



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

KRISTENNA CHASE, *PRESERVATION PLANNER*
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER*

Case #: HPC 2018.115
Date: January 15, 2019

Recommendation: Denial, *Conditional Approval*

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT

Site: 1 Arlington Street
Applicant Name: Oanh Nguyen & Tuan Phan
Applicant Address: 1 Arlington Street
Owner Name: same as above
Owner Address: same as above

Petition: Oanh Nguyen & Tuan Phan, Owners, seeks permission from the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to install brick driveway, parking area & patio.

HPC Hearing Date: January 15, 2019

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- I. **Subject Property:** See Form B for details.
2. **Background:** The Applicant has covered their entire front yard to the left of the main block of the building. They told Staff that the yard had been covered with bricks which they removed. Those were the piles seen in their front yard. They claim that the paving would keep rain from entering the basement of their house. The wrapping on the bricks seen in the 2017 photos was to protect their children from bumping into the sharp corners.
3. **Proposal:** They would like a Certificate of Appropriateness for alterations to the landscape. See attached photos and plans for details.



II. GENERAL APPROACH

The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines have been developed to ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.

The following portions of the Guidelines in bold italics are applicable in this case:

- A. ***The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance*** described in the Study Committee report must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.
- B. Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place over the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected (LATER IMPORTANT FEATURES will be the term used hereafter to convey this concept).
- C. ***Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.***
- D. ***When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.***
- E. Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.
- F. ***The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways*** or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future.

III. FINDINGS FOR LANDSCAPING

GUIDELINES

The following sections of the "Landscape features & paving guidelines are also relevant to this case:

Landscape Features and Paving

1. ***The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.***
4. ***The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained*** if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.

Staff Findings:

Staff finds walkways, ramps, and stairs are influenced by the historic patterns of use of the site. Driveways and parking areas, where original, speak to the transportation of the City and the property; where these features are later alterations to accommodate modern lifestyles; care should be taken to ensure that they do not distract from the site's historic nature. Paved patio areas and other formal spaces form outdoor rooms and contribute to a site's overall character.

Staff finds that the current plan has much more ground coverage by hardscaping (brick) than was seen on the lot prior to June 2017. Staff finds that there is no evidence of the entire yard being covered with bricks. Recent photos of the building prior to 2017 show a concrete path to the main door and a bricked pathway from Arlington Street to the entry to the servant/family entry of the house. While there is a curb cut and double gates in the fence, there is no evidence that the driveway and parking area was ever covered with brick or other hardscape materials. These are not simply cleaned brick as claimed by the Applicants. Older images show no recent evidence of the yard being used regularly for parking. See 2013 and 2016 photos.

Staff finds that the bricks are all new as can be seen by their clean finish and sharp edges and corners. Staff finds that too much of the yard has been covered with brick in a manner that is not historically appropriate. The areas are not differentiated by purpose.

The largest problem with the alteration the applicants have made is that there is no differentiation between the uses from a historic perspective. The amount of space devoted to those non historical uses is far more than would ever have been done. Too much area is devoted to automotive parking and driving areas.

Early driveways were narrow double paths not much wider than the tires and spaced the width of the tires. Grass was grown in between the tracks. Parking area must be located beside or behind the building not in front of it.

Patios are not a historic element although formal gardens might have had small paved “rooms”.

The Staff also looked at the Secretary of the Interior Standards because this is a National Register District as well as a Local . In the section of the guidelines on site and setting the following was noted:

“The landscape surrounding a historic building and contained within an individual parcel of land is considered the building site. The site, including its associated features, contributes to the overall character of the historic property.

“As a result, the relationship between the buildings and landscape features within the site's boundaries should be considered in the overall planning for rehabilitation project work and the following was **not recommended**

Locating any new construction on the building site where important landscape features will be damaged or destroyed, for example, removing a lawn and walkway and installing a parking lot.

Placing parking facilities directly adjacent to historic buildings where automobiles may cause damage to the buildings or to important landscape features.

It may also be noted that the City’s Zoning Manual does not allow parking in the front yard and defines how that is determined.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the information provided and an assessment of the proposal against the Somerville LHD guidelines, Staff recommends Denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the existing conditions and recommends a Certificate of Appropriateness under the following conditions.

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. If changes are necessary to the proposed design for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.

3. A dual path or ribbon driveway and a parking area for two cars with no more than 9' x 18' for each car to the left of the building and behind the edge of the building.
4. The patio shall be sized to be no more than 12' x 12'.
5. Brick may be used for the paving.
6. All other currently bricked areas shall be removed and landscaping shall be installed (no hardscaping)
7. The landscaping proposal shall be reviewed by Planning Staff to ensure compliance with landscaping standards.
8. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate and approved plans.





