

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS
PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 57 INMAN STREET, CAMBRIDGE 02139

NOTICE OF DECISION

Case No: PB #187

Address: 10-18 Decatur Street

Zoning: Residence C

Owner: Fela Realty Trust, Lucy A. Woods, Trustee, C/O Margaret Morrissey, 340 Harvard Street, Cambridge, MA 02140

Applicant: Margaret Morrissey, 340 Harvard Street, Camb., MA 02140

Application Date: March 5, 2003

Public Hearing: May 6, 2003

Planning Board Decision: June 17, 2003

Date of Filing Decision: July 22, 2003

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OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

Application. Townhouse Development Special Permit for more than 6 units of housing in a Residence C district (Section 11.10), and reduction in the minimum dimension for open space to ten feet as permitted in the Townhouse Ordinance. The twenty unit proposal also requires Board of Zoning Appeal relief for FAR, lot area per dwelling, height, and rear and side yard requirements.

Decision: GRANTED with conditions

Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17 of Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 40A, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the filing of the above referenced decision with the City Clerk. Copies of the complete decision and final plans, if applicable, are on file with the Office of the Community Development Department and the City Clerk.

Liza M. Paden

Authorized Representative to the Planning Board

7/22/03

Date

For further information concerning this decision, please call Liza Paden at 617-349-4647, TTY: 617-349-4621, email lpaden@cambridgema.gov.

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Application Documents

1. Transmittal memo to Liza Paden from Mark Boyes-Watson dated March 4, 2003 transmitting application documents.
2. Special Permit application (on BZA forms) supporting statement for the BZA variance, supporting statement for the special permit, and zoning compliance tabulation form.
3. Plans, elevations and perspectives, sheets 1-13, dated March 2003, Assessor map, site plan, dimensioned site plan, open space calculations, floor plans for buildings A-C, building elevations, site photographs, ownership form.
4. Transmittal memo to Liza Paden from Steve Hiserodt dated March 10, 2003 transmitting ownership information.
5. Transmittal memo to Liza Paden from Mark Boyes-Watson dated May 28, 2003 transmitting revised plans and explaining the changes.

6. Plans, elevations and perspectives, sheets S-1, R-1 to R-27 illustrating the revisions to the proposal, dated May 27, 2003, and comments in response to the Planning Board public hearing comments.

7. Plans, elevations, perspectives, dimensional form, etc.; entitled "Revised Special Permit Submittal, 10-18 Decatur Street, Cambridge Ma."; sheets S-1, R-3 to R-5, R-10, 11, 14, 16, 18 illustrating the revisions to the proposal; dated June 17, 2003.

8. Application fee of \$1,717.

Additional Documents Submitted

9. Photographs submitted at the public hearing.

10. Letter to everyone from Janet Halley, dated 5/5/03, re: plans of the new development.

11. Copy of letter to the Board of Zoning Appeal from Rick von Turkovich, 31 Shepard Street, dated 5/6/03.

12. Copy of an email to K. Boucher of Boyes-Watson from Richard Correia, dated 5/6/03.

13. Letter to the Planning Board from Anne Smith Duncan, dated 5/6/03.

14. Letter to the Planning Board from Daniela and Maceij Gadamska, dated 5/12/03, re the proposal.

15. Email to the Planning Board from Victoria Benedict, dated 5/21/03, re: the proposal.

16. Letter to the Planning Board from Karen and John Pierson, dated May 29, 2003.

17. Letter to the Planning Board from Paul Kleinman, dated 6/3/03.

18. Letter to the Planning Board from Anne Smith Duncan, dated 6/3/03.

19. Letter to the Planning Board from Janet Halley, dated 6/3/03.

20. Letter to the Planning Board from Patricia Dorris, no date.

21. Letter to Larissa Brown from Owen O'Riordan, City Engineer, dated

June 3, 2003 re: recommended stormwater management infrastructure.

Findings

After review of the application documents and other documents submitted to the Board, testimony taken at the public hearing, and after review and consideration of the special permit criteria, the Board makes the following findings.

1. Criteria for Approval of Townhouse Development and Multifamily Dwellings – Section 10.47.4

a. Key features of the natural environment should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Tree removal should be minimized and other natural features of the site, such as slopes, should be maintained.

