

City of Cambridge Planning Board Special Permit Application

Owners: Justin Caravella, Shwu Kong

Architect:

Sami Kassis

Design by Sami LLC

81 Oceanside Dr

Scituate, MA 02066

Project Address: 3 Michael Way

Volume 1 Table of Contents

| <b><u>Title</u></b>                               | <b><u>Page</u></b> |
|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| Application Cover Sheet                           | 2                  |
| Ownership Certificate                             | 3                  |
| Dimensional Form                                  | 4                  |
| Fee Schedule                                      | 5                  |
| Project Narrative                                 | 6                  |
| Review of Compliance with Zoning                  | 7                  |
| Review of Compliance with Special Permit Criteria | 8                  |
| Community Engagement                              | 9                  |



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

## COVER SHEET

In accordance with the requirements of the City of Cambridge Zoning Ordinance, the undersigned hereby petitions the Planning Board for one or more Special Permits for the premises indicated below.

Parcel Address(s): 3 Michael Way, Cambridge, MA 02141

Base Zoning District(s): C-1

Overlay Zoning District(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant Name: Justin Caravella and Shwu Kong

Applicant Address: 121 Sciarappa St #3, Cambridge, MA 02141

Contact Information: Justin Caravella 919-943-8762

Name justin.caravella@gmail.com Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

**Note that the Applicant is responsible for seeking all necessary special permits for the project. A special permit cannot be granted if it is not specifically requested in the Application.**

List all requested special permit(s) (with reference to zoning section numbers):

| Zoning Section | Requested Special Permit                                                                                                                   |
|----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11.15.b        | contruction of a conforming addition that will increase the GFA to 2065 sq ft. pursuant to Dimensional Standards for Townhouse Development |

Denote other City of Cambridge Board/Commission Review Needed:

- Board of Zoning Appeal (Variances)     Conservation Commission     Historical Commission

Denote applicable Committee Review and Public Outreach:

- Central Square Advisory Committee     Harvard Square Advisory Committee     Community Meeting(s)

*Justin A Caravella*

10/18/2024

Signature of Applicant

Date

**DIMENSIONAL FORM**

**Project Address:** 3 Michael Way, Cambridge, MA 02141

**Date:** 10/18/2024

|                                   | Existing | Allowed or Required (max/min) | Proposed | Permitted |
|-----------------------------------|----------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Lot Area (sq ft)                  | 3336     | 5000                          | 3336     |           |
| Lot Width (ft)                    | 34.5     | 50                            | 34.5     |           |
| Total Gross Floor Area (sq ft)    | 1255     | 2502                          | 2065     |           |
| Residential Base                  | 1255     | 2502                          | 2065     |           |
| Non-Residential Base              | 0        | 0                             | 0        |           |
| Inclusionary Housing Bonus        | 0        | 0                             | 0        |           |
| Total Floor Area Ratio            | 0.38     | 0.75                          | 0.62     |           |
| Residential Base                  | 0.38     | 0.75                          | 0.62     |           |
| Non-Residential Base              | 0        | n/a                           | 0        |           |
| Inclusionary Housing Bonus        | 0        | n/a                           | 0        |           |
| Total Dwelling Units              | 1        | 3                             | 1        |           |
| Base Units                        | 1        | 1                             | 1        |           |
| Inclusionary Bonus Units          | n/a      | n/a                           | n/a      |           |
| Base Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)      | 3336     | n/a                           | 3336     |           |
| Total Lot Area / Unit (sq ft)     | 3336     | n/a                           | 3336     |           |
| Building Height(s) (ft)           | 27.0     | 35                            | 27.0     |           |
| Front Yard Setback (ft)           | 32.7     | 10                            | 28.3     |           |
| Side Yard Setback (ft)            | 10.2     | 13.5                          | 10.2     |           |
| Side Yard Setback (ft)            | 0        | 13.5                          | 0        |           |
| Rear Yard Setback (ft)            | 37.3     | 20                            | 23.3     |           |
| Open Space (% of Lot Area)        | 70.9     | 30                            | 71.8     |           |
| Private Open Space                | 51.8     | 15                            | 43.4     |           |
| Permeable Open Space              | 61.5     | 15                            | 62.5     |           |
| Other Open Space (Specify)        | n/a      | n/a                           | n/a      |           |
| Off-Street Parking Spaces         | 1        | 1                             | 1        |           |
| Long-term Bicycle Parking Spaces  | n/a      | n/a                           | n/a      |           |
| Short-term Bicycle Parking Spaces | n/a      | n/a                           | n/a      |           |
| Loading Bays                      | n/a      | n/a                           | n/a      |           |

