



**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 2018.035

**Date:** June 19, 2018

**Recommendation:** Preferably Preserved

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**PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT**  
*for*  
**Determination of Preferably Preserved**

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**Site:** 15 Mossland Street

**Applicant Name:** Umberto & Charity Rossetti

**Applicant Address:** 15 Mossland Street

**Owner Name:** Same

**Owner Address:** Same

**Petition:** Applicant seeks to demolish the c. 1870 single family residence at 15 Mossland Street.

**HPC Hearing Date:** June 19, 2018



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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. **Subject Property:** 15 Mossland Street is a 2-story gable end side hall plan house with a 2-story bay on the left side front. The roof pitch is that of a Greek Revival but the house does not have the other architectural references expected for Greek Revival consistent with an earlier structure. Four of the windows in the bay are original 6/6 sash window trim is simple. Many of the other windows have been altered and replaced. There is a small ell on the rear and a wing on the left side. The rear right side has a shed/enclosed porch addition. Despite alterations to the fenestration and porch, the building retains the form and massing of a 19<sup>th</sup> century workers cottage. The house is slightly smaller than the other houses on the street.

2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the c. 1870 single family residence at 15 Mossland Street.

**I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance**

On Tuesday, May 15, 2018, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to determine the c. 11860 wood-framed at **15 Mossland Street** 'Significant' because the building, per Section 2.17.B of the Demolition Review Ordinance 2003-05, is "at least 50 years old, and is or has been determined by the Commission to be a significant building or structure after a finding that the building or structure is either:

- i. "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 of Massachusetts, or
- ii. "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, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished."

The subject building at **15 Mossland** is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City. No associations were found with an important historic person or event.

Despite alterations to the fenestration and porch, the building retains the form and massing of a 19<sup>th</sup> century workers cottage. The house is slightly smaller than the other houses on the street indicating that it probably the oldest house on the street. The pitch of the roof suggests a Greek Revival style core to the building. The house is important in the context of the group of building within the streetscape.

## II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information was found regarding the families residing at 15 Mossland Street prior to 1870. The 1869 City Directory notes only three buildings on Elm or Mossland Street. Two on the corners of Mossland at Elm and one on Mossland near Milk (Somerville Avenue).

### *Comparable Structures:*

Two story gable-end dwellings with two or three bays are common throughout the City and compose a majority of the residential housing stock within the City. This building type is generally constructed as a single or two-family dwelling. Comparable structures of the same roof pitch are of an earlier date and include:

- 1 Webster Street (LHD)
- 81 Pearl Street (LHD)
- 67 Florence Street (LHD)

These are all gable end toward the street. The shapes and sizes of the eaves and bays as well as widths of the buildings. They all have different amounts details retained and have changed over time. They were all constructed for workers and inhabited by families for generations. For the most part they are well-maintained and retain much of their original character. 1 Webster Street, 81 Pearl Street and 67 Florence Street in East Somerville



Above: 1 Webster Street (1851), 81 Pearl Street (1860); 67 Florence Street (c.1857).

**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.*

Despite alterations to the fenestration and porch, the building retains the form and massing of a 19<sup>th</sup> century workers cottage. The house is slightly smaller than the other houses on the street and may indicate that the building is the oldest on the street. The pitch of the roof suggests a Greek Revival style core to the building. The house is important in the context of the group of building within the streetscape. See determination of significance for a summary of the historic architectural features of this structure.

- b) What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*

The Commission also found **15 Mossland** importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City. No associations were found with an important historic person or event. The house is important in the context of the group of building within the streetscape.

- c) What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*

The building is located on a residential through street. It is not known to have been moved. The surrounding buildings on the street with one exception are of more recent construction but are predominantly 19<sup>th</sup> century.

- d) What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*

Two story gable-end dwellings with two or three bays are common throughout the City and compose a majority of the residential housing stock within the City. This building type is generally constructed as a single or two-family dwelling. The roof pitch indicates Greek Revival influence and possibly an earlier date of construction than the 1870 date of residence, at that time the population was only 14,685.

*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 the house at 15 Mossland Street significant and important for the reasons noted above.

**III. RECOMMENDATION**

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 15 Mossland Street to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*