



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: August 31, 2016
Re: **Amendment to Special Permit PB #301, 249 Third Street**

Background

In fall 2015, the Planning Board issued special permits authorizing development of a residential project with 84 dwelling units and a small ground-floor commercial space at 249 Third Street. The permitted building design did not include a basement, and the special permits authorized parking to be provided off-site within existing nearby facilities. Due to unexpected site conditions, the Permittee has now revised the plans for the building to include a basement, which would be used for bicycle parking, storage and amenity space for the building's residents, and an electrical vault. Because this change results in a substantive increase in the Gross Floor Area (GFA) of the project, a special permit amendment is required. However, the project as it is currently proposed continues to conform to the requirements of the base and overlay zoning districts. The new design includes some modest changes to the above-grade portions of the building, mainly with respect to the use of spaces at the ground floor.

Planning Board Action

The initial approval involved several special permits, because it authorized a reduction in required parking and a distributed parking arrangement across three sites. Because the proposed change to the project only involves an increase in GFA on the 249 Third Street site and does not affect the approvals for the other off-site parking facilities, the only action required by the Planning Board is to amend the dimensional approvals associated with special permit PB #301.

That special permit included a Project Review Special Permit (19.20), a reduction in the required side yard to 10 feet (Section 5.34, Footnote b), and a reduction in required parking (Section 6.35.1). The special permit findings are summarized on the following page.

The findings for the latter two special permits are not affected, because there is no proposed change in the side yard setback and no change in the parking requirement, because the number of dwelling units is not being increased. Therefore, only the 19.20 Project Review Special Permit findings need to be addressed.

Special Permits for 249 Third Street (PB #301)

Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Project Review Special Permit (Section 19.20)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The project will have no substantial adverse impact on city traffic within the study area, upon review of the traffic impact indicators analyzed in the Transportation Impact Study and mitigation efforts proposed. • The project is consistent with the urban design objectives of the City as set forth in Section 19.30.
Reduction in Side Yard to 10 Feet (instead of formula calculation) for New Residential Buildings in Industry A-1 (Section 5.34, Footnote b) Note that no change in side yard is proposed.	The yard is suitably landscaped to effectively buffer building walls from abutting lots.
Reduction in Required Parking (Section 6.35.1) Note that no change affecting parking requirements is proposed.	Lesser amount of parking will not cause excessive congestion, endanger public safety, substantially reduce parking availability for other uses or otherwise adversely impact the neighborhood; or will provide positive environmental or other benefits to the users of the lot and the neighborhood, including assisting in provision of affordable housing units. <i>(See appendix for details.)</i>

Comments on Proposed Changes

The modifications are proposed as a result of the Applicant moving the electrical transformer underground, which was suggested by the Planning Board and is entirely consistent with the City’s urban design objectives. The resultant internal layout changes at the ground floor, and corresponding minor changes to the elevations, offer several design improvements, including:

- Greater visual connection between Third Street and the internal courtyard;
- Opportunities to further activate the sidewalk and courtyard; and
- Increased amenity space for residents,

Comments regarding the changes to long-term bicycle parking spaces have been provided by The Traffic, Parking and Transportation Department. The Department of Public Works has also reviewed the amendment, and subject to continuing review and approval anticipates that the project can be designed in a manner to mitigate potential future issues related to surface flooding.