CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS

MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

KATJANA BALLANTYNE
MAYOR

THOMAS GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING, PRESERVATION & DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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

Site: 93 Highland Avenue (City Hall)

Case: HP23-000085

Applicant: City of Somerville – IAM-Capital Projects

Owner: City of Somerville

Legal Ad: *Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to replace cupola windows and deteriorated trim.*

HPC Meeting Date: February 6, 2024

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 Somerville City Hall, one of several civic buildings located on the Central Hill Campus. A full description of the property is provided in the attached Form B survey held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Proposal: The Applicant proposes the following work which falls within the review purview of the HPC:

1. **Cupola siding, trim, and decorative urns**: replace deteriorated wood siding and trim on the cupola with PVC. Profiles to be cut to match existing. Replicate decorative urns from the 1920s City Hall renovation.

2. **Cupola windows:** Replace existing windows with double-hung aluminum clad 6-over-6 windows with exterior applied muntins.

Please note that **only** the changes to the materials on the cupola and the replacement windows are within the HPC's review purview. All other work shown in the accompanying proposal document is approved at Staff level.

The above proposal was part of an advisory review for a larger CPA-HP project proposal reviewed by the HPC at their January 16, 2024 meeting.

II. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

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.

1. Cupola siding, trim, and decorative urns: replace deteriorated wood siding and trim on the cupola with PVC. Profiles to be cut to match existing. Replicate decorative urns from the 1920s City Hall renovation.

The most relevant portions of the Design Guidelines regarding the **siding and trim** are as follows:

> **Sec. I, *General Approach*, item E**
> *Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged*.
>
> **Sec. II, *Specific Guidelines, Sub-section A "Exterior Walls", item 1, sub-items (b) and (d)***
>
> *b. Retain and repair, when necessary, replace deteriorated material which matches as closely as possible.*
>
> *d. Synthetic siding (aluminum, vinyl, artificial stone or brick) is prohibited because it severely compromises the appearance and integrity of old buildings. In those rare instances where, for reasons of hardship, synthetic siding is approved, the new siding must reproduce the dimensions of the original, including its relationship to corner boards, window trim and other architectural*

details, all of which must be retained. The application for a Certificate of Hardship must include precise installation specifications supplied by an expert.

The most relevant portions of the Design Guidelines regarding the **decorative urns** are as follows:

> **Sec. I, *General Approach*, item D**
> *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*

Preservation Planning Assessment

On January 16, 2024, during their CPA-HP advisory review of the larger City Hall exterior preservation project proposal, the HPC discussed the cupola at-length. Of particular interest to the HPC was the Applicant's proposal to replace the wood trim and siding with *either* molded and painted copper *or* PVC. The Applicant has since settled on using PVC.

In their advisory review discussion the HPC noted the following:

The proposed change in materials from wood to either molded (painted) copper or PVC trim on the cupola would occur on an area of the cupola minimally visible from the public way. In cases where these areas/materials will be visible from a public way, they will be visible only from a significant distance. Whatever material is used, the HPC wants to ensure that the design, detail, and scale of the existing features are replicated in any new material.

As noted in the *Design Guidelines*, use of synthetic materials is not allowed except with a Certificate of Hardship. In the recent past, when appropriate, the HPC has issued Certificates of Appropriateness for the use of synthetic materials, particularly in cases where it would be difficult to discern that the materials were synthetic due to location on the building, distance from the public way, and painting of the PVC. Some past approvals for such manmade materials included porch flooring, ceilings, skirting, and trim work. There was no financial hardship claimed for these cases.

In terms of the decorative urns, the 1920s plans for the cupola addition called for the inclusion of these urns flanking the corners of the clock tower itself. A portion of the original blueprints provided by the applicant show the location of these architectural details. Such details are consistent with the Classical Revival style popular at the time. Close examination of the historic photo and historic postcard image of City Hall provided in the accompanying proposal show that the urns had, indeed, been installed on the cupola approximately 100 years ago.

