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# CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

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To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: July 6, 2021

Re: Special Permit **PB #22, 7 Cornelius Way**

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Community Development

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Chief of Administration

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## Overview

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Submission Type:	Special Permit Application
Applicant:	Brady-Built Inc
Zoning District(s):	Residence C-1 District (C-1)
Proposal Summary:	Construct a sunroom addition and dormer to an existing townhouse.
Special Permits Requested:	Section 11.15. b. Modification to a townhouse development after a subdivision has been recorded. <i>A summary of the applicable special permit findings is listed on the following page. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.</i>
Other City Permits Needed:	None
Planning Board Action:	Grant or deny requested special permits.
Memo Contents:	Zoning Report & Design Report
Other Staff Reports:	None

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<b>Requested Special Permits</b>	<b>Required Planning Board Findings</b> <i>(Summary - see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Townhouses and multifamily dwellings (Section 10.47.4)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key features of natural landscape are preserved.</li> <li>• New buildings relate sensitively to existing built environment.</li> <li>• Open space provides visual benefits to abutters and passersby and functional benefits to occupants.</li> <li>• Parking, access and egress are safe and convenient.</li> <li>• Intrusion of onsite parking is minimized.</li> <li>• Services such as trash collection and utility boxes are convenient yet unobtrusive.</li> </ul>
General special permit criteria (Section 10.43)	<p>Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest because the proposal would (unlike uses or development otherwise allowed in the district) either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• not comply with the Zoning Ordinance;</li> <li>• cause traffic congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established character;</li> <li>• adversely affect the continued operation or development of adjacent uses;</li> <li>• create nuisance or hazard to the detriment of health, safety and/or welfare;</li> <li>• impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of the Zoning Ordinance; or</li> <li>• be inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.</li> </ul>



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Zoning Report: **PB #22, 7 Cornelius Way**

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## Area Planning and Zoning

### *Site Context*

The site is located in the Residence C-1 District and was part of a 54-unit Cambridge Redevelopment Authority development in the Wellington-Harrington neighborhood. The development abuts the Grand Junction corridor to the east. The original special permit and amendments approved the site plan and arrangement of townhouse units, and includes conditions pertaining to tree protection, landscaping, perimeter fencing, parking, and vehicular circulation on the site.

The site is at the southernmost area of the original development and directly abuts a commercial complex that includes the Kendall Square Cinema, the Kendall Square garage, a childcare facility, and office and lab use (see Figure 1). The building is located on the southern side of Cornelius Way, at the eastern end of a row of four houses.

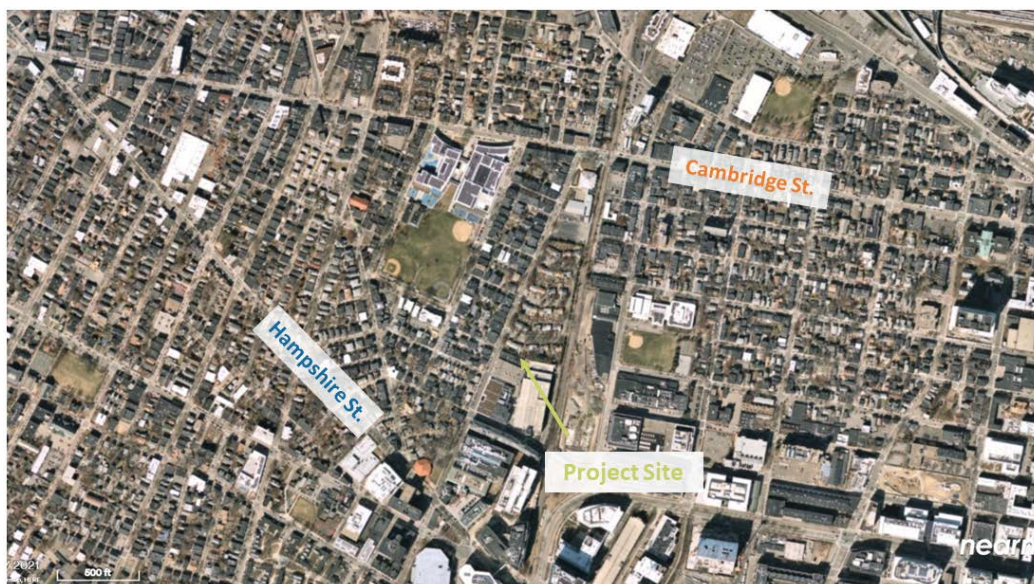


Figure 1: Project site location (Source: Nearmap, March 27, 2021)

### *Project Description*

The applicant proposes adding a wood-framed, single-story sunroom addition to the south side of the first story of the existing building and a shed dormer to the south side of the third story of the existing building. The first-floor sunroom addition will connect to the townhouse through an interior opening. A similar special permit was granted by the Planning Board in December 2021 for 2 James Way (PB-22, amendment #4).

## **Comments on Proposal**

### ***Consistency with Planning and Zoning***

The gross floor area (GFA) of the site will increase by only 435 square feet, so both the GFA and the floor-area ratio (FAR) will remain substantially below the maximum in the district. The height of the proposed dormer is lower than the height of the current roof, so the building height will not increase. All of the setbacks will remain the same, except for the rear yard setback, which will decrease from 34.6' to 21.1'; this is still above the minimum required setback of 20'. While the amount of open space on the lot will decrease, it will still be more than double the required amount. The amount of permeable open space will stay the same.

The proposed scope of work will preserve the key existing landscape features of the site, including fences, plantings, and the relationship of the building to the public right-of-way. No existing trees will be removed, and the applicant does not propose regrading the site. The third-story shed dormer and the roof skylight will not directly face neighbors' houses, thus preserving privacy. There are no changes to the number of parking spaces, nor to the arrangement of parking on-site. Similarly, the number of dwelling units will not increase.

### ***Suggested Conditions***

The following additional information is requested to clarify the proposal:

- Revise dimensional form so that Permeable Open Space is recorded as the actual square feet or a percentage of the lot area.



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Urban Design Report: **PB #22, 7 Cornelius Way**

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## Urban Design Comments

At the site planning level, there is some ambiguity regarding the treatment of the driveway. The existing and proposed plot plans should be revised to clarify whether the existing asphalt driveway will remain asphalt, or if new permeable paving is proposed.

The proposed sunroom is modest in scale and generally follows the footprint of the existing deck. It is slightly offset from the existing building volume, which helps differentiate it as an addition. Its solid walls will be clad with siding to match the existing building.

The proposed shed dormer on the rear of the existing roof follows most of the recommendations in the City's "Design Guidelines for Roof Dormers". The exception is that its outer face is in the same plane as the wall below, where the guidelines recommend that it be set back. This does not seem problematic as the proposed dormer is on the rear side of the roof and not a prominent element of the streetscape. The dormer's overall length of 15' equals the maximum length recommended by the guidelines and it is setback from the gable end and adjoining townhouse. Its end walls will be clad in siding to match the existing building.

## Suggested Conditions / Continuing Review

The following are additional recommendations for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Revised existing and proposed plot plans