



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

THOMAS F GALLIGANI JR
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ALTERATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT (LHD) PROPERTY
STAFF REPORT

Site: 56 Bow Street

Case: HP23-000060

Applicant: Ashley Blum

Owner: Same as Applicant

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to Install an AC Unit visible from a Right-of-way*

HPC Meeting Date: December 19, 2023



The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with a professional assessment of alteration proposals made for Local Historic District (LHD) properties. These assessments are based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and the associated Design Guidelines. A Staff Report is not a determination/decision and does not represent findings. A staff report does not constitute authorization in any form.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Subject Property: The locus is the c.1874 residence known as the Dr. Arnald Couch House. This property is located within the Prospect Hill neighborhood. A full description of the property is provided in the attached Form B survey held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Proposal: The following scope is under the purview of the HPC.

- Installation of an AC unit on the left side behind the porch.

II. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

The HPC must make findings based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and associated Design Guidelines. The portions of the regulations that are applicable to the proposed alterations are discussed below.

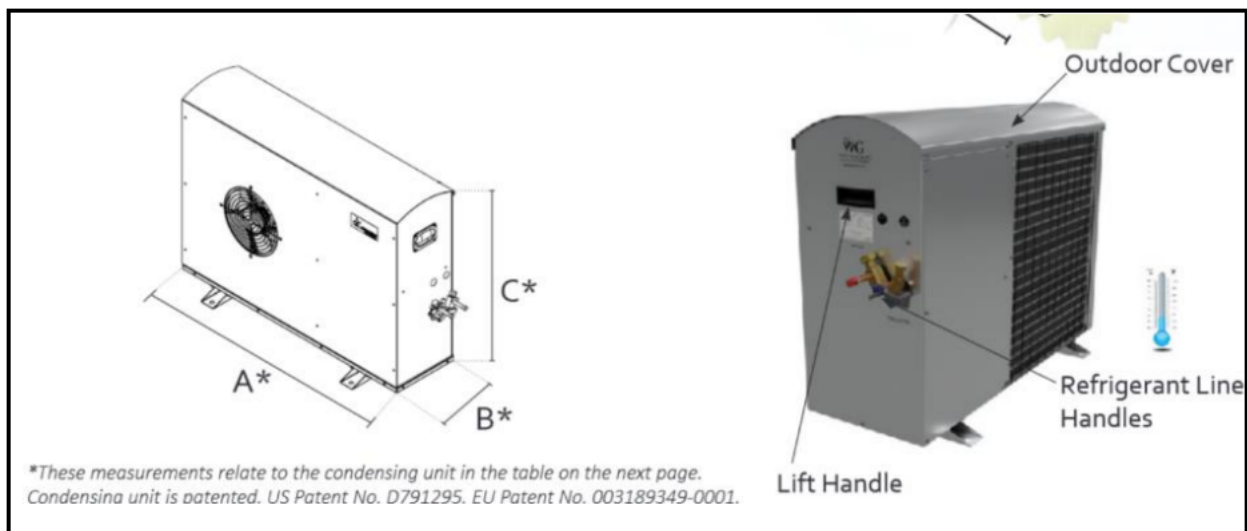
A. Exterior Walls & B. Roofs

The most relevant portion of the Design Guidelines is as follows:

Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.

Due to the proposed elements being visible from the right of way, the HPC has purview over these features and the materials used.

Applicant Proposal: The Applicant proposes to install an AC condensing unit on the left side of the property behind the front porch. The condenser will measure 34"x12"x26".



Above: Proposed condensing unit for the AC unit



Above: Image showing proposed location of the unit

The Applicant has stated that they are unable to place the unit on the rear for the following reasons:

- It would place the units too far away from the area to be cooled (the basement) (>50’);
- There are too many bends in the piping run;
- Refrigerant lines would have to dip below a carrying beam to traverse the basement, and sags in the line could create an oil trap, which could starve the compressor of lubricant and cause premature failure.

Preservation Planning Assessment:

The proposed tracking lines will be visible from a public way. Pursuant to the Design Guidelines

“Utility equipment, such as ... air conditioners ...and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.”

To place the AC condenser on the side of the structure is not within keeping of the Design Guidelines as proposed. The Design Guidelines state if such items are not possible to place in the rear, to have them flush to the building and paint them to match the building. The current proposal does not propose any screening. Should the Historic Preservation Commission vote to approve the proposed location for the condensing unit a condition should be included requiring the Applicant to work with Staff to choose an appropriate form of screening. This would lessen the visual impact of the condenser to the historic façade. Staff have included such a condition in the Recommended Conditions section of this Staff Report.

III. FINDINGS & VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote the HPC must state their findings and reasons on why they take their position.