The Applicant's proposal would allow for the urns to be returned to the cupola, recreating the intended visual appearance of the 1920s renovation. The proposed material to be used to recreate the urns is PVC.

Synthetic materials have changed significantly since the days of old-fashioned vinyl siding and the fake stone and brick veneers which our current Design Guidelines were eager intended to address. While newer synthetic materials are not by any means appropriate in all circumstances, the use of such materials may be appropriate for the cupola given the lack/minimal visibility of the location and the challenging environmental conditions this architectural component continually faces.

2. Cupola windows: Replace existing windows with double-hung aluminum clad 6-over-6 windows with exterior applied muntins.

The most relevant portion of the Design Guidelines regarding the cupola **windows** is as follows:

Sec. II, *Specific Guidelines, Sub-section C "Windows and Doors", items 1 & 2*

1. Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.

2. Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sill, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence. If aluminum windows must be installed, select a baked finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim. Investigate weather-stripping and storm windows with a baked enamel finish as an alternative to the replacement of historic sash.

Preservation Planning Assessment

The existing windows on the cupola are 6-over-6 wood, double-hung windows. As discussed during their CPA-HP advisory review, the Applicant proposed replacing these windows with aluminum clad double-hung windows. No new window openings will be created, enlarged, or reduced.

Though not represented consistently in the accompanying proposal, the replacement windows must have 6-over-6 lites to be consistent with the existing (deteriorated) windows, Classical Revival stylistics for a building of this nature, and with all of the other windows on the building.

III. FINDINGS & VOTE

When brining 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 a building permit.
2. Replacement windows on the cupola must present 6-over-6 lights with a muntin profile appropriate to the Classical Revival period.
3. 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.
4. 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.
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.

SOMERVILLE CITY HALL

PROPOSED REPAIRS AT CITY HALL CLOCK TOWER AND ADJACENT ROOFS

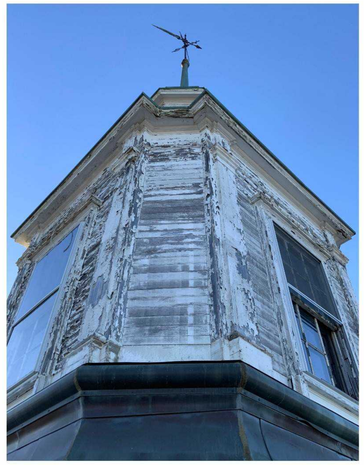
Somerville Historic Preservation Commission Meeting

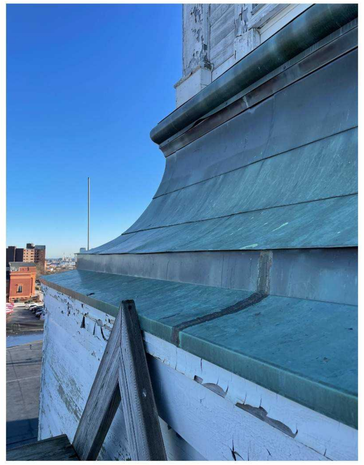
February 6, 2024

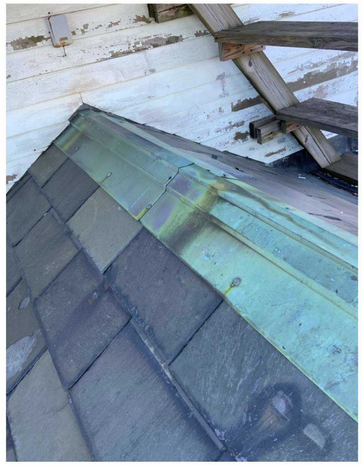
BEYER
BLINDER
BELLE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

