



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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To: Planning Board

From: Swaathi Joseph, Associate Zoning Planner
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Re: Special Permit **PB #327, 74 Holworthy Street**

This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 74 Holworthy Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Summary of Proposal

The proposed project consists of renovation and expanding the existing single-family residential building and constructing a second single-family detached dwelling unit on the lot with required off-street parking on the site.

Requested Special Permits

The proposed project is located on a parcel with frontage on Holworthy 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 has portions that are more than 75 feet from Holworthy Street. Therefore, the proposal requires the Planning Board to issue a Special Permit if the proposal is found to meet the requirements of Sections 10.43 and 5.53.2 of the Zoning Ordinance. The project also requires a Special Permit for a conforming addition to the existing nonconforming structure less than 25% in area and volume pursuant to Section 8.22.2.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. (See appendix) |
| Special permit for conforming addition to existing nonconforming structure less than 25% in area and volume (Section 8.22.2.c) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The addition will not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing nonconforming use. • There is no further violation of the dimensional requirements of Article 5.000. • Compliance with parking requirements in Article 6.000. |
| 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 (see appendix). |

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 neighborhood generally consists of single-family and two-family and some multi-family dwellings. Most lots contain one residential structure, although some lots contain two separate dwellings. Each of the neighboring lots at 50-52

Holworthy, 60-62 Holworthy, 82 Holworthy, and 102 Holworthy contain two residential structures in the same parcel, with a “front” building facing Holworthy Street and a “rear” building at the back of the lot.

Proposed Project

The lot at 74 Holworthy Street is similar in depth and width to the neighboring lots, with approximately 50 feet of frontage and almost 180 feet deep. The lot is relatively flat except where it slopes up towards the property line in the rear. The existing building does not have the minimum side setback of 7.5 feet on the northern side, making it a nonconforming structure. The proposal would renovate the existing building, while adding a second floor above the single story section at the back of that building, and build a new detached structure behind the existing building. The proposed house in the rear would be more than 75 feet from Holworthy Street, which is what triggers the special permit requirement. 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 two-family dwelling.

The proposed addition to the existing building, which is less than 25% but more than 10% of the existing building’s area and volume, would comply with all dimensional requirements and would not enlarge any existing non-conforming aspect of the building. The proposed second structure also conforms to all the dimensional requirements. The removal of the existing patio behind the existing building would create some additional permeable area to offset the additional paving due to the extension of the driveway and new parking area. There are several mature trees on the site, and two trees would be removed; one in the front yard along the driveway due to sewer damage as noted in the ‘Landscaping Plan’, and one near the side property line as it is proximate to the second dwelling.

Urban Design

As noted above, the context has a mixed built form character with several architectural styles and types present, including traditional two-story, wood-framed homes and flat roofed, triple-deckers. While not a designated historic property, the project preserves the existing dwelling, which has contextual significance as an example of the late 19th Century Empire Style. The proposed second dwelling has relatively slender proportions and a modest footprint, which helps maintain a sense of openness between the two dwellings, as well as the rear yards of the adjoining lots. The more generous setback to the south also enables a layered view between houses and through yards to be maintained from the public realm.

The entrance to the second dwelling is quite visible down the driveway, which provides a sense of identity for the new residence. The proposed muted color palette will also help the new dwelling recede into the background of rear yards and landscaping. The contemporary massing and exterior treatment ensures that the more ornate existing dwelling, with its Mansard roof, maintains prominence on the site.

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 area.
- All landscape details, including proposed plantings and treatment of the space between the two dwellings.