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CITY OF CAMBRIDGE  
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board

From: Liza Paden, Zoning Project Planner  
Jeff Roberts, Senior Manager for Zoning and Development

Date: April 10, 2018

Re: Amendment to Special Permit **PB #9, 15 Lilac Court**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 15 Lilac Street, the amendment being requested, the original decision and related comments.

### **Summary of Proposal**

The applicant is proposing to modify the existing townhouse by filling in a mezzanine area between levels 2 and 3 to create an additional bedroom. As shown in the application documents, the existing mezzanine slab will be extended to create a new ceiling over the first floor and the existing dormer roofline extended to 15 feet in length to create adequate headroom.

### **Requested Special Permit**

The project is located in the Residence C-1 District and was granted a Townhouse Special Permit in 1980 (attached). The Applicant seeks a special permit for a modification to the plans not enumerated in the original special permit, per Section 11.15b of the Zoning Ordinance. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

The proposal remains within the allowable gross floor area (GFA) for the Residence C-1 zone. According to the application, the GFA will not increase as it is already included in the existing total per the definition of GFA:

*In a building with more than two floors, the area of each floor level of any interior courtyard whether or not covered by a roof, which has a minimum dimension of less than 40 feet in any direction shall be included unless 20% or more of the perimeter of such courtyard at each floor level measured consecutively is not enclosed.*

The total GFA allowed on the lot is 2,732 square feet and this unit has 2,000 square feet.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(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> <p>(See full text in appendix)</p>
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> <p>(See full text in appendix.)</p>

**Comments on Proposal**

The site is located in the Residence C-1 District and was part of a 24-unit Cambridge Redevelopment Authority development in the Wellington-Harrington neighborhood. The development abuts the Dante Allegheri Society Center to the south, residences to the north and is across the street from One Kendall Square. The original special permit approved the site plan and arrangement of townhouse units, and includes conditions pertaining to tree plantings and vehicular circulation on the site.

The proposed changes are modest in nature and do not seem to affect the conditions of the special permit or the Planning Board criteria for evaluating townhouse projects, which address issues such as landscaping, open space, parking and circulation, utilities and service functions, and relationship to the surrounding context.

The proposed infill creates additional living space and has no exterior changes other than the increase in the dormer on the rear façade, which meets the rear yard setback requirement and is shielded from public view. The dormer extension is designed to match the existing dormer with the same siding materials and color, and similar window style.