Presently the site is heavily used for industrial activities, including an auto body shop. Neither trees and other vegetation nor unique topography are significant elements of the lot.

b. New buildings should be related sensitively to the existing built environment. The location, orientation, and massing of structures in the development should avoid overwhelming the existing buildings in the vicinity of the development. Visual and functional disruptions should be avoided.

The plan, as revised, relates well to abutting properties. The Decatur Street frontage now reads as a series of freestanding buildings, reflecting the rhythm and pattern that occurs on the already developed portions of the residential street. To the south the site abuts a streetwall industrial building that has been converted to housing in the recent past. Adjustments have been made in the location of higher elements of the project near this building so as to minimize any negative impact on nearby units in the 155 Brookline Street structure. The row of new two family structures along the northerly sideline of the lot is not dissimilar in scale and height to the existing adjacent residential buildings.

c. The location, arrangement, and landscaping of open space should provide some visual benefits to abutters and passersby as well as provide functional benefits to occupants of the development.

The site is currently devoid of landscaping (although much of it is open as driveways, car storage, etc.). Significant front yards will be provided on the Decatur and Valentine Streets frontages. Landscaped rear yards will be provided along the northerly property line, adjacent to the extensive rear yards of abutting properties.

d. Parking areas, internal roadways and access/egress points should be safe and convenient.

The development is served by one driveway having an entry on each road. The site has been rationalized for traffic circulation purposes with considerably fewer disruptive vehicular movements expected than the current use generates. Traffic calming devices are proposed on the through-site driveway to ensure that external traffic does not use it as a cut-through path.

e. Parking area landscaping should minimize the intrusion of on-site parking so that it does not substantially detract from the use and enjoyment of either the proposed development or neighboring properties.

The parking is located within buildings. The driveways are essentially internal to the project and do not have significant visual exposure to the public streets. Modest landscaping is provided within the driveway areas.

f. Service facilities such as trash collection apparatus and utility boxes should be located so that they are convenient for residents, yet unobtrusive.

The final location of these facilities, to the extent that they will occur outside of the buildings, will be reviewed when final architectural and site plans are produced.

2. Reduction of the minimum Open Space dimension to ten feet - Section 11.15.5 (1).

a. Peculiarities of the parcels warrant a reduction

The site is currently occupied by a non-conforming industrial activity (car repair) that is disruptive to its residential neighbors. Its removal and conversion of its site to residential use is highly desirable and consistent with the objective of city land use policy. Due to its industrial past it is likely that the site will be expensive to remediate environmentally and to then covert to housing. Construction to a sufficient density is likely to be needed to carry the costs of the redevelopment of the site. Therefore, reduction in the dimensions of the provided open space facilities is reasonable to accommodate the added density on a fairly constrained lot.

b. The smaller dimensions will result in a superior design.

As illustrated in the submitted documents, the smaller dimensioned spaces will be carefully designed and quite functional for the residents who will be using them. The smaller dimensions allow the buildings on

the site to be arranged in a logical way that allows them to relate well to abutting properties and the two city streets.

c. Total amount of open space not be reduced.

The total amount of open space required will not be reduced.

3. The general criteria for the issuance of a special permit are met – Section 10.45.

a. The requirements of the Ordinance are met.

With the issuance of the special permits granted herein and after issuance of requested variances from the Board of Zoning Appeal, for which application has been made, the project will conform to all requirements of the Zoning Ordinance.

b. Traffic patterns will not cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in the established neighborhood character.

All traffic to the site will utilize a single entry drive that runs from Valentine Street to Decatur Street. The modest number of units will not burden abutting streets and the character of vehicular movements will be substantially more appropriate to the neighborhood than are those associated with the current servicing of cars.

c. Continued operation or development of adjacent uses will not be adversely affected.

Adjacent uses are residential. One cluster of housing is about the same density as the one proposed, but in a converted industrial building. Other residences in wood-frame two and multifamily dwellings typical of the neighborhood are common on adjacent lots. Construction of this development will substantially improve the residential environment for those existing dwelling units.

d. No nuisance or hazard will be created to the detriment of the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants or the citizens of the City.