IV. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Preservation Planning recommends the following conditions be attached to any Certificate of Appropriateness that the HPC might grant for this project:

1. The Applicant/Owner shall file the Certificate with the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) by uploading it to the CitizenServe permitting portal with their application for zoning compliance/building permit.
2. This Certificate is valid for one year. If work has not commenced within one year of the HPC's date of determination, this Certificate shall expire, and the Applicant shall re-apply for re-issuance of this Certificate. Provided that no changes have been made to the proposal, this shall be a Staff-level re-issuance of the Certificate.
3. Any changes to this proposal made prior to the commencement of work or in-the-field changes shall be submitted to Preservation Planning for their review to determine if the changes come under the purview of the HPC. Failure to seek approval for changes may delay final sign-offs/Cos.
4. The Applicant shall screen the condenser unit with final approval of the method and material of the screening by Preservation Staff.
5. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning at **historic@somervillema.gov** a minimum of 15 business days prior to final ISD walk-through so that Preservation Planning or their designee can confirm if the project was completed according to HPC approvals.

A) Pictures of the front of our house





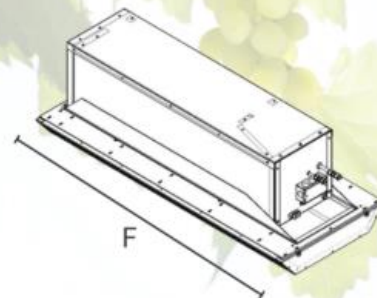
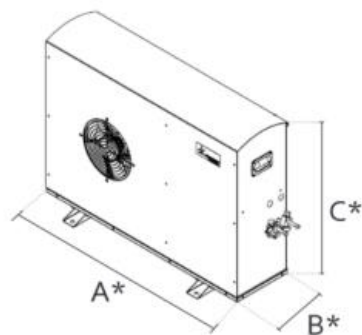
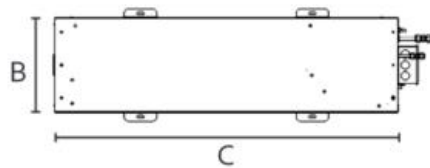
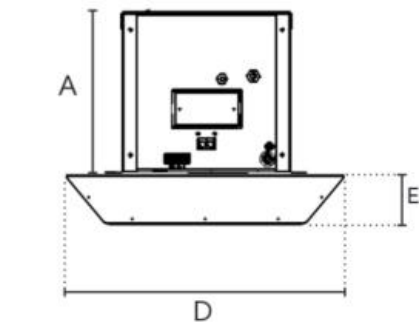
B) First two are views you would see from the street if it were on the side of the house; 3rd view is to give an idea where the unit itself would go (where the man is standing)





Cooling Systems

Specifications




*These measurements relate to the condensing unit in the table on the next page.
Condensing unit is patented. US Patent No. D791295. EU Patent No. 003189349-0001.

60Hz System Specifications

Model	Capacity (BTU/H)	A	B	C	D	E	F	Electrical	Sound (DBA)	Weight (lbs.)
CS025	2,900	9 ^{1/2"}	10 ^{3/8"}	36 ^{1/2"}	18 ^{1/8"}	3 ^{1/8"}	43 ^{1/4"}	115V / 1ph / 60Hz	53	51
Condensing Unit	—	34"	12"	26"	—	—	—	208 - 230V / 1ph / 60Hz	52	57
CS050	4,300	9 ^{1/2"}	10 ^{3/8"}	36 ^{1/2"}	18 ^{1/8"}	3 ^{1/8"}	43 ^{1/4"}	115V / 1ph / 60Hz	57	51
Condensing Unit	—	34"	12"	26"	—	—	—	208 - 230V / 1ph / 60Hz	55	75

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.A	
Historic Name:	Bow Street Historic District	
Common Name:		
City/Town:	Somerville	
Village/Neighborhood:	Prospect Hill;	
Local No:		
Year Constructed:		
Use(s):	Commercial District; Other Institutional; Residential District;	
Significance:	Architecture; Commerce; Community Planning; Education; Politics Government; Religion; Social History;	
Designation(s):	Nat'l Register District (03/26/1976); Local Historic District (03/11/1985);	
Building Materials:		
Demolished	No	

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

The MACRIS database and scanned files are highly dynamic; new information is added daily and both database records and related scanned files may be updated as new information is incorporated into MHC files. Users should note that there may be a considerable lag time between the receipt of new or updated records by MHC and the appearance of related information in MACRIS. Users should also note that not all source materials for the MACRIS database are made available as scanned images. Users may consult the records, files and maps available in MHC's public research area at its offices at the State Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, open M-F, 9-5.

