



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2014-05

Date: March 13, 2014

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 36 Mead Street

Applicant Name: Open Homes LLC

Applicant Address: 60 Tufts Street, Unit 14, Somerville, MA 02145

Property Owner Name: Open Homes LLC

Property Owner Address: 60 Tufts Street, Unit 14, Somerville, MA 02145

Alderman: Katjana Ballantyne

Legal Notice: Applicant and Owner, Open Homes LLC, seeks a Special Permit under SZO §4.4.1 to construct a dormer on the right side roof plane, add skylights, and alter window locations on the front and rear façades. RB zone. Ward 7.

Dates of Public Hearing: March 19, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject parcel is 3,157 square feet, located near the corner of Mead and Moore streets, just south of Teele Square. The parcel does not have any street frontage and is accessible through an easement with the adjacent parcel at 57 Moore Street. The dwelling is currently a two-family structure in an RB zoning district. There has been no prior zoning relief.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to construct a large dormer on the right side roof plane, as part of interior alterations to reduce the number of residential units. Due to the size of the dormer, the structure would be considered a three-story dwelling, which changes the nonconforming setback on the nonconforming left side façade. Other changes include the addition of two skylights on the left side roof



plane, the replacement of a sash window with a circular window in the half-story on the front façade and the addition of two windows on the rear façade.



36 Mead Street: View from the corner of Mead and Moore streets

3. Green Building Practices: There are no green building practices indicated.

4. Comments:

Fire Prevention: Has been contacted and does not have any questions, concerns or comments.

Wiring Inspection: Has been contacted but has not yet submitted comments.

Engineering: Has been contacted and does not have any concerns as the footprint will not change.

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

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."

Under SZO §4.4.1, an existing single or two-family dwelling may alter a nonconformity through the granting of a Special Permit. Therefore, due to the size of the proposed dormer, which alters the left side yard setback from 8 to 10 feet, a Special Permit is required. Additionally, as other proposed changes are located within the front, rear and side yard setbacks, a Special Permit is also required to modify window arrangements and to add skylights.

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 addition of a dormer on the right side roof plan will have a minimal impact on abutters. The adjacent dwelling to the right is more than twenty feet away and the windows within the proposed dormer would look onto the neighboring roof. The Applicant has worked with Staff to break up the massing of this sizable dormer. While Staff generally does not support dormers of this size, due to the location of this landlocked structure, which has no impact on the streetscape, and as the dormer is proposed on the by-right side of the building, the proposed massing of the dormer is the least obtrusive and the center gable would divide the overall massing proportionately. Proposed alterations to the window arrangements and the addition of skylights will have minimal to no impact on abutters and will retain the character of the building. Other than dimensional standards, the proposal is in compliance with ground coverage (31%), landscape (44%) pervious area (56%), and floor area ratio (0.58).

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 encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to encourage housing for persons of all income levels; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality."

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the RB district, §6.1.2, 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."

The proposal is to construct a sizable dormer on the right side roof plane as well as alter the window arrangements on the front and rear façades and install skylights in the left side roof plane. The proposed alterations will minimally impact the streetscape and the abutters. While the dormer will alter the structure, the shed and gable components will have the least obtrusive impact on the streetscape.

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 parcel is located in a Residence B zoning district, just south of Teele Square. The surrounding buildings are single, two- and three-family dwellings. The subject and abutting parcels are landlocked but near the corner of Mead and Moore streets. The nearby dwellings are predominantly similar gable-ended structures of 1½ and 2½ story structures.

The addition of a dormer on the right side roof plan will have a minimal impact on abutters. The adjacent dwelling to the right is more than twenty feet away and the windows within the proposed dormer would look onto the neighboring roof. The Applicant has worked with Staff to break up the massing of this sizable dormer. While Staff generally does not support dormers of this size, due to the location of this landlocked structure, which has no impact on the streetscape, and as the dormer is proposed on the by-right side of the building, the proposed massing of the dormer is the least obtrusive and the center gable would divide the overall massing proportionately. Proposed alterations to the window arrangements and the addition of skylights will have minimal to no impact on abutters and will retain the character of the building.

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 construct a dormer on the right side roof plane, add skylights, and alter window locations on the front and rear façades. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/ Plng.									
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>(February 11, 2014)</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>March 11, 2014 (March 12, 2014)</td><td>Plot plan submitted to OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>March 11, 2014 (March 12, 2014)</td><td>Elevations and interior plans submitted to OSPCD (A101 1st Fl Demo Plan, A102 2nd Fl Demo Plan, 3rd Fl Demo Plan, A104 4th Fl Demo Plan, A105 Basement, A112 1st Fl Plan, A113 2nd Fl Plan, A114 3rd Fl Plan, A115 Roof Plan, A201 Bldg Elev, A202 Bldg Section, A203 3d, L101 Landscape Plan, A204 Kitchen Plan, A205 3d)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	(February 11, 2014)	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	March 11, 2014 (March 12, 2014)	Plot plan submitted to OSPCD	March 11, 2014 (March 12, 2014)	Elevations and interior plans submitted to OSPCD (A101 1 st Fl Demo Plan, A102 2 nd Fl Demo Plan, 3 rd Fl Demo Plan, A104 4 th Fl Demo Plan, A105 Basement, A112 1 st Fl Plan, A113 2 nd Fl Plan, A114 3 rd Fl Plan, A115 Roof Plan, A201 Bldg Elev, A202 Bldg Section, A203 3d, L101 Landscape Plan, A204 Kitchen Plan, A205 3d)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
Design												
2	New siding type and color, roofing, trim, and materials of the dormer shall match or be complimentary to the rest of the existing structure.	BP	Plng.									
Public Safety												
3	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau’s requirements.	CO	FP									
Final Sign-Off												
4	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.									

