



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 2019.005

Date: April 16, 2019

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 2-6 Porter Street

Applicant Name: Joe the Architect

Applicant Address: 343 Medford Street, Somerville, MA

Owner Name: K & K Realty Trust

Owner Address: 279 Porter Street, Melrose, MA

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the wood-framed storefront and apartments.

HPC Hearing Date: April 16, 2019



I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1887 wood-framed store and apartments.
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, February 19, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (7-0) to determine the c. 1887 wood-frame apartments and storefront at 13 Elm Street/2 Porter 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 Commission also found 13 Elm Street, 2-4 Porter Street importantly associated with Charles S. Butters, provisioner but not with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City.

The Commission also found that 13 Elm Street, 2-4 Porter Street has integrity of form and purpose. While the building has undergone some alteration, it retains its original form. Most of the alterations are reversible allowing for the original design of the building to be returned if the owner is willing. Its corner location makes the building highly visible in the streetscape while the additions on the rear on the Porter Street side do not dominate the site. The concrete block additions could be removed with no damage to the perception of the original building.

The Commission will hold a public hearing on March 19, 2019 to review the initial determination of ‘Significance’ and if the buildings should be ‘Preferably Preserved.’ Per Section 4.2.D, “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 preferably preserved.” Public testimony will be taken at the hearing, followed by a discussion and a vote by the Commission.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information has been received.

Comparable Structures:

Commercial retail businesses were often located on the ground floors of apartment houses and hotels. Many were located near streetcar and bus stops. Such buildings are located along the major roads throughout the city. Here are a few from the 1890s.



61 Cedar Street (c. 1895); 380 Somerville Avenue (LHD (1892)); 33 Bow Street (LHD (1892))

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 reflects the evolution of this property through key eras of architectural change (synthetic siding overlaying the wood clapboard, ground floor store front and the removal of shutters). 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 found 13 Elm Street, 2-4 Porter Street importantly associated with Charles S. Butters, provisioner and prominent businessman but not importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City.

The Commission found that 13 Elm Street, 2-4 Porter Street has integrity of form and purpose. While the building has undergone some alteration, it retains its original form. Most of the alterations are reversible allowing for the original design of the building to be returned if the owner is willing. Its corner location makes the building highly visible in the streetscape while the additions on the rear on the Porter Street side do not dominate the site. The concrete block additions could be removed with no damage to the perception of the original building.

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

While the building has undergone some alteration, it retains its original form. Most of the alterations are reversible. Its corner location makes the building highly visible in the streetscape while the additions on the rear on the Porter Street side do not dominate the site.

d. What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?

Commercial retail businesses were often located on the ground floors of apartment houses and hotels. Many were located near streetcar and bus stops. Such buildings are located along the major roads throughout the city and varied in size from single-story to 3-4 story mixed use buildings.

e. 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 type of c. 1890s mixed use building typical of its time and period and is aware of a few in Union Square and a couple of other such buildings elsewhere in the city. The building could be renovated to reflect its original design with complimentary additions on the rear and side.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 2-6 Porter Street to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*