



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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Case #: ZBA 2014-128
Date: December 31, 2014
Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 18 Burnside Avenue

Applicant Name: Peter Kochansky
Applicant Address: 18 Burnside Ave, Somerville MA 02144
Owner Name: Peter Kochansky and Lauren Dias
Owner Address: 18 Burnside Ave, Somerville MA 02144
Alderman: Rebekah Gewirtz

Legal Notice: Applicant, Peter Kochansky, and Owners, Peter Kochansky and Lauren Dias seek a Special Permit per SZO §4.4.1 to alter a nonconforming structure by enclosing a front porch. RA Zone. Ward 6.

Dates of Public Hearing: January 7, 2014

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The subject property is a single family house on a 3,743 square foot lot. There is a covered but open front porch on the structure.
2. Proposal: The proposal is to enclose the front porch to provide for a transitional space between the exterior and interior of the house. The enclosure will include large windows and a transparent door. The existing fenestration on the house including the window on the bay and front door will remain inside of the enclosed porch. As part of the project the front steps and railing will be replaced.
3. Green Building Practices: None listed on the application form.
4. Comments:



Ward Alderman: Has been contacted but has not yet provided 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."*

The structure is currently nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, including minimum front and side yard setbacks.

Enclosing the front porch will alter the nature of the structure in the nonconforming setbacks. The right side yard is 1 foot and the minimum side yard setback in this district is 8 feet for a 2 ½ story structure. The front yard setback to the existing open porch is 8 feet 2 inches. Open front porches can project into the front yard but must maintain a 10 foot setback. 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 “[l]awfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5.”

In considering a special permit under §4.4 of the SZO, Staff find that the proposal would not be substantially more detrimental to the neighborhood than the existing structure. The footprint of the porch will not change as a result of the proposal.

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 maintaining the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City.

The proposal is consistent with the purpose of the Residence A district, which is, "[t]o 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." The proposal alters the single-family structure for the occupants of the dwelling to use the space.

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 surrounding neighborhood is comprised of mostly one- and two-family structures. Many of the houses have open small covered or two-story front porches. The house to the right of the subject property has an enclosed front porch that is similar in appearance to the proposal.

Front porches provide a transitional space between the public realm and the living space inside of the dwelling. They are spaces for the occupants of the house to interact with the street and also provide a buffer and privacy for the interior space. Often when front porches are enclosed they become living spaces and these benefits of porches are lost. Also, the aesthetics of the house are negatively impacted. The current proposal keeps the front porch as a transitional space through its design. The porch will be very transparent with large windows and a transparent door. The space will serve as a coat room and not an extension of the interior living space.

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

The improvements to the single-family dwelling will not significantly impact the affordability of it.

8. 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, transform key opportunity areas, preserve and expand an integrated, balanced mix of safe, affordable and environmentally sound rental and homeownership units for households of all sizes and types from diverse social and economic groups; and, make Somerville a regional employment center with a mix of diverse and high-quality jobs. The areas in the SomerVision map that are designated as enhance and transform should most significantly contribute towards the SomerVision goals that are outlined in the table below. The areas marked as conserve are not expected to greatly increase the figures in the table since these areas are not intended for large scale change.*

<u>SomerVision Summary</u>	<i>Existing</i>	<i>Proposed</i>
<i>Dwelling Units:</i>	2	2

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 the enclosure of a front porch. This approval is based upon the following application materials and the plans submitted by the Applicant:	BP/CO	ISD/Pln g.							
	<table><tr><th>Date (Stamp Date)</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>Dec 18, 2014</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office</td></tr><tr><td>Dec 8, 2014</td><td>Plans submitted to OSPCD (O – Existing Site Plan, X1.0 – Existing Plan & Elevations, A1.0 – Proposed Plan & Elevations)</td></tr></table>				Date (Stamp Date)	Submission	Dec 18, 2014	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk's Office	Dec 8, 2014	Plans submitted to OSPCD (O – Existing Site Plan, X1.0 – Existing Plan & Elevations, A1.0 – Proposed Plan & Elevations)
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Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.										
2	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							
3	New siding type and color, roofing, trim, and materials of the addition shall match or be complimentary to the rest of the existing structure.	CO	Plng.							
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.							

