



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2013-34
Date: August 1, 2013
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 336 Summer Street

Applicant Name: Siyuan He
Applicant Address: 12 Thorndike Street, Somerville, MA 02144
Property Owner Name: Siyuan He & Robert Yi Bao
Property Owner Address: 12 Thorndike Street, Somerville, MA 02144
Agent Name: Richard G. Di Girolamo
Agent Address: 424 Broadway, Somerville, MA 02144
Alderman: Rebekah Gewirtz

Legal Notice: Applicant, Siyuan He, and Owners, Siyuan He and Robert Yi Bao, seek a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure to create one new two-family dwelling. RA zone. Ward 6.

Zoning District/Ward: RA Zone / Ward 6

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: May 21, 2013

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – **Wednesday, August 7, 2013**

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a two-family, gable end dwelling on a 5,110 square foot lot. Nearly half the parcel is pervious and landscaped, and six parking stalls are located on-site. There is an existing net floor area of 2,588 square feet with a 0.51 floor area ratio. The property is located slightly east of Davis Square, near Cambridge, in a Residence A district. The immediate surrounding properties are a mix of single, two- and three-family dwellings; however, near Davis Square, the uses become mixed, consisting of commercial, office, and retail.



The Applicant applied to demolish the structure in 2012 due to structural and hydrological concerns. The Historic Preservation Commission found the building to be Significant and Preferably Preserved; however, the 9-month demolition delay expired on 3/19/2013.

There has been no prior zoning relief.



336 Summer Street

2. Proposal: Applicant, Siyuan He, and Owners, Siyuan He and Robert Yi Bao, propose to alter a two-family, nonconforming structure to create one new two-family dwelling.

The proposed new two-family dwelling would be a 2½ story, gable-end structure with a tower component on the corner of Summer Street and St. James Avenue. The units would be located on either half of the building and share only the side porch along St. James Avenue. The gross floor area, which includes the basement level, would be 7,040 square feet. Each unit would be approximately 1,750 net square feet with a 0.68 floor area ratio. Each unit would have a living room with gas fireplace, dining room, kitchen, bathroom, and mudroom on the first floor while the second floor would have a master bedroom with a bathroom and walk-in closet, a study and access to a second story porch along St. James Avenue. A balcony would be located on the front and rear façades, one for each unit. The half-story would be composed of a third bathroom and two additional bedrooms, to create family sized units, and an unfinished area for mechanicals. The rear unit along St. James Avenue would also have a small two foot deep balcony above the two-story polygonal bay. The basement level would provide access to the rear yard, have two separate storage areas and a full bathroom; only the mechanical room will remain unfinished.

The exterior of the new dwelling would be primarily composed of Hardi Board, a fiber cement board, while the trim would be composed of Azek. The deck areas would be a composite deck material that appears like wood, and the windows would be low-E vinyl windows, except for the windows in the corner tower, which would be further insulated to deter street noise.

The new structure, as proposed, conforms to all setback and dimensional requirements. Using Summer Street as the front elevation, there is a 16 foot front yard setback, a 20.5 foot rear yard setback and the sum width of both side yards is approximately 18 feet. Ground coverage will conform to SZO requirements at 34.4%. Nearly half of the parcel will remain landscaped (43.7%) while more than half of the parcel will be composed of a pervious material (56.3%). Each unit will have two parking stalls to be located near the private front and rear entries which will be composed of permeable pavers. A new 12 foot curb cut will be created along Summer Street to accommodate parking for front unit, as one curb cut

per street is allowed in residential districts. A four foot fence would enclose a majority of the Summer Street and St. James Avenue front and side yards while a six foot fence would run along the right side parcel boundary and at the rear of the St. James parking area.

3. Nature of Application: The existing structure is currently nonconforming with regard to minimum lot size and the right side yard setback. In accordance with the Somerville Zoning Ordinance (SZO), a nonconforming two-family dwelling may be altered through Special Permit approval, in accordance with Article 5. Therefore, as a portion of the existing right side foundation is to remain, the proposed alteration of this nonconforming structure requires Special Permit approval.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The subject property is located in a Residence A district, just beyond Davis Square, near Cambridge. The surrounding residential neighborhood is composed of similar gable-end dwellings that are a mix of single, two- and three-family dwellings; however, near Davis Square, the uses become more mixed-use, consisting of commercial, office, and retail.



