



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2018-125
Date: January 23, 2019
Recommendation: Conditional approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 17 Elmwood Street

Applicant / Owner Name: Elmwood Street, LLC
Applicant / Owner Address: 17 Elmwood Street, Somerville, MA 02144
Agent Name: Richard G. DiGirolamo, Esq.
Agent Address: 424 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02145
City Councilor: Katjana Ballantyne

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Elmwood Street, LLC, seeks a special permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure and a special permit under SZO §9.13 for parking relief to demolish portions of the building, construct two additional stories, and change the use from a mix of uses that include two residential units and an office to three residential units. RB Zone. Ward 7.

** After further analysis by Planning Staff, it has been determined that a special permit for parking relief is no longer required.*

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – January 23, 2019

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property consists of one parcel totaling 5,000 square feet of lot area. It contains a single-story masonry industrial style building that is currently being used as two residential units and a property management office.



2. Proposal: The proposal is to demolish a

substantial portion of the existing structure and construct two additional stories to establish three-dwelling units on the site. The proposal will include three parking spaces and landscaping.

3. Green Building Practices: The application states that the proposal will meet or not exceed the stretch energy code.

4. Comments:

Historic Preservation: The Historic Preservation Commission has determined the existing structure to be not significant.

City Councilor: Council President Ballantyne held a neighborhood meeting on the proposal. It was attended by approximately six people. The main concern expressed by those in attendance was that adding an additional unit would take away on-street parking space. The proposal includes decreasing the width of the curb cut, which could create one additional on-street parking space. There was a concern about potential contamination a former use of the property was believed to have been an oil heating business. In the event that there is any hazardous materials found during construction it is required by law and conditioned as part of this permit to be reported to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The DEP will ensure that an investigation is conducted and the hazardous material be handled according to certain specifications.

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

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."*

Article 4: Nonconforming Uses and Structures

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to the following dimensional requirements lot area, front yard setback, and right side yard setback.

The proposal will keep portions of the existing walls within the front yard and the right yard at one story. The proposed additions will be stepped back to conform to setback requirements. The new window openings and terrace above the existing one story portion are within the required front and right side yard setbacks. The current dimension is 0 feet and the proposal will maintain that where the requirement in the district is 8 feet. This alteration to a nonconforming structure requires the Applicant to obtain special permits under §4.4.1 of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO).

Section 4.4.1 states that “[I]awfully existing nonconforming structures other than one- and two-family dwellings may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered only by special permit authorized by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5. The SPGA must find that such extension, enlargement, renovation or alteration is not substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing

nonconforming building. In making the finding that the enlargement, extension, renovation or alteration will not be substantially more detrimental, the SPGA may consider, without limitation, impacts upon the following: traffic volumes, traffic congestion, adequacy of municipal water supply and sewer capacity, noise, odor, scale, on-street parking, shading, visual effects and neighborhood character.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff finds that the alterations proposed would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The proposal will allow for the redevelopment of a former industrial garage in a manner that follows a residential character. The proposal has been designed with setbacks that minimally impact the neighbors and the requirements for lot area per dwelling unit, ground coverage, landscaped area, pervious area, floor area ratio (FAR), building height, rear yard setback, left yard setback, and street frontage will continue to be conforming to the requirements of the SZO.

Article 9: Off-Street Parking and Loading

	<i>Existing</i>		<i>Proposed</i>	
Unit #1	1 BR	1.5 spaces	3 BR	2 spaces
Unit #2	1 BR	1.5 spaces	3 BR	2 spaces
Unit #3	--	--	3 BR	2 spaces
Office Space	1,000 s.f	2 spaces	--	--
Total	5 spaces		6 spaces	

The site currently provides two parking spaces for the existing uses where five are required. Therefore, the site is nonconforming with respect to the number of required off-street parking spaces. For sites with a nonconforming number of parking spaces, SZO 9.4.2 only requires a proposal to provide the number of required spaces for what is being added to the site. The proposal is to add a dwelling unit, which will increase the number of required parking spaces to six. **The proposal is to provide one additional space on the site, which satisfies the requirements of Article 9; therefore a special permit for parking relief is not required.**

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 promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to lessen congestion in the streets; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the RB district, which is, "to establish and preserve medium density neighborhoods of one-, two- and three-family homes, free from other uses except those which are both compatible with and convenient to the residents of such districts.