2016



2013

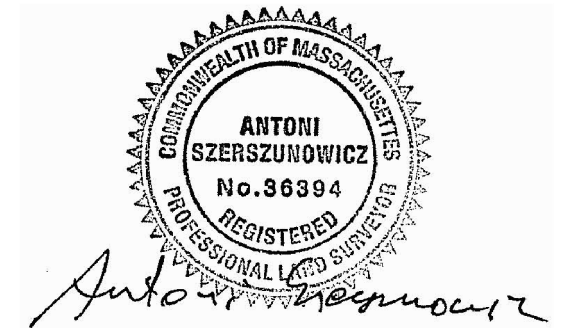
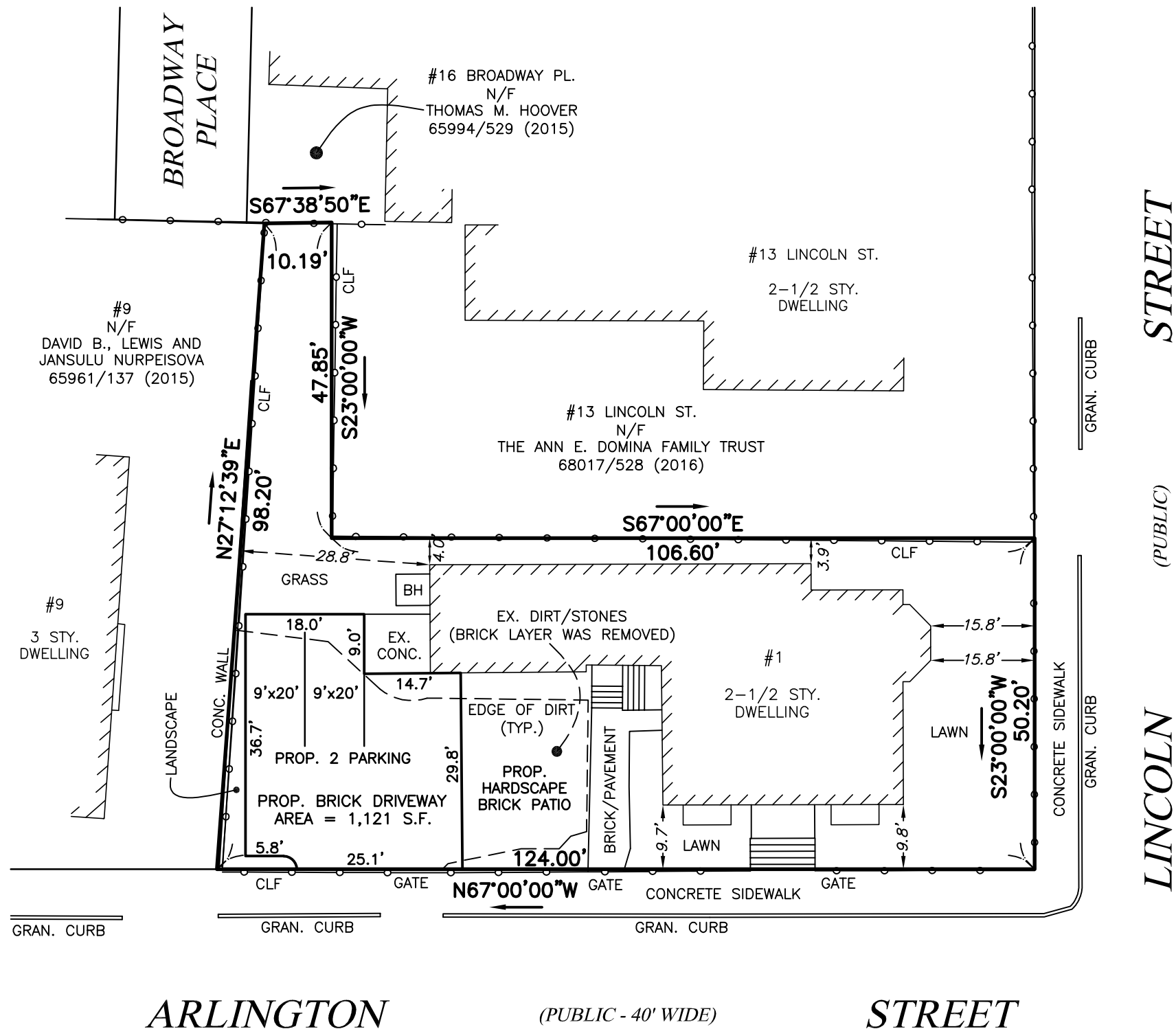


2017



2017





PLOT PLAN
1 ARLINGTON STREET
SOMERVILLE, MASS.

