



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: March 9, 2021

Re: Special Permit PB #374, 9-11 Jackson Street

Submission Type: Special Permit Application

Applicant: Gregory Matteosian

Zoning District(s): Residence B

Proposal Summary: Demolition of an existing dwelling and construction of two new single-family residences with one located greater than 75 feet from the street line along with two off-street parking spaces.

Special Permits Requested: Special Permit for more than one structure containing a principal residential use (Section 5.53.2). *A summary of the applicable special permit findings is listed on the following page. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.*

Other City Permits Needed: None being sought prior to building permit

Planning Board Action: Grant or deny requested special permits.

Memo Contents: Review of area planning and zoning, comments on proposal addressing planning, zoning, and urban design.

Other Staff Reports: Department of Public Works (DPW)

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

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Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

Requested Special Permits	Required Planning Board Findings (Summary) <i>(see Criteria 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)	<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or (b) traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or (c) the continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or (d) nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or (e) for other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and (f) the new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30 (see appendix).

Area Planning and Zoning

Jackson Street is a one-way residential street in North Cambridge that connects Rindge Avenue to Harvey Street and is within the Residence B zoning district. The Residence B zoning district is a low-moderate density residential district which permits single-family, two-family and townhouse dwellings of a smaller scale and intensity than most other districts. The majority of lots within the Residence B zoning district contain one residential structure, though some lots (including those along Jackson Street) contain two dwellings.

Envision Cambridge (2019) established several goals related to housing, including increasing the City's overall housing production, providing a variety of housing options for individuals and families, and utilizing zoning and regulatory incentives to help facilitate new housing development of different types and scales. The development of small-scale, infill housing helps to further these goals.

Comments on Development Proposal

Consistency with Planning and Zoning

The applicant proposes to demolish the existing principal dwelling and construct two new single-family dwellings on the lot. The applicant states that the existing dwelling on the lot is less than 1,500 square feet and undersized compared to other principal dwellings along Jackson Street. The applicant states that expanding the existing structure would result in less overall open space, less natural light within the structure and on abutting lots, and result in a new structure which would be oversized compared to existing structures along Jackson Street. The shape and size of lots along Jackson Street are typical of the lots located in this particular residential neighborhood, measuring approximately 50' wide and 150' deep. These lots present an opportunity to add a second principal dwelling in the rear yard, and the Planning Board has reviewed several such applications in recent years, including another one on Jackson Street (14-16 Jackson Street). In most cases, the existing front dwelling is preserved and a new structure is built behind it.

When a second principal dwelling is proposed in the rear yard and is located more than 75' from the street line, a special permit is required from the Planning Board. Alternatively, an applicant could also seek to add density by constructing a two-family or attached townhouse dwelling, or by increasing the size or intensity of an existing structure by expanding its footprint and/or converting it to a two-family structure. Such approaches can result in over-sized buildings that are inharmonious with existing neighborhood character and/or result in less total open space on the lot.

In making a determination to grant a special permit under Section 5.53 of the Zoning Ordinance, the Planning Board is to consider whether the development of two or more structures on the lot results in benefits that could not otherwise be achieved in a single structure. Benefits could include elements such as maintaining the existing prevailing development pattern along the street, maximizing the site's open space, reducing the visual impact of parking from the street, and enhancing the living environment for residents on the lot.

The existing structure dates to the early 19th century and was relocated to the site in 1872. The Cambridge Historical Commission reviewed the proposed application and, following a public hearing held on October 1, 2020, determined that the existing house not be preferably preserved.

Urban Design

Site Design and Landscaping

The design utilizes many of the same strategies that the project architect has employed in similar, nearby projects. The proposed site design reflects the surrounding context and the evolving character of the area. The rear yard setback results in the two dwellings being relatively close together; however, the building placement and staggered massing generally helps avoid privacy concerns by not directly aligning windows and maintains openness between the rear yards of the adjacent lots.

The landscaping is thoughtfully done; the use of permeable pavers for hardscape areas, and the short driveway length with minimal curb cut help to mitigate the visual impacts of the project. The landscaped walkway to the rear dwelling is an attractive site feature. More substantial plantings along its length could be considered to further improve the relationship with the abutting property. A higher-Solar Reflectance Index (SRI) paving color and additional tree plantings would also further the City's climate resilience goals and help mitigate urban heat island impacts.

Building Design

Both dwellings are modest in scale, and the relatively simple massing and proposed building heights emulate neighboring structures. The visible front entry and separate walkway help to give the rear dwelling its own sense of address when viewed from the street frontage.

The project utilizes details, such as cementitious lap siding, board and batten, eaves, posts and trim boards that are in keeping with the architectural character of the neighborhood. The front windows of No. 9 are 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.

The project renderings are a little vague regarding some details, so the proposed materials and color palette should be further detailed by the Applicant as part of the continuing review process.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that may be addressed further at the public hearing, or may be incorporated into conditions for continuing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- All landscape details, including proposed plantings, hardscape materials, fences, exterior lighting, etc.
- Details, materials, and colors of all architectural elements.
- Acoustic screening of air conditioning condensers.