



**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 2019.036  
**Date:** June 18, 2019

**Recommendation:** Conditional  
Approval

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**PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT**

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**Site:** 1-3 Harvard Place

**Applicant Name:** Tom Bent  
**Applicant Address:** 1-3 Harvard Place  
**Owner Name:** same as above  
**Owner Address:** same as above

**Petition:** Tom & Roseanne Bent, Owners, seek permission from the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to construct retaining walls to contain erosion.

**HPC Hearing Date:** June 18, 2019

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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is located at the corner of Harvard Street and Harvard Place on Spring Hill. See Form B for details.
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant proposes to construct stone retaining walls to contain erosion along Harvard Street and Harvard Place. See attached plans for details.



**II. FINDINGS FOR LANDSCAPE FEATURES  
AND PAVING**

*While the building is clearly the dominant feature of most sites, a historic property is more than just the structure itself. Similarly, the property as a whole must be considered as part of its neighborhood and*

*streetscape context. The landscape provides a setting for a historic building and should complement its historic character.*

## **GUIDELINES**

1. The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.
2. It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.
3. The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.
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 that the planned walls do not significantly detract from the historic character of the historic building or streetscape. The proposed alterations to the landform do not obscure the structure or markedly change its relationship to the hill on which it stands. Stone is a traditional material for retaining walls. The style is a Ticonderoga granite wall with bluestone cap as can be seen in the attached proposal plans.

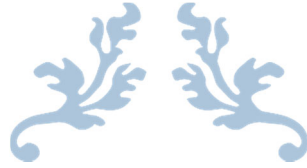
## **III. RECOMMENDATION**

***Based on the information provided and an assessment of the proposal against the Somerville LHD guidelines, Staff recommends A Certificate of Appropriateness for the new stone retaining walls with 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. The alterations to the landscape and construction of retaining walls shall be in accordance with HighMark Land Design plans dated 5/28/2019 for the Bent Residence at 3 Harvard Place, Job Number 1904.
4. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate and approved plans.



Photo 2008



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# 1 & 3 HARVARD PLACE

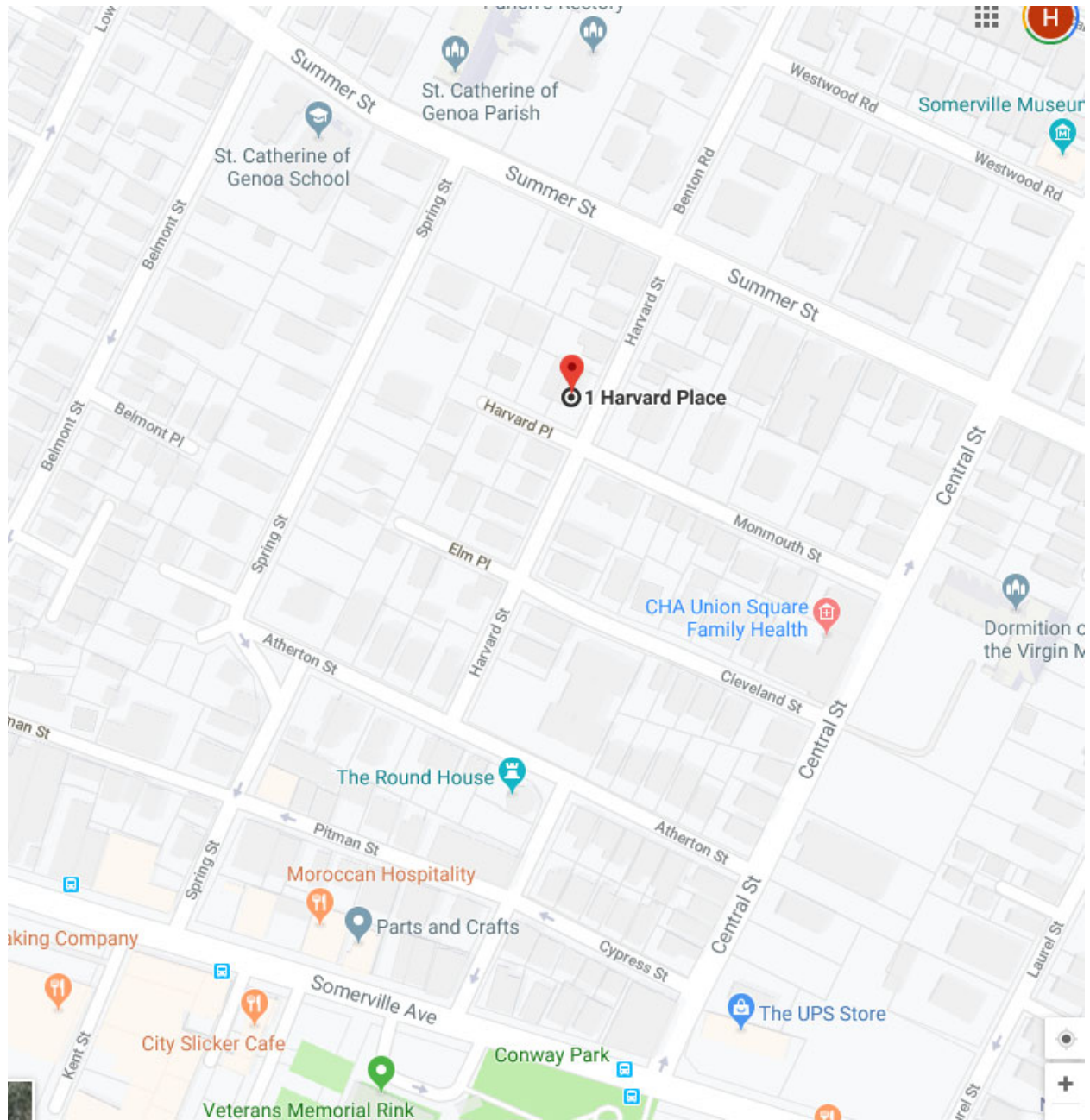
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Bent Residence Existing and Proposed Conditions



MAY 28, 2019

HIGHMARK LAND DESIGN  
561 Windsor Street, Somerville, MA



Context Map for 1 & 3 Harvard Place. North is the top of page and South is the bottom.





1& 3 Harvard Place as seen from Harvard Place looking east toward Harvard Street. Terrace wall will line up with the mid-level stair landing, shown with a blue line. Existing Pine tree to be removed.



Garden Stairs (left) and Main stairs (right). Existing slope soils are sluffing and eroding downhill. The blue line shows the mid-level wall which will reduce the angle of the slope uphill. Downhill slope and groundcover will be left largely intact.





Garden stair slope showing proposed wall in blue and new slope angle in green.



Looking downhill from top garden stair landing.





1 & 3 Harvard Place as seen from the corner of Harvard Street. Blue lines show proposed wall, the lower slope will remain largely unchanged. Green line shows the location of a proposed dogwood near the flagpole.



Detail image of the top of slope showing pocketing and erosion.





1 and 3 Harvard Place as seen from across Harvard Street looking east.



Example of Ticonderoga granite wall with bluestone cap- demonstration wall at Swenson Granite Works, Rowley, MA.





Steep slope near apartment patio to be retained with 3'6" x 2'6" L shaped pressure treated lumber cribbing adjacent to the cobble curb.



Apartment patio garden bed (far bed parallel to the property line) to be enhanced with new plants including evergreens to screen condenser form the sidewalk.