



**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 2019.054  
**Date:** October 15, 2019

**Recommendation: Preferably Preserved**

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

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**Site:** 15 Woodbine Street

**Applicant Name:** Sal Querusio

**Applicant Address:** 8 Munroe Street, Somerville, MA  
**Owner Name:** Margaret Collette  
**Owner Address:** 15 Woodbine Street

**Petition:** Applicant seeks to demolish the 1 ½-story wood-framed house

**HPC Hearing Date:** October 15, 2019



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**I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1890 1 ½-story wood-framed house
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

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

On September 17, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 15 Woodbine Street 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 subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its associations with the working class development of the City in the Albion Magoun neighborhood

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its place within a group of similarly important buildings which forms a coherent streetscape. The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant as an intact representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century working-class housing stock and represents some of the earliest residential development on this neighborhood.

The period of significance for 15 Woodbine circa 1890 begins with its construction as rental property. Woodbine Street was originally called Alpine Street and dead-ended against land belonging to the Stearns family. The 1884 Hopkins Atlas shows only six houses on the street with 3 of them on the property of Daniel Simonds. 15 Woodbine Street was constructed at some time between 1884 and 1895. By 1895, most of the north side of Woodbine Street was fully built up with workers cottages. The ownership of the parcels on both sides of the road is shown to the ownership of Nathan Simonds. In the 1900 census, 76 year-old Simonds is listed as a landowner boarding at 73 Albion Street which abuts the properties he owned on Woodbine Street. Neither he nor Daniel Simonds are found in Somerville for the 1880 census. Due to the continued ownership of the land from the 1874 through 1900 by the Simonds family, it is likely that all the workers cottages were constructed by them for rental. Nathan Simonds also owned rental property on Campbell Park in Davis Square.

Despite some alterations to the building, the retention of form and location give a very good sense of this type of working-class housing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. 15 Woodbine Street is set among many similarly sized and shaped buildings. The house is centrally located on the street.

### III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

See attached Report from Prometheus Life Safety. This report is not written by a structural engineer. Jason Kahan, P.E. who specializes in fire prevention, has assessed the building and provided photos of the conditions. He noted that he does not believe the building to be sound enough to be moved to repair the stone foundation and crawl space. Photos taken suggest that the building rests on a few stones and is very close to the ground. A letter from Paul F. Mochi, qualifications unknown, was also submitted, noting deficiencies and recommending that a structural engineer perform a more detailed analysis. A structural engineer's report will be submitted on the evening of October 10, 2019, too late for inclusion in this report.

#### *Comparable Structures:*

Woodbine Street has several small 1 ½- and 2-story houses. There have been some recent larger houses that disrupt the rhythm. Other neighborhoods of workers cottages are also under pressure of demolition and replacement of larger homes.



*North side of Woodbine Street looking toward Lowell Street*



*South side of Woodbine Street looking toward Lowell Street, #22 is the large red house approved in 2016*

#### IV. 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 reflects the evolution of this property through key eras of architectural change. See determination of significance for a summary of the historic architectural features of this structure. See also the attached reports of the structural integrity.

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

- This structure is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its associations with the working class development of the City in the Albion Magoun neighborhood
- This structure is found historically and architecturally significant due to its place within a group of similarly important buildings which forms a coherent streetscape. The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant as an intact representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century working-class housing stock, as part of a coherent streetscape and represents some of the residential development on this neighborhood.

b) ***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 located toward the center of the block between two earlier but similarly scaled buildings. Removing the building would alter the historic rhythm of the streetscape.

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

- The City of Somerville has several neighborhoods of workers cottages; however these neighborhoods are being eroded by alterations and new construction replacing the small single family structures. Woodbine Street still retains its late 19<sup>th</sup> century character despite the new additions toward Lowell Street and the new house at 22 Woodbine Street.

***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 this house is an important part of the streetscape. The street is a coherent grouping of 1 ½ story workers cottages on generous lots constructed by the Simonds family as rental property. Altering or removing the building changes the character of this neighborhood street even more than has already occurred at the Lowell Street end and across the street where the rhythm has been broken by a 2 ½-story house. Staff finds the removal of the building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City.

