



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2019-68
Date: September 4, 2019

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT - ZBA

Site: 63 Franklin Street

Applicant Name: Hudson
Santana/North America Development,
LLC

Applicant Address: 295 Upland
Avenue, Newton, MA 02461

Owner Name: Sonam Dorjee & Karma
Sichoe

Owner Address: 63 Franklin Street,
Somerville, MA

City Councilor: Matthew
McLaughlin

Legal Notice: Applicant, Hudson
Santana of North America
Development, LLC, and Owner,
Sonam Dorjee & Karma Sichoe, seek

special permits under §4.4.1 of the SZO to significantly alter a non-conforming property by creating an upward extension of a non-conforming front yard setback, increase the GFA by more than 25%. Parking relief under Article 9 of the SZO. Unit count to increase from 1 to 2. RB zone. Ward 1.



Dates of Public Hearing(s): September 4, 2019 – ZBA

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The locus presents a two-story, single-family residential structure sited on the corner of Franklin and Oliver Streets and near the Capuano Early Childhood Center. The site presents 3,030 square feet of lot in the RB zoning district.

2. Proposal: The Applicant proposes a substantial renovation of the property. The structure will be transformed from a gable-fronted edifice to a Mansard-roofed building. The number of units will increase from one to two. The height of the building will increase from 19.17 feet to 31.25 feet. The building will transform from a 2-story structure to a 3-story structure (Mansards of this type are considered 3-stories).

As the property is a corner lot, an Applicant can decide which frontage will serve as the front yard. According to the Applicant's submission, the Franklin Street frontage will function as the front yard. The property will be re-landscaped and all bituminous material will be removed. The following constitute the triggers for special permitting:

- Increase the GFA by more than 25% (**special permit**)
- Improve, but still build within the non-conforming front yard (**special permit**)
- Parking relief for two (2.0) spaces (**special permit**)

3. Green Building Practices:

The application states the following: *“increased landscaping. Reduction of non-permeable asphalt paving. Addition of non-invasive species landscape planting. Use of water-saving plumbing fixtures. Use of energy efficient appliances.”*

4. Comments:

Councilor McLaughlin is aware of this project and a neighborhood meeting was held.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1 & Article 9):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §4.4.1 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §4.4.1 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §4.4.1 of the SZO.

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."*

Section 4.4.1 of the SZO

Section 4.4.1 states that "[l]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."

Gross Floor Area (GFA)

Section 4.4.1 of the SZO requires that an Applicant seek a special permit when then GFA of a property will increase more than 25%. Given the additional living space being added due to the addition of a third floor, and complete build-outs of the basement, first, and second floors, the GFA will increase by more than 25%.

Front yard setback

The RB zone requires a front yard setback of 15 feet, though stairs and building components such as bays may protrude. Under no circumstances may the front yard setback be reduced to less than 10 feet. The existing front yard setback is .07 feet. After the proposed renovation, the new front yard setback will remain non-conforming but will be improved to 5.5 feet

Section 9.13 of the SZO

The Applicant proposes one parking space per unit for a total of two legal spaces on the site after renovation. The assessment regarding relief for number of parking spaces appears below:

Unit #	Existing BDR	Existing Req. Pkg.	Proposed BDR	Proposed Req. Pkg.
1	3	2.0	3	2.0
2	n/a	n/a	3	2.0
TOTAL: 2.0			TOTAL: 4.0	

Formula: *new parking requirement – old parking requirement = # spaces of relief*

63 Franklin: 4.0 – 2.0 = 2.0 spaces of relief needed

Other determinations

The Franklin Street and Oliver Street area presents a variety of houses of varying styles and sizes, from more recently-renovated multi-family structures to simple gable-fronted houses. The Capuano Early Childhood Center is on the same block as the subject property.

The proposed alterations at the locus will be visible from the public ways of Franklin and Oliver and will be visible to front, left, right, and rear-abutting properties. The scale of the proposed changes is consistent with other structures along Franklin and Oliver.

Abutters can expect typical noises and odors associated with the construction phase of a project. There is also the possibility that there may be an up-tick in noise due when building residents use their rear yards. It is possible that additional shadowing of the right-abutting property may occur due to the nature of the proposed addition.

Due to the addition of more bedrooms, there will be more demand placed on the City's water supply and sewer system. Because this project will need to be reviewed by the Engineering Department prior to the granting of a building permit, they will determine if any measures need to be taken by the Applicant to address any impacts.

Lastly, as the property is converting from a single-family to a two-family. In general, taken independently, the increase of one residential unit, even one with one or more vehicles associated with it, would not substantially increase the traffic volume in the immediate area. Due to residents coming and going from any property at staggering times, additional traffic congestion is not anticipated.

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."*

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the purposes of the RB zone which are "[t]o 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."

There is no part of this proposal, as conditioned, that Staff finds to be inconsistent with the purposes of the RB district.

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."*

Staff has addressed the question of site and area compatibility in a previous section. Staff has also conditioned the project to require an update to the landscaping plan prior to the issuance of a building permit.

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

The proposal will not add to the existing stock of affordable housing.

6. SomerVision:

The proposal will add one residential unit to the City's available housing stock.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permits under §4.4.1 and Article 9

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 PERMITS**.

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 increase in GFA of more than 25% through the rehabilitation of the property, 2.0 spaces of parking relief, constructing within the front yard setback (on Franklin Street).	BP/CO	ISD/PIng.	
	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Date (Stamp Date)</th> <th>Submission</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>July 13, 2019</td> <td>Application submitted to City Clerk’s office.</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval. Whether or not a change is <i>de minimis</i> in nature must be determined by the Planning Office.</p>			
Date (Stamp Date)	Submission			
July 13, 2019	Application submitted to City Clerk’s office.			
Engineering				
2	<p>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.”</p> <p>The Applicant shall work with Engineering to meet this condition and provide the required fees/mitigation.</p>	BP	Engineering/ISD	
3	The Applicant must comply with all Engineering requirements pertaining to finishing basements.	BP/CO	Engineering/ISD	
4	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.	

5	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	
Design				
6	<u>All materials, including, but not limited to windows, exterior finishes, siding, and similar shall be submitted to, reviewed and approved by Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a building permit. Vinyl-based products will not be considered.</u>	BP	ISD/PIng	
Construction Impacts				
7	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	
8	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/ISD	
9	<u>The name(s) and contact information of all entities working on the site shall be posted in an area easily-visible from the public way for the passing public to read.</u>	During Construction	ISD	
10	<u>Construction shall be limited to M-F 7:30am – 5:00pm. No weekend construction or construction-related work shall occur.</u>	During Construction	ISD	
Site				
11	All hardscaping to be used on the property shall first be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	ISD/PIng	
12	All garbage and recycling shall be stored out-of-view of the public way and shall be screened	Perpetual	ISD/PIng	
Public Safety				
13	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
14	All exterior lighting on the site shall be downcast and shall not cast light onto surrounding properties in any fashion.	CO	ISD	

15	In accordance with City of Somerville ordinances, no grills, barbeques, chimineas or the like shall be allowed on decks and porches. This shall be written into any rental agreements or condo documents. Proof thereof shall be presented to Planning Staff/ISD prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (CO)	CO/Perpetual	ISD/PlngFP	
Miscellaneous				
16	Venting and piping shall be painted or wrapped the same color as the exterior of the house from which they protrude.	CO	ISD/Plng	
17	Utility meters shall not be installed on the front façade of the structure.	CO	ISD/Plng	
18	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.	
19	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	
Final Sign-Off				
20	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff, specifically, the Zoning Review Planner, 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	ISD/Plng.	