No nuisance or hazard will be created. In fact a substantial existing nuisance, and possible environmental or operational hazards, will be eliminated.

e. The use will not impair the integrity of the district or adjoining districts or derogate from the intent and purpose of the Ordinance.

The development will directly advance the intent and purpose of the Ordinance to encourage the conversion of non-conforming industrial uses in this neighborhood to residential use.

f. The new development is consistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.

19.31. New projects should be responsive to the existing or anticipated pattern of development.

The development will convert a non-conforming industrial site to a conforming residential one, and through its design effectively bridge the differing patterns and scales of abutting residential development: i.e. moderate density multifamily units in a converted factory on Brookline Street and a pattern of individual, freestanding single, two-family and multifamily dwellings more typical of the Cambridgeport neighborhood on the other side of the site.

19.32. Development should be pedestrian and bicycle-friendly, with a positive relationship to its surroundings.

The development provides for safe and comprehensive pedestrian circulation throughout the site and from abutting streets.

19.33. The building and site design should mitigate adverse environmental impacts of the development upon its neighbors.

The principal mitigation undertaken by the development is the elimination of an intrusive, non-conforming auto repair facility from the site.

19.34. The project should not overburden city infrastructure services, including neighborhood roads, city water supply and sewer systems.

The development is of modest scale and will not overburden city infrastructure.

19.35. New construction should reinforce and enhance the complex urban aspects of Cambridge as it has developed historically.

As suggested above, the project is designed to complement and enhance the varied pattern of residential development found in its vicinity generally and on abutting sites specifically.

19.36. Expansion of the inventory of housing in the city in encouraged.

Nineteen units of housing will be created, of which two will be affordable as required by Section 11.200 of the Zoning Ordinance.

19.37. Enhancement and expansion of open space amenities in the City should be incorporated into new development.

Although the open space created in the development will serve as an amenity primarily for the new residents of the development, the spaces are arrayed on the lot in locations where their benefits can also be appreciated by abutters and the general public passing the lot on abutting streets.

Decision

After review of the application documents and discussion at the public hearing and at subsequent Planning Board meetings, and based on the above findings, the Planning Board **GRANTS** a special permit for a Townhouse Development for 19 dwelling units (17 market and 2 affordable) in a Residence C district and to reduce the minimum dimension for open space in the development to ten feet, subject to the following limitations and conditions.

1. All use, building construction, and site plan development shall be in substantial conformance with the plans and application documents submitted to the Planning Board as referenced above, as modified by the Revised Special Permit Submittal dated June 17, 2003. Appendix I summarizes the dimensional features of the project as approved.

Approval herein and the dimensional features summarized in Appendix I require the granting of variances from the Board of Zoning Appeal.

2. The project shall be subject to continuing design review by the Community Development Department (CDD). In that process particular note shall be paid to the final design details proposed for the open spaces on the site and the location and design of any trash handling and utility facilities.

Before issuance of each Building Permit for the project, the CDD shall certify to the Superintendent of Buildings that the final plans submitted to secure that Building Permit are consistent with and meet all conditions of this Permit.

3. The Permittee shall comply with all requirements of the Department of Public Works with regard to stormwater and sewer service improvements

on the site as outlined in the above referenced letter to Larissa Brown from Owen O'Riordan dated June 3, 2003.

4. All authorized development shall conform to the requirements of the City of Cambridge Noise Control Ordinance, Chapter 8.16 of the City Municipal Code.

Voting to **GRANT** the special permit were L. Brown, B. Shaw, H. Russell, W. Tibbs, F. Darwin, and K. Benjamin, Associate appointed by the Chair, constituting at least two thirds of the membership of the Board.

For the Planning Board,



Barbara Shaw, Vice Chair

A copy of this decision #187 shall be filed with the Office of the City Clerk. Appeals, if any, shall be made pursuant to Section 17, Chapter 40A, Massachusetts General Laws, and shall be filed within twenty (20) days after the date of such filing in the office of the city Clerk.

ATTEST: A true and correct copy of the above decision filed with the Office of the City Clerk on July 22, 2003, by Elizabeth M. Paden, authorized representative of the Cambridge Planning Board. All plans referred to in the decision have likewise been filed with the City Clerk on such date.

Twenty (20) days have elapsed since the filing of the Decision. No appeal has been filed.

DATE

City Clerk, City of Cambridge