*Use space below and/or attached pages for additional notes:*

**OWNERSHIP CERTIFICATE**

**Project Address:**

**Date:**

To be completed by the Property Owner:

I hereby authorize the following Applicant: Justin Caravella and Shwu Kong  
at the following address: 121 Sciarappa St #3, Cambridge, MA 02141  
to apply for a special permit for:  
on premises located at: 3 Michael Way, Cambridge, MA 02141  
for which the record title stands in the name of: Justin Caravella and Shwu Kong  
whose address is: (same as above)

by a deed duly recorded in the:

Registry of Deeds of County: Book: 82664 Page: 27  
**OR** Registry District of the Land Court,  
Certificate No.: Book: Page:

*Justin A. Caravella*

**Signature of Property Owner** (If authorized Trustee, Officer or Agent, so identify)

To be completed by Notary Public:

Commonwealth of Massachusetts, County of Middlesex

The above named Justin Caravella personally appeared before me,  
on the month, day and year October 18, 2024 and made oath that the above statement is true.

Notary: Petuel C. Jean-Louis

My Commission expires: July 15, 2027



**PETUEL C. JEAN-LOUIS**  
Notary Public  
Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
My Commission Expires July 15, 2027



FEE SCHEDULE

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**Project Address:** 3 Michael Way, Cambridge, MA 02141      **Date:** 10/18/2024

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The Applicant must provide the full fee (by check made to City of Cambridge) with the Special Permit Application. The required fee is the larger of the following amounts:

- (a) The fee is ten cents (\$0.10) per square foot of total proposed Gross Floor Area noted in the Dimensional Form.
- (b) The fee is one thousand dollars (\$1,000.00) if Flood Plain Special Permit is sought as part of the Application and the amount determined above is less than \$1000.
- (c) The fee is one hundred fifty dollars (\$150.00) if the above amounts are less than \$150.

**Fee Calculation**

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|                                                         |                                            |            |         |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|------------|---------|
| (a) Proposed Gross Floor Area (SF) in Dimensional Form: | 810                                        | × \$0.10 = | 81.00   |
| (b) Flood Plain Special Permit fee                      |                                            | :          | 1000.00 |
| (c) Minimum Special Permit fee                          |                                            | :          | 150.00  |
| <b>SPECIAL PERMIT FEE</b>                               | <b>Enter Largest of (a), (b), and (c):</b> |            | 150.00  |

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## **Project Narrative**

We propose to build a 2-story addition and add a shed dormer to the existing townhouse located at 3 Michael Way, Cambridge, MA 02141. This townhouse is located in a Residential C-1 district, and it was originally permitted in 1982 under case number PB-22. We are applying for a special permit because the zoning ordinance 11.15.b requires an amendment for this project. The existing townhouse is nonconforming, but the proposed modifications do not make it more nonconforming in any respect.

The added space will allow our family to grow in place in Cambridge, where we have lived for more than 10 years. We have designed the project based on similar renovations that have already been approved and built for other townhouses in the neighborhood. The proposed project seeks a modification that is appropriate to the site, preserves open space, has no impact on parking or traffic, and maintains the character of the neighborhood and streetscape.

## **General Information and Dimensional Requirements**

3 Michael Way is a single-family 1,248 sq. ft. 2-story townhouse consisting of 2 bedrooms and 1.5 bathrooms with a single parking spot. This residence is an end unit sharing one party wall with the adjacent townhouse, 1 Michael Way, the adjacent townhouse to the east. The west side of the townhouse borders 5 Michael Way. The homes on Michael Way are townhouses from the same development permitted in 1982. The south side (rear) of the house is a fenced yard facing the back yards of the homes on 18 and 20 Cornelius Way, which are both in the same townhouse development. The north side of the townhouse is the front yard facing Michael Way.

We propose to build a two-story addition on the south side of the house with the dimension of 16' x 14' along with a 15' shed dormer on the third story of the existing structure. The exterior and style of the additions will complement the existing townhouse.

3 Michael Way is an end unit, and the back and sides of the house are shielded from public view by fences. The third-floor shed dormer will also be added to the south side of the townhouse. The proposed setbacks and other dimensions of the proposed home meet the zoning ordinances.

