



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

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Re: Special Permit **PB #344, 14-16 Jackson Street**

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This memo contains an overview of the of the proposed project at 14-16 Jackson Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Summary of Proposal

The proposed project consists of demolishing the existing single-family residential building and constructing two new detached single-family buildings on the lot. A total of two required off-street parking spaces are proposed on the site.

Requested Special Permits

The proposed project is located on a parcel with frontage on Jackson Street in the Residence B base zoning district in North Cambridge. 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 Jackson 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 existing structure has been modified substantially from its original form and the site has extensive paved area as the property was used as a parking lot for a moving company in the past. Since the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) determined that the existing dwelling is not significant to be preferably preserved, the existing house is proposed to be demolished. 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.
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 southern end of Jackson Street and near Comeau Field and Jerry’s Pond abutting Rindge Avenue. The Alewife MBTA station is within walking distance from the property. 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 14-16 Street is about the same size as most of the other lots with single family structures in that neighborhood. It is surrounded by two-family developments on all sides. The existing building does not have the minimum side and front setbacks, making it a nonconforming structure. The existing building is proposed to be replaced with two detached houses.

The proposed single-family house in the rear would be more than 75 feet from Jackson 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 a single-family or two-family building. The site is large enough to accommodate up to 2 dwelling units per zoning. The site is almost entirely paved and hence does not meet the requirements for permeable open space for this zoning district.

Site Design and Landscaping

The proposed site design will vastly reduce the paved area on the property and improve the quality of open space with tree planting. The rear yard setback requirement results in the two dwellings being relatively close together; however, the building placement and staggered massing generally helps avoid overlooking issues. Reducing the extent of the existing shared driveway/curb cut by the addition of a landscaped walkway between the site and 18 Jackson Street is a significant improvement. The design of the curb cut should meet city standards and be approved by the Department of Public Works. In addition, more could be done to mitigate the visual impacts of the parking area on Jackson Street, including a possible street tree, and varying the hardscape treatment. The location and screening details of trash and recycling receptacles should also be provided.

Building Design

Both dwellings are modest in size, and the simple massing is relatively consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. The project utilizes details, such as wood siding, eaves, posts and trim boards that are in keeping with the architectural character of the neighborhood. The front windows are harmoniously aligned and sized with proportions that relate to the overall scale of the building. The covered, front porch also relieves the flatness of the façade, while providing a pedestrian-scaled element that faces the street.

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:

- The selection of paving materials and landscaping to minimize the visual impact of the driveway and parking spaces.

- All landscape details, including proposed trees, curb cut design, and the location and details of trash and recycling enclosures.
- Details, materials, and colors of architectural elements.