



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: April 20, 2021

Re: Special Permit PB #377, 88 Holworthy Street

Submission Type: Special Permit Application

Applicant: Stephen Sillari

Zoning District(s): Residence B

Proposal Summary: Demolition of an existing two-family residence and construction of two new two-family residences with one located greater than 75 feet from the street line along with four 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: Variances for total gross floor area/FAR, lot area per dwelling unit/total number of units

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
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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

Development in the Residence B zoning district is intended to match the prevailing density of the overall neighborhood. The Residence B district contains a number of single-family dwellings, but also contains two-family and multi-family dwellings dispersed throughout. Along Holworthy Street, several lots have developed two separate principal dwellings – such as 50-52 Holworthy, 60-62 Holworthy, 82 Holworthy, 102 Holworthy and 118 Holworthy. Infill residential development in these neighborhoods helps to implement City planning goals of increasing housing production without disrupting the overall prevailing development pattern of the neighborhood.

Comments on Development Proposal

Consistency with Planning and Zoning

The lot at 88 Holworthy Street is not unlike many of the other lots along Holworthy Street, measuring approximately fifty (50) feet wide and one hundred and seventy-five (175) feet deep. The lot is currently improved with an existing two-family structure. This application seeks to rehabilitate the existing two-family structure and construct a new two-family structure in the rear yard of the property. The proposed development would result in four (4) total units, consisting of one and two-bedroom apartments.

The proposal exceeds the minimum lot area per dwelling unit and maximum floor area ratio of the Residence B district. The minimum lot area per dwelling unit is 2,500 square feet for the first 5,000 square feet, and 4,000 square feet per dwelling unit for lot area over 5,000. The proposal includes four total units, which requires a minimum lot area of 13,000 square feet; 8,637 square feet of lot area is existing. Similarly, the maximum floor area ratio is 0.5 for the first 5,000 square feet and 0.35 for remaining square footage above 5,000. For an 8,367 square foot lot, the total gross floor area would be calculated as 5,000 * 0.5 (2,500) plus 3,637 * 0.35 (1,272.95) for a total allowable floor area of 3,772.95 square feet; 3,795 square feet are proposed.

Zoning Standard (Res B.)	Allowed/Required	Proposed
Minimum Lot Area per DU	2,500 sq/ft for first 5,000 sq/ft; 4,000 sq/ft for portion over 5,000 sq/ft	2,159.25 sq/ft per DU
Total Gross Floor Area (based on FAR Standards)	0.5 for first 5,000 sq/ft; 0.35 for portion over 5,000 sq/ft – 3,772.95 sq/ft permitted	3,795 sq/ft

Given the proposed number of units, the Board of Zoning Appeals (BZA) must grant variances for minimum lot area per dwelling unit and maximum floor area ratio for the development to meet applicable zoning requirements.

Section 5.53.1 of the Zoning Ordinance stipulates that more than one structure containing a principal residential use is permitted in the Residence B district when all portions of the structures are located no farther than seventy-five (75) from any street line to which the lot abuts. When that cannot occur, a Planning Board Special Permit is required to permit the construction of a second structure. The proposed house in the rear would be more than 75 feet from Holworthy Street and triggers the special

permit requirement. There does not appear to be an as-of-right path to increase the proposed density of the lot to four (4) total units without building a second two-family dwelling on the lot, as multi-family dwellings are not permitted in the Residence B district.

With the exception of the variances identified above, the application meets all other applicable zoning requirements. The proposed structures will meet yard setback requirements, exceed open space requirements, and provide the required number of minimum off-street parking spaces. The application states that the construction of two separate dwellings on the lot provides opportunity to better screen off-street parking, create a more context-sensitive development pattern and enhance openings for light and air in the new structures.

The application was submitted to the Cambridge Historical Commission for review under the Demolition Delay Ordinance. On January 7th, the Historical Commission completed its review and determined that the existing structure “not preferably preserved” in the context of the proposed application.

Urban Design

The existing two floor house, compatible in style with its neighbors along Holworthy Street, occupies the front of the lot. The applicant proposes to relocate it slightly farther from the north side lot line (achieving the 7 ½' side setback prescribed by zoning), and remove its rear addition. It will remain as a two unit building. Its exterior will be repaired and restored using stylistically appropriate materials and details: horizontal siding, trim, double hung windows, etc. A new second building, also consisting of two units, is proposed in the rear of the lot, the majority of its mass aligned behind the front house. It is stylistically different: flat roofed, with more complex massing, informally arranged windows, and is clad in a combination of white high pressure laminate panels and siding. A paved parking area is proposed between the two buildings, creating a shared courtyard.

Other lots in the area have been developed in a similar manner, with a front house and a separate rear house. The proposed project, however, has a higher density in terms of lot area per dwelling unit and FAR than is typical in the area.

Site Design and Landscaping

The proposed site plan is well organized, with new trees and lower plantings along the long sides of the property, a new driveway on the southern side of the property, parking hidden behind the front house, and the majority of the existing trees preserved.

The existing driveway is very close to the south side property line. The applicant proposes to relocate it, creating a 5' wide planting strip between the driveway and the property line. Accordingly, the applicant proposes to relocate the curb cut 3.5 feet to the north. Coordination with city staff will be necessary on changes to the curb cut and sidewalk. A gravel strip is proposed at the center of the driveway, and a dry well in the parking area, presumably both are to reduce stormwater runoff.

The visual axis from the sidewalk down the driveway toward the rear of the site is interrupted by a small shed, whose elevation is not provided in the materials. More information on its appearance would be helpful.

New fences are proposed along the side lot lines. It is unclear whether new fences are proposed at the front and rear.

The existing trees will be preserved along the sides and rear of the site. Seven trees with trunk diameters of 6" to 12" are proposed to be removed in and around the location of the new rear building. Five new trees will be planted along the northern edge of the site and one in the front setback. Staff appreciates the preservation of the existing perimeter trees and the addition of new ones.

Building Design

The proposed renovations of the front house, with their traditional materials and details, are appropriate to the character of the street.

The more abstract composition of the rear house, with its flat roof, panelized cladding system, and informally located windows, seems appropriate on the more secluded rear of the site. While the majority of the rear building is proposed to be clad in flat white panels, the southernmost portion – the portion approximately in the zone of the front house's south side setback, is primarily clad in horizontal clapboard siding, helping to tie the rear building's massing into the overall spatial arrangement of the site plan. The specific colors and joint patterns of the rear house's cladding materials should be carefully considered.

The visual axis down the driveway to the rear of the site is interrupted by a small shed. Its elevation is not provided in the materials.

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:

- A revised dimensional form illustrating updated proposed dimensional standards against Residence B requirements.
- All landscape details, including species and planting standards of proposed plantings, hardscape materials including color and permeability, design and materials of fences, exterior lighting, etc.
- The location of landscaping to minimize the visual impact of the driveway and parking area.
- Turnaround movements in the parking area – vehicular swept path analysis.
- Detail slope of the drainage of the parking area.
- Review relative to Cambridge's Tree Protection Ordinance.
- Coordination with the city on the location and design of the proposed curb cut.
- Details, materials, and colors of all architectural elements. Including details of the high pressure panel system proposed as exterior cladding on the rear building.
- Design of the shed at the end of the driveway: elevation, materials, and color.
- Locations and visual and acoustical screening of mechanical equipment.