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."*

Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding neighborhood is surrounded by 2.5 story residential structures.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility): The proposal will result in a 2.5 story gable-end structure that will fit in with the neighborhood more so than the existing one-story industrial style structure. The overall aesthetics of the site will be enhanced with landscaping and residential building materials and a fenestration pattern.

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

<i>SomerVision Summary</i>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	2	3
<i>Affordable Units:</i>	0	0

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1

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

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes								
1	Approval is for the construction of two additional stories and establishing a total of three dwelling units. 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>September 10, 2018</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 22, 2018</td> <td>Landscape Plan</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 23, 2018</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-000, A-020, A-100, A-300, AV-1, and AV-2)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	September 10, 2018	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	August 22, 2018	Landscape Plan	August 23, 2018	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A-000, A-020, A-100, A-300, AV-1, and AV-2)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations/use that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
Pre-Construction												

2	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to obtain a street address prior to a building permit being issued.	BP	Eng.	
3	The proposed basement finished floor elevation shall not be less than is 1 foot above the Seasonal High Ground Water elevation. The seasonal high ground water elevation shall be determined by a Massachusetts certified soil evaluator and stated on a signed soil test pit log.	BP	Eng.	
4	The Applicant shall complete the Site Plan Review Checklist and supply the information to the Engineering Office. The plans must comply with the City's Stormwater Management Policy.	BP	Eng.	
5	The Applicant shall submit a proposed drainage report, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy.	BP	Eng.	
6	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to coordinate the timeline for cutting or opening the street and/or sidewalk for utility connections or other construction. There is a moratorium on opening streets from November 1st to April 1st and there is a list of streets that have additional opening restrictions.	BP	Eng.	
7	The applicant must comply with the Policy for new connections to and modifications to existing connections to the municipal sewer and drainage system stormwater management and infiltration/inflow mitigation. The Applicant shall work with Engineering to meet this condition and provide the required fees/mitigation.	BP	Eng.	
8	The Applicant shall develop a demolition plan in consultation with the City of Somerville Inspectional Services Division. Full compliance with proper demolition procedures shall be required, including timely advance notification to abutters of demolition date and timing, good rodent control measures (i.e. rodent baiting), minimization of dust, noise, odor, and debris outfall, and sensitivity to existing landscaping on adjacent sites.	Demolition Permitting	ISD	
Construction Impacts				
9	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by.	During Construction	Plng.	
10	The Applicant shall at their 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	
11	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	

12	For the convenience of and respect for the neighborhood, during the construction phase, construction work shall not begin prior to 7:30am and shall finish no later than 5pm Monday through Friday. There shall be no construction or construction-related work performed on weekends or holidays.	During Construction	ISD	
Design				
13	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Plng.	
Site				
14	Landscaping shall be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards;	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
15	There shall be a minimum of one tree for each 1,000 sf of required landscaped area under SZO §10.3.	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD	
16	The Applicant must reduce the curb cut width to ten feet.	CO	DPW Highway / Eng.	
17	The entire driveway shall be constructed of permeable pavers.	CO	Plng. / ISD	
18	The electric, telephone, cable TV and other such lines and equipment shall be placed underground from the source or connection. The utilities plan shall be supplied to the Wiring Inspector before installation.	Installation of Utilities	Wiring Inspector	
Miscellaneous				
19	Gas and electric meters shall not be on the front of the structure. Gas and electric meters may be located on the side of the structure but shall be screened from the street by a hardy, staff approved evergreen planting. Utilities shall not be located adjacent to windows and shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress. The provisions of this condition may be waived by staff if the applicant submits a letter from the utility, signed by a utility representative, on utility letterhead, indicating that there is no feasible alternative to placing meters in violation of this condition.	CO	ISD	
20	Electrical conduits on the exterior facades of buildings shall be painted to match the wall material to which they are attached. Conduits are not allowed on the front of any structure.	CO	Plng.	
21	Granting of the applied for use or alteration does not include the provision for short term rental uses, such as AirBnB, VRBO, or the like. Separate approvals are needed for the aforementioned uses.	Ongoing	ISD / Plng.	
22	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well kept and in good and safe working order.	Cont.	ISD	
Public Safety				
23	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	

24	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches.	Perpetual	FP/ISD	
25	Notification must be made, within the time period required under applicable regulations, to the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) if there is any release of oil, hazardous materials, or regulated hazardous substances at the site. The City's OSE office, Fire Department and the Board of Health shall also be notified.	At time of release	OSE/FP/BOH	
26	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.	
Final Sign-Off				
27	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.	