336 Summer Street and surrounding neighborhood

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposal to modify a nonconforming structure to create one new two-family dwelling will alter the existing structure indefinitely. However, the existing dwelling does have some structural and hydrological concerns that make rehabilitation not preferable. The design for the new structure utilizes a gable-end roof form, which is consistent with the existing building and continues the roofline rhythm of the streetscape.

6. Green Building Practices: The Application states that the site will use an Infiltrator System for environmental onsite stormwater collection. The new structure will use a high efficient heating and cooling system, a tankless hot water heater system, Energy Star light bulbs and kitchen appliances, and energy efficient windows. The new structure will be fully insulated and the ducts will be airtight.

7. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Wiring Inspection: The Utility plans (Sheet 1) illustrate one new utility pole. The Wiring Inspector notes that the City will likely not support the installation of this new pole on the opposite side of the street from the existing pole. The electrical service and other underground utilities will need to be installed underground from an existing pole to the new dwelling.

The lay out of the A/C condensers should not present any concerns with regard to the required working clearance.

Engineering: Has been contacted but has not yet provided comments.

Historic Preservation Commission: The Applicant applied to demolish the structure in 2012 due to structural and hydrological concerns. The Historic Preservation Commission found the building to be Significant and Preferably Preserved; however, the 9-month demolition delay expired 3/19/2013.

Ward Alderman: A neighborhood meeting was held in early July. Alderman Gewirtz does not have any objections to the proposed project.

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."

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 proposed design for the new structure utilizes a gable-end roof form, which is consistent with the neighborhood and continues the roofline rhythm of the streetscape. In addition, the corner tower provides a focal point at the corner of St. James and Summer Street. The proposal will increase the pervious area for the site and become conforming with regard to the 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 promoting "the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; 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 Residence A district, §6.1.1, which is, “To establish and preserve quiet neighborhoods of one- and two-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.”

The proposed design for the new structure utilizes a gable-end roof form and similar 2½ story massing, which is consistent with the neighborhood and continues the roofline rhythm of the streetscape. In addition, the corner tower provides a focal point at the corner of St. James and Summer Street. The proposal will increase the pervious area for the site and become conforming with regard to the right side yard setback. There will likely be no impact on the surrounding neighborhood as the design is compatible with the area and surrounding residential uses of the neighborhood.

5. Adverse environmental impacts: The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.

6. Vehicular and pedestrian circulation: The circulation patterns for motor vehicles and pedestrians which would result from the use or structure will not result in conditions that create traffic congestion or the potential for traffic accidents on the site or in the surrounding area.

While a second curb cut for the property will be created along Summer Street to accommodate two vehicles for the front unit, the circulation patterns should not be altered for motor vehicles or pedestrians. Additionally, the new curb cut would be located approximately 17 feet from the Summer Street/St. James Avenue intersection.

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 public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes										
1	Approval is for a Special Permit to alter a nonconforming structure to create one new two-family dwelling. 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>(May 21, 2013)</td> <td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td> </tr> <tr> <td>August 10, 2012 Revised July 10, 2013 (July 29, 2013)</td> <td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8.1, A8.2, A8.3, & A9)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>March 24, 2013 June 25, 2013 (July 29, 2013)</td> <td>Utility/Plot plans submitted to OSPCD (Sheets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>(July 29, 2013)</td> <td>Rendering submitted to OSPCD (Sheet 1)</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(May 21, 2013)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	August 10, 2012 Revised July 10, 2013 (July 29, 2013)	Plans submitted to OSPCD (A1, A2, A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A8.1, A8.2, A8.3, & A9)	March 24, 2013 June 25, 2013 (July 29, 2013)	Utility/Plot plans submitted to OSPCD (Sheets 1, 2, 3, 4, 5)	(July 29, 2013)	Rendering submitted to OSPCD (Sheet 1)
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Any changes to the approved site plan or elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.														
Pre-Construction														
2	The Applicant will be required to demonstrate that the updated project plans meet the current City of Somerville stormwater policy. Utility, grading, and drainage plans must be submitted to the Engineering Department for review and approval.	BP	Eng.											
3	The Applicant shall submit a proposed grading and drainage plan, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy.	BP	Eng.											
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 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				
6	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.	
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	
Design				
9	An exterior light and electrical receptacle is required for the first (or all) level of the porch and an electrical receptacle is required for the second level (if there is no access to the ground).	Final sign off	Wiring Inspector	
Site				
10	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	
Public Safety				
11	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
12	Any transformers should be located as not to impact the building or landscaped area, and shall be fully screened.	Electrical permits & CO		
Final Sign-Off				
13	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.	

336 Summer Street

