

Ryan Residence – 23 Poplar Street

Special Permit Application – Supplemental Information

Project Information

PROPOSED PROJECT

The owners of 23 Poplar Street are proposing the following renovations and expansions to their property:

- Add Family Room and Deck to rear of first floor
- Extend existing Kitchen and create casual dining space
- Extend second floor to add new Master Bath and updated Family Bath

NON-CONFORMING COMPONENTS

The existing property is non-conforming with respect to the Front and Right side setbacks. No changes are proposed in the front. All of the proposed changes are conforming, with the exception of a small section at the rear on the right side, where the property owners are requesting relief in order to extend the existing 9 FT side setback non-conformity rearwards by 12 FT.

Property Overview

PROPERTY HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

Property Class	Single-Family
Zoning	General Residence
Land Area	6,532 SF
Style	Colonial
Year Built	1925
Number of Stories	2.0
Rooms/Bedrooms	7 / 3
Full Baths/Half Baths	1 / 1

Zoning and Dimensional Compliance Information

District: R Dimensional Requirements	Required	Actual/Proposed	Compliance Status
Lot Size	5,000 SF	6,532 SF	CONFORMS
Minimum Frontage	50.0 LF	60.0 FT	CONFORMS
Minimum Front Yard Depth	20.0 FT	19.5 FT – EXISTING NO CHANGE PROPOSED	EXISTING NON-CONFORMING
Minimum Side Yard – LEFT	10.0 LF	11.5 FT – EXISTING NO CHANGE PROPOSED	CONFORMS
Minimum Side Yard – RIGHT	10.0 LF	9.0 FT – EXISTING 9.0 FT – PROPOSED (EXTEND EXISTING)	EXISTING NON-CONFORMING
Minimum Rear Yard	20.0 LF	63.5 FT – EXISTING 40.0 FT – PROPOSED D	CONFORMS
Open Space	40 Percent	64.6 % – EXISTING 60.5 % – PROPOSED	CONFORMS
Lot Coverage	30 Percent	17.1 % – EXISTING 23.6 % – PROPOSED	CONFORMS
Height	33.0 FT	25.9 % – EXISTING 26.6 % – PROPOSED	CONFORMS

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Statement of Intent and Neighborhood Impact

FAMILY NEEDS DRIVING THE IMPROVEMENT

Bernie and Diane Ryan and their two daughters have lived at 23 Poplar for eight years. The girls are in the Belmont schools and are active in Town sports and activities. The family is deeply involved in the Town and is committed to this particular neighborhood. Bernie Ryan is a coach with Belmont Youth Travel Basketball and serves on the Board of Belmont Second Soccer. Diane, who grew up a few miles away from 23 Poplar in Arlington, has extended family nearby. She has been involved in the Belmont Girl Scouts and the schools.

The Ryan home, which has about 1,700 square feet of living space, is fairly typical for its type and age, with small, dark rooms, and chopped up spaces that do not serve our 21st century lifestyle particularly well. The Kitchen is cramped and needs updating, and the single bathroom on the second floor, with its original finishes, is not serving the family well. As the children grow, the need to deal with the constraints is becoming more urgent.

A DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The goal is to add a Family Room at the rear, open up the flow on the first floor, and update/extend the Kitchen, allowing room for an eating area. The existing deck will essentially be relocated rearwards. On the second floor, no new bedrooms will be added. A new Master Bath will be added (the Master Bedroom will actually be reduced in size) and the existing Family Bath will be extended and relocated. The existing small Bedroom on the driveway side will be extended by a few feet.

The proposed project is at the rear of the existing home, and will not be easily visible from the street. It is well away from the abutter on the left side, and is really a factor only to the abutter on the right side. They are aware of the proposed change and have stated that they do not oppose the change.

The non-conforming piece is at the rear of the right side of the existing house. We are not looking to create a new non-conformity, but rather to slightly extend that existing wall that is already non-conforming.

NEIGHBORHOOD METRICS AND COMPARISONS

The property at 23 Poplar is, at present, one of the smallest on the street and in the neighborhood. Of the 23 nearest properties (10 on Poplar Street, the near end of Home Road (7), and the 6 closest on Barnard), this property is the third smallest at 1,718 SF in Total Living Area. It is a 3 bedroom in a 4 bedroom average neighborhood. The proposed addition of the Family Room would bring the room count at 23 Poplar up closer to the neighborhood average of 9 rooms.

Even with the addition, which would increase the Total Living Area by 776 SF to 2,494 SF, it would still only be at the top end of the middle third of the grouping in size.

While many of the homes on Poplar are still at or close to their original footprint, a number of them have been modified. 27 Poplar, the house directly to the left, has had an addition built over the side Sunporch. 20 Poplar, directly across the street, has had a number of modifications done over the years. A very similar project is currently under construction five houses away at 39 Home Road.

Note that these numbers are based on Town of Belmont Assessor's maps and data.

A Table containing the above referenced comparative data follows.

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DESIGN FOR A POSITIVE NEIGHBORHOOD IMPACT

This proposal clearly meets the standard for changes that are “Not Detrimental to the Neighborhood”. A fundamental premise of the renovation at 23 Poplar right from the beginning was to minimize the neighborhood impact. This addition is wholly about long term improvement of the living spaces for the Ryan Family. It is not about positioning the property for sale, or about maximizing the possible space use.

The following elements are important and deliberate factors in keeping with this design goal.

- **3 Bedrooms** – There will be no change in the number of Bedrooms. The changes on the second floor are specifically to improve the bathroom and storage situation.
- **Massing and Roof Height** – A goal was to minimize the perception of any significant change in the size of the house. In addition to placing the addition at the back of the house, instead of the side, the height of the roof of the new addition has been kept several feet below the existing main peak. The second floor addition does not cover the full extent of the footprint of the first floor.
- **Street Visibility** – The placement of the addition is intended to minimize its visibility from the street.
- **Grade Adjustment** – The grade across Poplar Street slopes downwards towards the back yards of all of the homes on the same side as 23 Poplar. The grade around the new addition will be brought up somewhat in order to soften the change/sense of height.
- **No Sunroom Addition** – Although it is a common solution in Belmont and surrounding towns, no expansion will take place over an existing side Sunroom, it ends up creating a taller, wider house. Avoiding this is another key part of the idea of minimizing the perception of massing and height.
- **On Edge of General Residence Zoning District** – 23 Poplar is literally across the street from the start of the Single Residence C district. Much of Poplar Street falls into the SRC district. With one exception, all of the homes on the street are single family residences, and the sense of the neighborhood is very much that of a single family district.
- **Extending the Look and Feel** – The design of the new addition is focused on extending the original look and feel of the home. Because the new work requires addressing the siding and trim, the intention is to restore as many materials and finishes as possible that were lost when the prior owners covered the house in vinyl siding and ripped off the original trimwork.
- **No Future Development Plan** – The home is being renovated for the long term ease and comfort of the Ryan Family only. It is NOT being positioned for future development. The layout will not allow a conversion to a 2-Family, and the investment in the changes will make a tear-down option financially unrealistic.