



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2014-39

Date: May 29, 2014

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 23-25 Ashland Street

Applicant Name: Chris Brand
Applicant Address: 23 Ashland Street
Property Owner Name: Chris Brand
Property Owner Address: 23 Ashland Street
Alderman: Mark Neidergang

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Chris Brand, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming 2-family by adding a 2-story front porch. Zone RB. Ward 5.

Dates of Public Hearing: June 4, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-family house on a 3870 square foot lot. The house previously had a large window on the second floor that has since been removed and replaced by a door and two windows in preparation for this application. The siding on the front of the house is being replaced with Hardiplanks and Azek trim.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to add a two-story front porch that will be four feet deep. A small roof overhang is proposed to be on the second floor that will project approximately 18 inches over the porch. It will have the same roof shingles as are on the house and wood clapboards underneath. The railing and post material for the deck, will be wrapped in a matte finished white Azek. The new window and door will be white and energy efficient.





3. Green Building Practices: Energy efficient windows and door will be installed.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has reviewed the application and does not have any objections.

Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 and 5.1):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

2. Compliance with Standards: *The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit."*

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The property is nonconforming in terms of lot size, front yard setback and right side yard setback. The existing front landing is 4 feet in depth, greater than 3 feet high, and setback 6 feet from the front property line. The new porch will have the same depth and front yard setback as the existing landing. The porch will extend the length of the house and therefore also be within the nonconforming right side yard setback.

3. Consistency with Purposes: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."*

The proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to providing for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City and conserving the value of land and buildings.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the district, in allowing for an alteration to a two-family which is the district is intended for the preservation of two-family homes.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."*

The porch as been designed to be compatible with the existing structure and neighboring area. It is typical to have a two-story front porch of these proportions in the City. Front porches provide an amenity for residents and add interest for pedestrians along the street. The porch will not project beyond where the existing landing is today. There will continue to be a landscaped area between the sidewalk and the porch that will be 6 feet in depth.

5. Housing Impact: *Will not create adverse impacts on the stock of existing affordable housing.*

Adding a front porch to a two-family house should not impact the affordability of the units.

6. SomerVision Plan: *Complies with the applicable goals, policies and actions of the SomerVision plan, including the following, as appropriate: Preserve and enhance the character of Somerville's neighborhoods, Transform key opportunity areas, Preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs.*

The proposal is compatible with the goal of SomerVision in preserving and enhancing the neighborhood by improving upon the appearance and quality of the living space in the two-family house.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1 and 5.1

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMIT**.

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes								
1	Approval is for the construction of a two story front porch. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.									
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>April 29, 2014</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>April 3, 2014</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(May 30, 2014)</td> <td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (New Section, Existing Level Plan, Existing Ashland Elevation, New Plans, New Ashland Elevation)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	April 29, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	April 3, 2014	Plans submitted to OSPCD (Plot Plan)	(May 30, 2014)	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (New Section, Existing Level Plan, Existing Ashland Elevation, New Plans, New Ashland Elevation)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
2	The Applicant shall at his expense replace any existing equipment (including, but not limited to street sign poles, signs, traffic signal poles, traffic signal equipment, wheel chair ramps, granite curbing, etc) and the entire sidewalk immediately abutting the subject property if damaged as a result of construction activity. All new sidewalks and driveways must be constructed to DPW standard.	CO	DPW									
3	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P									
4	The railings and posts shall be made of a material with a matte finish.	Final Signoff	Plng.									
5	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.									

