



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

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Re: Special Permit **PB #341, 78 Holworthy Street**

IRAM FAROOQ
Assistant City Manager for
Community Development

SANDRA CLARKE
Deputy Director
Chief of Administration

KHALIL MOGASSABI
Deputy Director
Chief of Planning

This memo contains an overview of the of the proposed project at 78 Holworthy Street, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Summary of Proposal

The proposed project consists of renovating 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 is 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.

Since the Cambridge Historical Commission (CHC) determined that the existing dwelling is significant and preferably preserved, the existing house is proposed to be preserved and renovated in a manner to maintain its original massing and detail. CHC has reviewed and approved the proposed modification and renovation of the existing house.

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 Strawberry Hill 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. The Board recently approved a similar project (PB-327) at 74 Holworthy Street in April 2017.

Comments on Proposal

Consistency with Planning and Zoning

The lot at 78 Holworthy Street is similar in depth and width to the neighboring lots, with approximately 50 feet of frontage and 175 feet deep. 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 with minor modifications in the rear resulting in a reduction in gross floor area. The proposed house in the rear would be more than 75 feet from Holworthy Street and 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 second structure conforms to all the dimensional requirements of the district. 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 mature trees along the northern and southern boundaries of the site. It is unclear whether those trees are located in the project and if they will be impacted by the construction of the proposed second structure.

Urban Design

The project preserves the existing dwelling, which was found to be historically significant by the CHC as a characteristic example of a Bracketed Italianate residence. The proposed second dwelling has relatively modest proportions, which helps maintain a sense of openness between the two dwellings, and the rear yards of the adjoining lots. The more generous setback from the southern property line also enables a layered view between houses and through yards to be maintained from the public realm.

The contemporary massing and exterior treatment ensures that the more ornate existing dwelling, maintains prominence on the site and the streetscape is relatively unchanged. The proposed muted color palette will also help the new dwelling recede into the background of rear yards and landscaping. Opportunities to mitigate the visual impact of the driveway and parking spaces, such as varying the paving treatment and driveway alignment should be explored. Planting of canopy trees in strategic locations could also help buffer the visual impacts of the project.

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 impacts of the project on existing trees.
- 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 dwellings.