## **Parking Spaces and Tree Preservation**

The number of parking spaces will not be altered by this project. Currently, there is one parking space in front of the townhouse.

There are currently no trees on the property, so the project will not impact any trees.

## **Review of Compliance with Zoning**

We are seeking approval to increase the gross floor area (GFA) of the townhouse from the existing 1,248 sq ft to 2,065 sq ft with the addition and dormer. The proposed modification is within the allowable GFA for the Residence C-1 district. The FAR after the proposed modification will be 0.62, which is also within the allowed limit. Additional details of the compliance with zoning are provided on the dimensional form and on the site plan in Volume 2 of this application.

## **Review of Criteria for Approval for Townhouses and Multifamily Dwellings (10.47.4)**

We believe the proposal meets the standards set forth in Section 10.47.4 of the Zoning Ordinance as detailed below (text of the ordinance is shown in italics).

*10.47.4 Criteria for approval of Townhouses and Multifamily Dwellings. In reviewing applications for townhouse developments and multifamily dwelling, the special permit granting authority shall consider and address the following site plan criteria as applicable:*

*(1) Key features of the natural landscape should be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. Tree removal should be minimized and other natural features of the site, such as slopes, should be maintained.*

The proposal does not make any significant changes to the landscape other than a building addition in the backyard. No trees will be removed, and we will not need to regrade the site.

*(2) New buildings should be related sensitively to the existing built environment. The location, orientation and massing of structures in the development should avoid overwhelming the existing buildings in the vicinity of the development. Visual and functional disruptions should be avoided.*

The proposed addition in the back follows the footprint of the existing patio. The style of the addition will match the existing building. We have followed the “Design Guidelines for Roof Dormers” set forth by the City of Cambridge in designing the proposed dormer.

*(3) The location, arrangement, and landscaping of open space should provide some visual benefits to abutters and passersby as well as functional benefits to occupants of the development.*

The proposed addition will reduce the open space in the backyard to an extent. It meets all zoning requirements and does not impact open space that is visible from the street.

*(4) Parking areas, internal roadways and access/egress points should be safe and convenient.*

No changes to parking or access/egress points are proposed.

*(5) Parking area landscaping should minimize the intrusion of onsite parking so that it does not substantially detract from the use and enjoyment of either the proposed development or neighboring properties.*

The proposal does not include any changes to parking or landscaping.

*(6) Service facilities such as trash collection apparatus and utility boxes should be located so that they are convenient for resident, yet unobtrusive.*

No changes to service facilities will be made as part of this proposal.

### **Review of Compliance with Special Permit Criteria (10.43)**

*Criteria. Special permits will normally be granted where specific provisions of this Ordinance are met, except when particulars of the location or use, not generally true of the district or of the uses permitted in it, would cause granting of such permit to be to the detriment of the public interest because:*

*(a) It appears that requirements of this Ordinance cannot or will not be met, or*

If the special permit is granted, we believe the other requirements of the City ordinances will be met.

*(b) Traffic generated or patterns of access or egress would cause congestion, hazard, or substantial change in established neighborhood character, or*

The townhouse will remain a single family unit, so there is no reason to expect congestion or hazard.

*(c) The continued operation of or the development of adjacent uses as permitted in the Zoning Ordinance would be adversely affected by the nature of the proposed use, or*

The existing residential use will not change under this proposal.

*(d) Nuisance or hazard would be created to the detriment of the health, safety and/or welfare of the occupant of the proposed use or the citizens of the City, or*

The proposed modification will not cause nuisance or hazard.



*(e) For other reasons, the proposed use would impair the integrity of the district or adjoining district, or otherwise derogate from the intent and purpose of this Ordinance, and*

The proposed modification is an addition to the existing residential unit, which is consistent with the intent of the Ordinance.

*(f) The new use or building construction is inconsistent with the Urban Design Objectives set forth in Section 19.30.*

We believe the proposal is consistent with Urban Design Objectives. The changes will have minimal impact on how the home appears from the street. Other homes in the neighborhood have made similar renovations (an extension in the back and/or a shed dormer), so the proposal is consistent with the pattern of development in the neighborhood.

### **Summary of Community Engagement**

We have solicited feedback from our next-door neighbors (including our neighbors at 1 Michael Way, with whom we share a townhouse wall), our neighbors across the street, and on the neighboring streets. In general, they have been supportive of the plan, and even helped with aspects of the design and recommending contractors who can perform some of the proposed work.