Users of this digital material acknowledge that they have read and understood the MACRIS Information and Disclaimer (<http://mhc-macris.net/macrisdisclaimer.htm>)

Data available via the MACRIS web interface, and associated scanned files are for information purposes only. THE ACT OF CHECKING THIS DATABASE AND ASSOCIATED SCANNED FILES DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTING A DEVELOPER AND/OR A PROPOSED PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE A PERMIT, LICENSE OR FUNDING FROM ANY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCY YOU MUST SUBMIT A PROJECT NOTIFICATION FORM TO MHC FOR MHC'S REVIEW AND COMMENT. You can obtain a copy of a PNF through the MHC web site (www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc) under the subject heading "MHC Forms."

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM A - AREA SURVEY

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, State House, Boston

Form numbers in this area

20-33

Area no.

A

1. Town Somerville

Name of area (if any) Bow

ST AREA

3. General date or period

Late 19th c.

4. Is area uniform (explain):

in style? _____

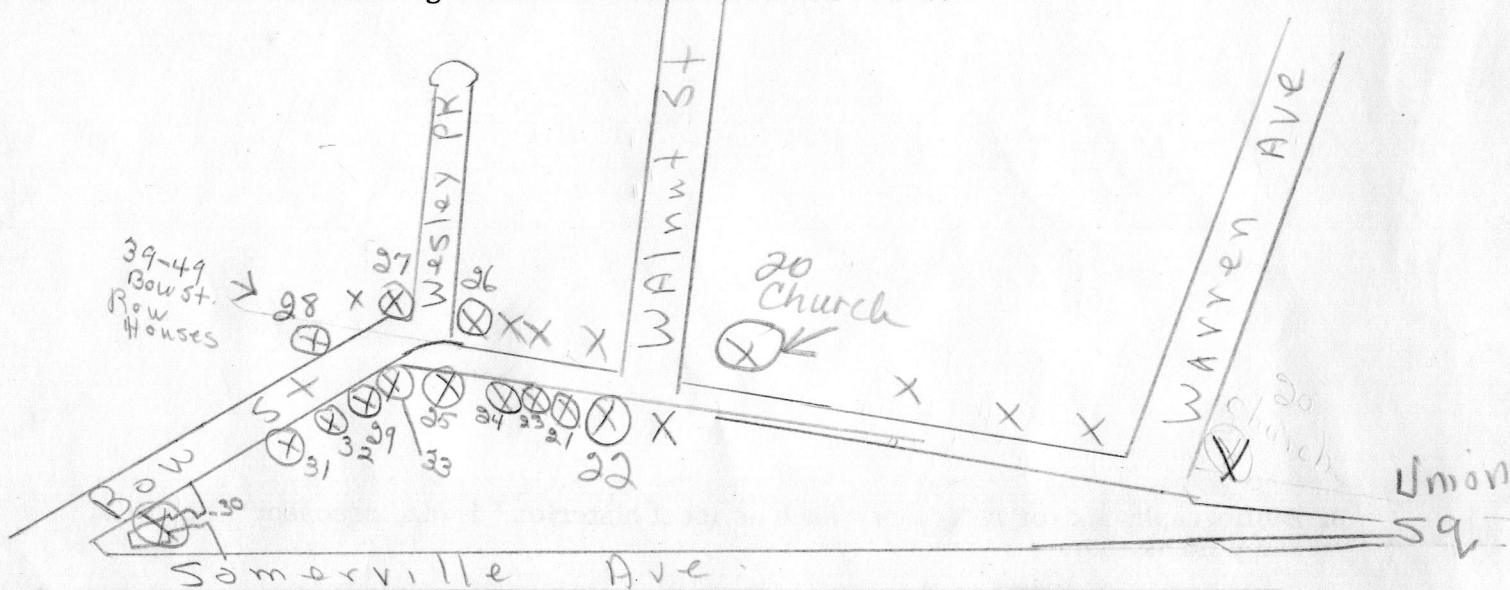
in condition? _____

in type of ownership? _____

in use? _____

2. Photo (3x3" or 3x5")
Staple to left side of form
Photo number _____

5. Map. Use space below to draw a general map of the area involved. Indicate any historic properties for which individual reports are completed on Forms B thru F, using corresponding numbers. Show street names (including route numbers, if any) and indicate north. Indicate with an "x" existing houses not inventoried on Form B.



DO NOT WRITE IN THIS SPACE
USGS Quadrant _____

MHC Photo no. _____

6. Recorded by

Rita Morrison
M H. C

Organization _____

Date

8/14/75

(over)

7. Historical data. Explain the historical/architectural importance of this area.

8. Bibliography and/or references such as local histories, deeds, assessor's records, early maps, etc.