PREPARED FOR: TUAN PHAN AND
OANH NGUYEN
1" = 20' JULY 22, 2017

Paul Lindholm, P.E.
Civil/Environmental Consulting
80 Tarbox Street, Dedham, MA 02026
(781) 461-1083 Fax: (781) 461-0274

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.141
Historic Name:	Williams, Charles Jr. House
Common Name:	
Address:	1 Arlington St
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	East Somerville
Local No:	1025; 105
Year Constructed:	c 1858
Architect(s):	
Architectural Style(s):	Italianate
Use(s):	Single Family Dwelling House; Telephone Office
Significance:	Architecture; Communications; Invention
Area(s):	SMV.AY: Somerville Multiple Resource Area
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (3/11/1985); Nat'l Register Individual Property (8/18/1989); Nat'l Register MRA (9/18/1989)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Aluminum Siding; Wood; Iron



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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RM B - BUILDING

AREA

FORM NO.

SSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
BOYLSTON STREET
STON, MA 02116AY East
Somerville

105 141

PI-E. SOM
USG-S-BOST,N

Somerville MRA

SECT A



ss 1 Arlington Street

ic Name Charles Williams Jr. House

Present residence

Original residence

PTION

ca. 1958

e map research

Italianate

ect unknown

Exterior Wall Fabric aluminum siding

Outbuildings none

Major Alterations (with dates) rear wing
mid to late Eastlake trim added
ca. 1983

Condition fair/good

Moved no Date

Acreage less than one acre

Setting North west corner of Arlington
and Lincoln Sts., urban residential
neighborhood of late 19th century
Italianate and Second Empire housesRecorded by Betsy Friedberg, Preservation
Planner

Organization Mass. Historical Commission

Date May 1986

Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location
relation to nearest cross streets and/or
topographical features. Indicate all buildings
between inventoried property and nearest
intersection(s).
Indicate north

See Attached Assessor's Map

IM REFERENCE Z E N
19 - 328/610 - 4694/510

SGS QUADRANGLE Boston North

SCALE 1:25,000

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The Charles Williams Jr. House is significant both historically and architecturally. Firstly, it is significant as the terminus of the first outdoor telephone line. Equally important is the building's architectural significance as a three-bay, center-gable Italianate house distinguished by an overlay of Eastlake trim, applied later in the 19th century. Retaining integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The Williams House fulfills Criteria A, B, and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

One Arlington Street is a center gable Italianate house (ca. 1858) with a later (ca. 1888) overlay of Eastlake style trim. The Eastlake-style remodeling was extensive and was applied to the interior as well as the exterior. The 2 1/2 story-rectangular-plan house was a 2 story side hall built in several successive stages. Notable features include the elaborate gable screen, the pedimented entrance porch with paired columns, and the oversacle window hoods or canopies above the windows of the lower story. These canopies are supported by Eastlake-style braces, and carry elaborate iron cresting.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

One Arlington Street was the terminus of the world's first outdoor experimental telephone line. Charles Williams Jr., who bought the house in 1876 and lived there until his death in 1909, was an early protege of Alexander Graham Bell, and a major force in the early development of commercial telephone service. Bell and Watson's first telephone (of the early gallows type) was developed at Williams's electrical shop at 109 Court Street in Boston in 1875. Although they later moved to larger quarters at 5 Exeter Place in Boston, where the first complete sentence was spoken over the wire, the manufacturing of early telephones took place exclusively at 109 Court Street until Williams's business was transferred to the Western Electric Company in 1883.

In early 1877, Williams arranged with Bell and a Mr. Hubbard to have the rights to manufacture telephones, and to lease them on a commission basis. On March 27 of that year work began on the world's first outdoor telephone line from Williams's 109 Court Street shop to his house at One Arlington Street in Somerville, a distance of three miles. Williams paid for the wire, the labor, and the house-top brackets. The line was finished on April 4, 1877.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the City of Somerville, 1874

Beyond the Neck, The Architecture and Development of Somerville, Massachusetts
Office of Planning and Community Development, 1982.

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SMV.141

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Somerville, MA	Form No: 105
Property Name: Charles Williams, Jr. House	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance (Continued)

To test this new technology, a steady stream of people poured into Williams's shop to talk over the line to his wife and others in Somerville. People quickly impressed, and by May 1 of the same year, Williams had installed the world's first commercial telephone line from the State Street, Boston, Office of his friend Roswell C. Downer to his house a 170 Central Street, also in Somerville.

