



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: December 7, 2018

Re: Special Permit **PB #343, 199 Pemberton Street**

This memo contains an overview of the of the proposed project at 199 Pemberton Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Summary of Proposal

The proposed project consists of retaining the existing single-family residential building and constructing a detached structure with two additional dwelling units on the lot. A total of three required off-street parking spaces are proposed on the site.

Requested Special Permits

The proposed project is located on a parcel with frontage on Pemberton Street across from Sargent Street 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 75 feet from any street line to which the lots abut. The proposed new structure is more than 75 feet from Pemberton Street, and so the proposal requires the Planning Board to issue a Special Permit based on whether the proposal is found to meet the criteria in Sections 10.43 and 5.53.2 of the Zoning Ordinance.

The project also requires a Special Permit for locating a second curb cut on a frontage that is less than 100 feet pursuant to Section 6.43.5(c) of the Zoning Ordinance. The Board of Zoning Appeal would typically grant that special permit, but since the proposal requires Planning Board review, the Planning Board may grant all necessary special permits per Section 10.45.

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 <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
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, considering the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Extent to which preservation of a large contiguous open space in the rear of the lot or series of adjacent lots is achieved ○ Incentives to locate buildings and parking in the front half of a lot per the prevailing development pattern in the neighborhood ○ Providing an enhanced living environment for residents on the lot ○ Incentives to retain existing structures, particularly structures that are preferably preserved ○ Opportunities to reduce visual impact of parking from the public street and adjacent lots ○ Opportunities to reduce height and bulk of new construction is deeper into a lot or closer to structures on abutting lots • Conforms to general criteria for issuance of a special permit.
Special Permit for additional curb cut on frontage less than 100 feet (Section 6.43.5.c)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The placement of the second curb cut will improve traffic and safety.
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43.

Area Planning and Zoning

Lower-scale residential zoning districts, such as Residence B, are intended to allow development at the prevailing scale, density and pattern of the existing neighborhood. The lot is in the North Cambridge neighborhood toward the western end of Pemberton Street and has the Fitchburg commuter rail along the southern boundary. This part of the neighborhood generally consists of single-family, two-family and

some multi-family dwellings. The Residence B district allows single-family, two-family, and townhouse dwellings with a maximum height of 35 feet.

Comments on Proposal

Consistency with Planning and Zoning

The lot at 199 Pemberton Street is larger in area than most of the other lots with single family structures in that neighborhood. It is surrounded by multi-family developments on three sides, and a lot right across Pemberton Street has a three-family structure. The existing building does not have the minimum side and front setbacks, making it a nonconforming structure. No changes are proposed to the existing building.

The proposed two-family house in the rear would be more than 75 feet from Pemberton Street and triggers the special permit requirement, but would otherwise conform to all the dimensional requirements of the district. The as-of-right option would be to continue to use the existing building as a single-family, or to convert, enlarge, or demolish and reconstruct the existing dwelling into an attached single-family, two-family, or townhouse residential building. The site is large enough to accommodate up to 4 dwelling units per zoning.

Site Design and Landscaping

Since the lot is quite large, the proposal maintains a sense of openness between the two-family house and the existing dwelling, as well as the side yards of the adjoining lots. A large open space area is also maintained to the rear of the existing dwelling.

The existing curb cut is directly into the garage of the existing building, limiting shared access to the proposed parking spaces for the new units. There will be approximately 14 feet between existing curb cut and the proposed additional curb cut. It is recommended that some landscape treatments, such as taller plantings and a canopy tree be provided in the area between the curb cuts to help alleviate the visual impacts of the parking and additional driveway at the sidewalk. Some consideration should also be given to providing a designated walkway to the new units from the street.

One existing tree is proposed to be removed, and it is unclear whether the remaining trees located on the site will be impacted by the construction of the proposed second structure. It is also unclear if there is sufficient space to access the proposed recycling and trash areas in front of the new building.

Building Design

While some of the design details are unclear since no renderings or a streetscape elevation were provided, the simple residential massing seems relatively consistent with the surrounding built form character. The proposed clapboards, asphalt shingles and simple trim boards are typical design treatments used in the existing residential context. It would be helpful to review further design details, such as material colors and details, as the project advances.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be further studied by the Applicant, either in preparing revised materials if the Planning Board continues the hearing to a future date, or as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Provide information regarding the protection of existing trees that are proposed to be retained.
- The selection of paving materials and landscaping to minimize the visual impact of the driveway and parking spaces.
- All landscape details, including proposed trees and treatment of the space between the two units and existing dwelling, and between the two driveways.
- Review of all exterior building materials, colors, and details.