



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 2018.022

Date: May 22, 2018

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 161 Broadway

Applicant Name: Somerville Realty Ventures, LLC
Applicant Address: P.O. Box 345 Somerville, MA 02143

Owner Name: Same
Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the 1914 storage garage.

HPC Hearing Date: May 22, 2018



I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1914 storage garage
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to partially demolish the existing structure.

I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, April 17, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (6-0) to determine the c. 1914 storage garage 161 Broadway '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 is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its early date of construction, the breadth of the automotive services made available to the public and the quality of the cars.

The period of significance for 161 Broadway begins in 1914 as a garage and showroom for Ford, Marmon and Marathon Cars. The building retains its essential form and character from 1914 through the present. The form, massing and materials are typical of automotive uses of the period and is relatively unaltered in appearance.

The building retains the essential form and character of an automotive storage garage from 1914. The form, massing and materials are typical of automotive uses of the period. The building is relatively unaltered in appearance.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its period, style, method of construction which is characteristic of the building type and time

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information has been received.

Comparable Structures:

Commercial garages of a similar type and style were once common throughout the City and have become increasingly uncommon. While several private garages still exist within the City, few (if any) present a similar scale or level of design as the subject structure. In addition, the type of use that is commonly associated with buildings similar to the subject structure often encourages alterations that affect the architectural integrity of the building.

Comparable structures within the City include: 297 Medford Street (1906); 92-96 Prospect Street (1917); 224 Somerville Avenue (1933); and 143 Jaques Street. Predominant differences between the structures are the size of the massing, use of materials, and remaining architectural integrity due to the degree of alteration, and the level of design



297 Medford Street (1906)



92-96 Prospect Street



143 Jaques Street



224 Somerville Avenue

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:

IV. Recommendation

Recommendations are based upon an analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the permit application and the required findings for the Demolition Review Ordinance, which requires archival and historical research, and an assessment of historical and architectural significance, conducted prior to the public hearing for a Determination of Preferably Preserved. This report may be revised or updated with a new recommendation and/or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through further research.

In accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 4.D, Staff find the potential demolition of the subject structure detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the National Register eligibility of this structure, under Criteria A and C, as well as the large massing and rarity of this type of structure to have retained the level of detail still present, **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission find 92-96 Prospect Street Preferably Preserved.**

If the Historic Preservation Commission determines the structure is Preferably Preserved, the Building Inspector may issue a demolition permit at any time, upon receipt of written advice from the Commission that there is no reasonable likelihood that either the owner or some other person or group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the subject building or structure (Ord. 2003-05, Section 4.5).

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 style, simplicity of architectural detail, and large massing of this structure were common for this type of garage structure within the City. These features are the early use of stucco and the brick parapet details that relate to the Spanish Revival style becoming prominent as an exotic building style. 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 determined that this structure is ‘Significant’ due to an historical association with the development of automobile commercial services and as a large, well-executed and preserved example of the early 20th century private garage.
 - The construction of private garages during the early 20th century illustrates the growing importance of the automobile, which represents an aspect of national history.
- c) ***What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?***
 - The subject parcel is highly visible along both Broadway and Minnesota
- d) ***What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?***
 - Large private garages which remain relatively intact, are becoming rare rare within the City and are likely rare within the larger Boston area. While several private garages still exist within the City, few (if any) present a similar scale or level of architectural detail as the subject structure.

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?

The Commission found the subject parcel ‘Significant’ due to a historical association with the development of automobile commercial services and as a large, well-executed and preserved example of the early 20th century private garage.

The consideration criteria (a-d) listed above conveys that structures, such as the subject building, are no longer common within the City and are likely not common within the larger Boston area.

Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 161 Broadway detrimental to the heritage of the City.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 161 Broadway to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*