



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2011-12
Date: March 17, 2011
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 25 Farragut Ave

Applicant Name: Reinaldo & Donna Luna
Applicant Address: 25 Farragut Ave, Somerville MA 02144
Property Owner Name: same
Agent Name: Jon Lannan
Agent Address: 59 Pearson Rd, Somerville MA 02144
Alderman: Robert Trane

Legal Notice: Applicants/Owners Reinaldo & Donna Luna seek a Special Permit to replace an existing 1 ½ story structure with a 2 ½ story single-family dwelling in an existing nonconforming side yard under SZO §4.4.1.

Zoning District/Ward: Residence B / 7

Zoning Approval Sought: Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1

Date of Application: February 22, 2011

Dates of Public Meeting • Hearing: Planning Board 3/17/11 • Zoning Board of Appeals 4/6/11

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a 5,000 sf rectangular parcel on which sits a 1 ½ story single-family house. There appears to have been additions on the back of the house that were not sensitive to the design of the original structure. The siding and door on the house are in poor condition. There is a concrete driveway that leads to a two-car, concrete block garage in the northwest corner of the site. The front yard is landscaped with some shrubs and a small tree that was recently removed. There is a lawn in the back yard and a small tree in the corner of the lot.



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2. Proposal: The proposal is to demolish most of the structure, keeping a portion to retain its nonconforming status, and construct a 2 ½ story single-family house on the foundation of the existing structure. The new porch will extend beyond the existing foundation. The house will be 1,490 nsf. The design of the structure is similar to a typical 2 ½ story house in Somerville with a gable roof, and single-story front porch with a bay window. The driveway side of the house will have a one-story square bay with a sloped roof. The front gable end will be clad with vinyl shingles and the rest of the house will be clad with vinyl clapboards. The house will include details such as wide corner boards, a watertable, and a roofette with brackets over the rear entry. Only two windows are proposed for the east façade because the abutting house is only approximately six feet away. The living space will be on the first and second floors and contain three bedrooms and two bathrooms. The use of the property will remain a single-family dwelling.

The site will continue to have landscaping in the front yard with a 3" caliper tree and a lawn in the rear yard with the existing tree to remain. The driveway and garage may be repaired but will otherwise remain the same. The area between the driveway and the house will be a newly planted landscaped area.



25 Farragut Ave:
(l) street view of house, (r) rear view of house



3. Nature of Application: The structure is currently nonconforming with the following dimensional requirements: minimum lot size and side yard setback.

The proposal will alter the structure along the nonconforming 4.3 foot side yard and raise the number of stories of the building from 1 ½ stories to 2 ½ stories. The nonconforming side yard will extend 4 feet 11 inches to allow for a front porch. The minimum in the district is 8 feet. This nonconformity requires the applicant to obtain a special permit under §4.4.1 of the SZO.

The remaining dimensions of the house are conforming. The ground coverage will be 30% and the maximum allowed is 50% making ample space for the landscaping that will make up 50% of the lot where the minimum allowed is only 25%. The building envelop is less than the maximum allowed: the floor area ratio (FAR) is 0.3 and the maximum is 1.0, the height is 30 feet and the maximum is 40 feet, and the left side yard setback is 19.5 feet and the minimum is 8 feet. The porch will be located 10 feet from the property line, which is allowed by the footnote in SZO §8.6 and will align with other structures on the street.

4. Surrounding Neighborhood: The surrounding area is comprised of one-, two- and multi-family homes of varying forms. Design elements on nearby houses include front porches, bay windows and clapboard siding.

5. Impacts of Proposal: The proposed house will have similar impacts as the existing house because it will continue to function as a single-family dwelling and be located on the same footprint. The appearance of the house as designed will be an improvement and the increase in the amount of landscaping will also be a positive change from the current state of the property.

6. Green Building Practices: The application states that the building envelope and mechanical systems will be exceptionally efficient.

7. Comments:

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

Ward Alderman: Alderman Trane is currently not available and will respond upon his return.

Historic Preservation: The Applicants will have to apply for a demolition permit and at that time further research will be done to determine if the building will go before the Historic Preservation Commission and be deemed significant.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMIT (SZO §4.4.1, 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 nonconforming structure. The structure will be located on the foundation of the existing house and only a front porch with a depth of 4 feet 11 inches will extend the nonconforming side yard. There will only be two windows on the first floor of the east façade where the abutting house is only approximately six feet away so privacy is not a concern. Because the houses are close together, this side of the house is not very visible from the sidewalk. The remaining three sides of the house contain windows that break up the façade and are evenly spaced.

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 maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; and the purpose of the Residence B zoning district with the proposal to reconstruct the single-family house.

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 design of the structure is similar to a typical 2 ½ story house in Somerville in terms of its massing and with elements such as a gable roof, single-story front porch and bay windows. The detailing shown in the plans including the wide corner boards and substantial window trim makes the building appealing. These details can be lost when installing vinyl siding and special attention should be given to ensure that the building appears as it does on the plans. The site provides sufficient garage parking and ample landscaping.

5. 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.

The vehicular and pedestrian circulation on the site will not change as a result of this application.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permit under §4.4.1, 5.1

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

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes						
1	Approval is for the construction of an approx 1,490 nsf dwelling. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	Plng.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>2/22/11</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>3/4/11</td><td>Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (site plan, floor plans, elevations)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	2/22/11	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	3/4/11	Modified plans submitted to OSPCD (site plan, floor plans, elevations)
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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.										
2	The Applicant shall present samples of the materials that will be used for the window trim, siding, and corner boards to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to construction.	BP	Plng.							
3	Landscaping should be installed and maintained in compliance with the American Nurserymen's Association Standards.	Perpetual	Plng. / ISD							

4	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
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	
6	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.	