## **V. RECOMMENDATION**

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





53 ASH AVE #2 SOMERVILLE, MA 02145  
800.517.7621 - INFO@PROLIFESAFETY.COM

To: Owner of Record C/O 15 Woodbine LLC  
Attn: City of Somerville Inspectional Services  
Location: 15 Woodbine Ave, Somerville MA

Date: September 17, 2019

To whom it may concern :

PLS performed a review of the existing structure located at the above mentioned address. PLS is a multi discipline consulting and fire protection engineer and was contracted to perform a general review and analysis of the existing structure. The purpose of this walkthrough was to determine the following:

1. Life safety issue systems in place including smoke detection and notification.
2. Structural stability of the existing structure and foundation.
3. Overall building feasibility study for the purposes of potentially renovation

Date: 9/9/19 at 10 AM

Personnel: Homeowner, Jason Kahan P.E., General Contractor (Name to be furnished)

Concern: Major structural lean and lack of property foundation

**Observations:**

Upon arrival at the above mentioned property a distance of 50' away from the property I visually recognized that the existing structure was sagging and leaning to the North East and to the rear of the property. This is generally a sign of a failing foundation and or rotten sub base and floor joist. Upon entrance of the structure it was apparent the the house was leaning from to rear and to a large factor degree. The current homeowner indicated areas that he was aware of framing issues as well as structural foundation issues. See attached pictures.

**General recommendation:**

The life safety systems consists of smoke and co detection and appears to be per IRC 2015. The seller has requested a 6D smoke certificate and the system.

The foundation as well as wood framing needs further review and from my engineering experience and structural education but limited to that and not certifying as a licensed structural engineer this structure does not appear to be salvageable. The house needs to be removed in order to repair the crawl space stone foundation and in doing so the house does not appear to be structurally sound enough to withstand this work.



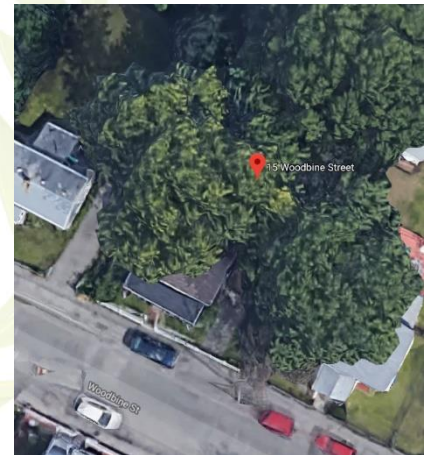
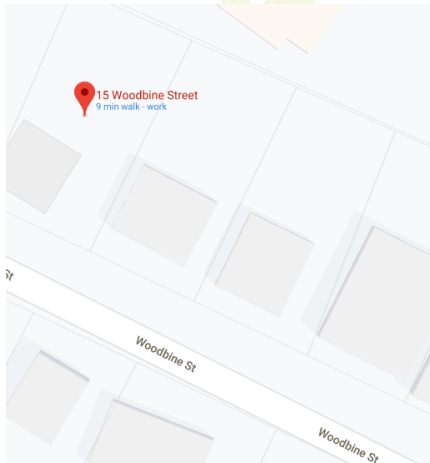
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Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Kahan".

Jason Kahan P.E.

617-633-3533



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## VISION DESIGN & CONSTRUCTION, INC.

14 Western Avenue Wakefield, MA 01880

(781) 844-8645

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August 5, 2019

Sal Querusio

Re: 15 Woodbine Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Dear Mr. Querusio:

During my on-site visit made to prepare the drawings for the proposed new structure at 15 Woodbine Street I inspected the existing 1 ½ story wood frame building. The existing structure is a single-family dwelling consisting of approximately 1,609 gross square feet. The foundation system is made up of a crawl space constructed out of field stone material, which exhibits signs of settlement and water penetration, which appears to be rotting out the sills, and is contributing to some type of mold condition in the crawl space. The first floor appears to have experienced substantial settlement, which is very noticeable in the kitchen area. The outside walls are bowing, and the roof framing is sagging at different locations.

Based on these visual observations it appears to me that this building is not structurally sound, and I would not recommend any further occupancy of this site. In addition I would strongly recommend that you obtain the services of a professional structural engineer to perform a more detailed inspection and evaluation of this structure.

Very truly yours,

Paul F. Mochi