



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 2018.106

Date: December 18, 2018

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 124 Highland Avenue

Applicant Name: Tony Barros & Mark Killoren

Owner Name: American Legion Post 19, Somerville

Owner Address: 124 Highland Avenue

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the c. 1931 brick building with later 1960s additions

HPC Hearing Date: December 18, 2018

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a the c. 1931 brick building with later 1960s additions constructed for the Somerville Post 19 of the American Legion

2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance

On November 13, 2018, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 124 Highland Avenue is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:



Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;

and

- (i) *The structure is importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth;*

and

- (ii) *The structure is historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.*

The Commission found 124 Highland Avenue to be importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth. The subject building is found importantly associated with the American Legion Post 19, a chapter of a national veterans' organization.

The Commission also found 124 Highland Avenue historically significant due to on-going association with the American Legion Post 19 since 1919 and their role; and architecturally significant as a good example of 1930s Classical Revival style executed on a small scale.

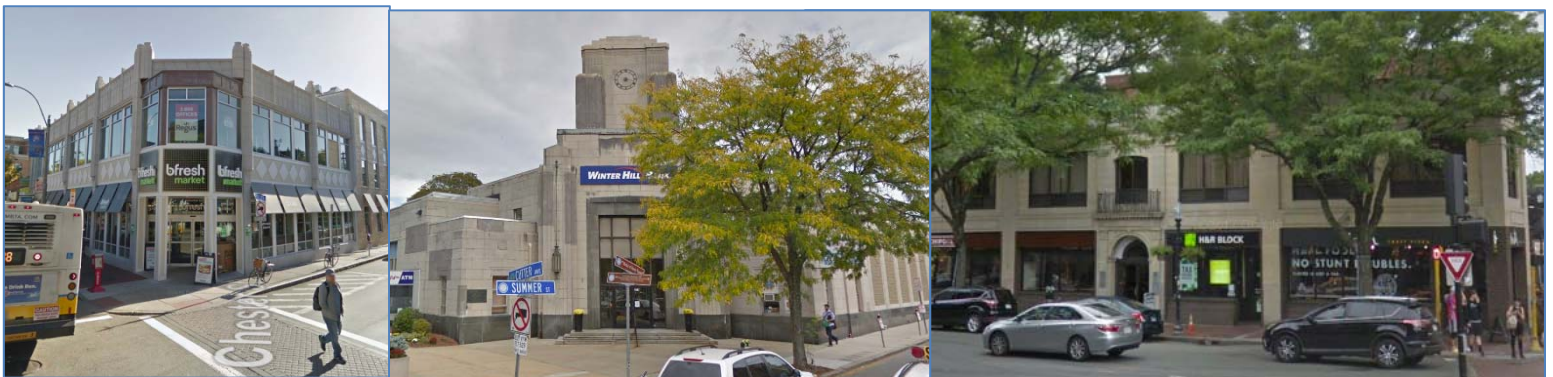
The period of significance for 124 Highland Avenue begins before its construction in 1931 as headquarters for the American Legion Post 19. The Post 19 received its charter in 1919 and was based in the Community House at 124 Highland Avenue.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information has been received.

Comparable Structures:

Looking at buildings with comparable age, style, and uses there are very few buildings comparable to the American Legion Post 19 building constructed in the early years of the Great Depression. Only 5 buildings similar in age and material were found on MACRIS. All were masonry buildings: three in popular variants of Deco style on commercial buildings; and three more traditionally inspired City buildings (police station, school and Post Office). Other comparable buildings found in MACRIS have been razed or irremediably altered.



240-244 Elm Street (1931), 274-282 Elm Street (1933), 361-371 Summer Street (1930)



66-70 Union Square (1932), 42 Prescott Street (1931), 237 Washington Street (1935)(LHD)

II. PREFERABLY PRESERVED

If the Commission determines that the demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City, such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure. (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 4.2.d)

A determination regarding if the demolition of the subject building is detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City should consider the following:

How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?

- a) *What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*
 - The exterior of the structure (the only portion of the building within the purview of the HPC), retains a high degree of architectural integrity and a good example of 1930s Classical Revival style executed on a small scale.
- b) *What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*
 - The period of significance for 124 Highland Avenue begins before its construction in 1931 as headquarters for the American Legion Post 19. The Post 19 received its charter in 1919 as one of the first Posts in Massachusetts and in the country. It was based in the Community House at 124 Highland Avenue. The members raised the funds to construct the existing building between 1925 and 1931. The American Legion is important for its role in the lives of all U.S. Veterans who served the country since it was founded in 1919. The Post is involved in many local events and hosts a number of activities for its members.
- c) *What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*
 - The structure is set on the corner of Trull Lane, a small private lane and Highland Avenue, a busy local artery.
- d) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*
 - Very few buildings of this era and style have been surveyed and are still extant.

Upon a consideration of the above criteria is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?

Staff finds that the building is important as the home of American Legion Post 19 and one of the few examples of 1930s architecture of more than one story constructed of masonry.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 124 Highland Avenue to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*