



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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Community Development

To: Planning Board
From: Jeff Roberts, Land Use and Zoning Planner
Suzannah Bigolin, Urban Design Planner
Date: November 23, 2015
Re: **PB #306, Proposed Project at 136-138 Cushing Street**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 136-138 Cushing Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments. The applicant is also requesting Board of Zoning Appeal dimensional relief for gross floor area.

Summary of Proposal

The proposed project consists of demolishing the existing building and constructing two single family detached dwelling units on the lot with required off-street parking for each structure sharing a single curb cut. The Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) approved the demolition of the existing structure finding the proposed project preferable to preserving the existing structure. The project received a Certificate of Appropriateness from the CHC on October 28, 2015.

Requested Special Permits

The proposed project is located on a corner lot at the intersection of Cushing and Vineyard Streets in the Residence B base zoning district. The Applicant is seeking a Special Permit to allow construction of more than one structure containing a principal residential use pursuant to Section 5.53.2 of the Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance allows for more than one structure containing a principal residential use as-of-right in a Residence B zoning district provided all portions of all structures are located no farther than seventy-five feet from any street line to which the lots abut. All portions of both proposed structures are less than 75 feet from Cushing Street, but one proposed structure has portions that are more than 75 feet from Vineyard Street. Therefore, the proposal requires the Planning Board to issue a Special Permit if the proposal is found to meet the requirements of Sections 10.43 and 5.53.2 of the Zoning Ordinance.

The applicable special permit findings are summarized on the following page. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings (see appendix for zoning text excerpts)
Special Permit for more than one structure containing a principal residential use (Section 5.53.2)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development of two structures on the lot will not significantly increase the impact of the new construction should it occur in a single structure, <u>OR</u> • The development of two structures will provide identifiable benefits beyond that provided by construction in a single structure. • Conforms to general criteria for issuance of a special permit. <i>(See attached)</i>

Staff Comments

The neighborhood generally consists of single-family and two-family dwellings, and the proposed development of two detached single-family dwellings would fit this existing pattern of development. Although one of the houses would be more than 75 feet from one of the abutting streets, which is what triggers the special permit requirement, both houses are designed to front a public street so the project meets the intent of Section 5.53.2. The as-of-right option would be to redevelop the lot or reuse the existing building as one single-family or attached two-family dwelling.

The site design will result in an improved streetscape appearance. The two new dwellings have a built form character and scale that is more consistent with the neighborhood than the existing building. The two structures will also provide front and side setbacks, and an urban grain, which aligns with the character of development on abutting and nearby lots.

The provision of the double driveway does appear to create a relatively large extent of paved surface; however, this has been designed to ensure that the driveway curb cut is located more than 25 feet from the intersection as required by zoning. It also has the added benefit of maintaining a consistent front setback on Vineyard Street.

In continuing review, staff recommends that the following details be further studied / clarified by the Applicant:

- The selection of paving materials and landscaping to minimize the visual impact of the driveway and parking area.
- Whether the mature tree on the Vineyard Street side of the site is proposed to remain.

Special Dimensional Regulations

5.53 In Residence A-1 and Residence A-2 districts, only one structure containing a principal use shall be allowed on a lot.

In Residence B districts only one structure containing a principal residential use shall be allowed on a lot except as set forth below:

1. More than one structure containing a principal residential use shall be allowed on a lot provided all portions of all structures are located no farther than seventy-five (75) feet from any street line to which the lot abuts. However, those elements of a structure that are permitted to extend into required yards as set forth in Section 5.24.2, may extend in a similar manner beyond the seventy-five foot limit.
2. By special permit from the Planning Board provided the Board finds
 - (a) that development in the form of two or more structures on the lot will not significantly increase or may reduce the impact of the new construction should it occur in a single structure; or
 - (b) That two or more structures may provide identifiable benefits beyond that provided should all construction be in a single structure. In making its findings the Board shall consider the impact of the new construction on the following:
 - (1) the extent to which the preservation of a large contiguous open space in the rear of the lot or series of adjacent lots is achieved through the provision of a rear yard setback significantly greater than that required and through the dedication of that rear yard as Green Area, as defined in this Ordinance,
 - (2) incentives for the location of buildings and parking facilities in the front half of a lot in a pattern compatible with the development pattern prevailing in the neighborhood,
 - (3) the extent to which two or more structures provides an enhanced living environment for residents on the lot,
 - (4) incentives to retain existing structures on a lot, particularly any structure determined to be a Preferably Preserved Significant structure by the Cambridge Historical Commission,
 - (5) the opportunities presented to reduce the visual impact of parking from the public street and from adjacent lots,
 - (6) The increased opportunities to reduce the height and bulk as new construction is deeper into a lot or closer to structures on abutting lots.

In Residence A-1, A-2 and B districts there shall be no limit on the number of those structures on a lot that contain principal nonresidential uses exclusively, provided all other requirements of this Zoning Ordinance are met.

General Criteria for Issuance of a Special Permit

10.43 *Criteria.* Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses

permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:

- (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or
- (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or
- (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or
- (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or
- (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and
- (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30. **[SEE FOLLOWING PAGE]**

19.30 Citywide Urban Design Objectives [SUMMARIZED]

Objective	Indicators
New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to lower-scale neighborhoods • Consistency with established streetscape • Compatibility with adjacent uses • Consideration of nearby historic buildings
Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inhabited ground floor spaces • Discouraged ground-floor parking • Windows on ground floor • Orienting entries to pedestrian pathways • Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian access
The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of a development upon its neighbors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location/impact of mechanical equipment • Location/impact of loading and trash handling • Stormwater management • Shadow impacts • Retaining walls, if provided • Building scale and wall treatment • Outdoor lighting • Tree protection (requires plan approved by City Arborist)
Projects should not overburden the City infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply system, and sewer system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water-conserving plumbing, stormwater management • Capacity/condition of water and wastewater service • Efficient design (LEED standards)
New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional use focused on existing campuses • Mixed-use development (including retail) encouraged where allowed • Preservation of historic structures and environment • Provision of space for start-up companies, manufacturing activities
Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city is encouraged.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing as a component of large, multi-building development • Affordable units exceeding zoning requirements, targeting units for middle-income families
Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the city should be incorporated into new development in the city.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicly beneficial open space provided in large-parcel commercial development • Enhance/expand existing open space, complement existing pedestrian/bicycle networks • Provide wider range of activities