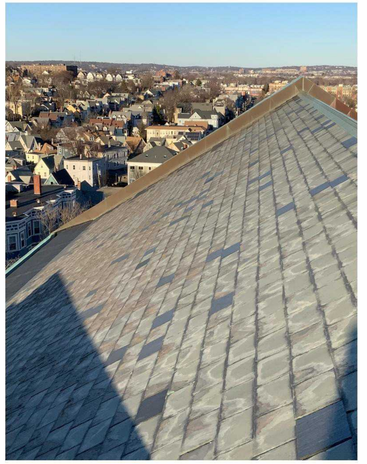

Displaced Clock Face


Close up of Wood Trim and Siding


Close up Copper Flat Seam Roofing

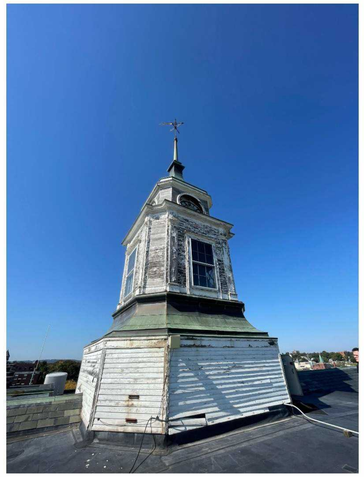

Intersection of Roof and Siding

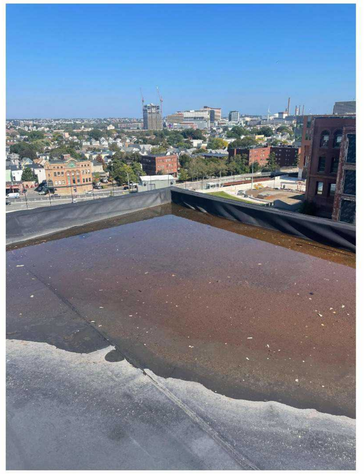

Existing Slate Roof and Brick

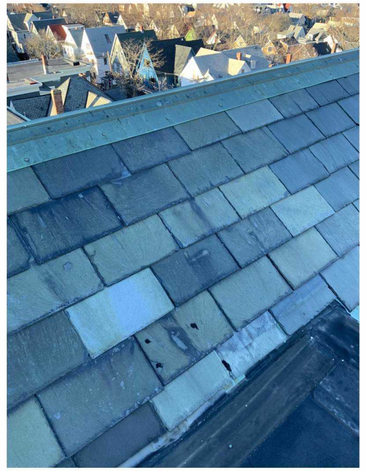

Existing Flaking and Discolored Slate Roof

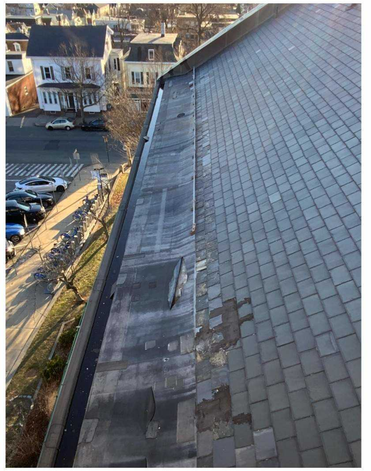

Existing Cupola


Close up of Wood Trim


Cupola and surrounding Roof(s)


EPDM Roof and Clogged Drain


Existing Slate Roof and EPDM


Existing Slate Roof, Torn EPDM and Clogged Gutter

PROPOSED WORK

OVERALL

REPLACE SLATE ROOFING WITH NEW SLATE

REPLACE EPDM ROOFING WITH GREY TPO AND INSTALL NEW SNOW GUARDS

AT CUPOLA:

- REPLACE SIDING AND TRIM WITH PVC SIDING AND TRIM
- REPLACE WINDOWS WITH ALUMINUM CLAD WINDOWS
- RESTORE CLOCK FACES WITH NEW LAMINATED GLASS
- ADD DECORATIVE URNS SHOWN IN 1920s
- RESTORE/ REPLACE COPPER AS NEEDED

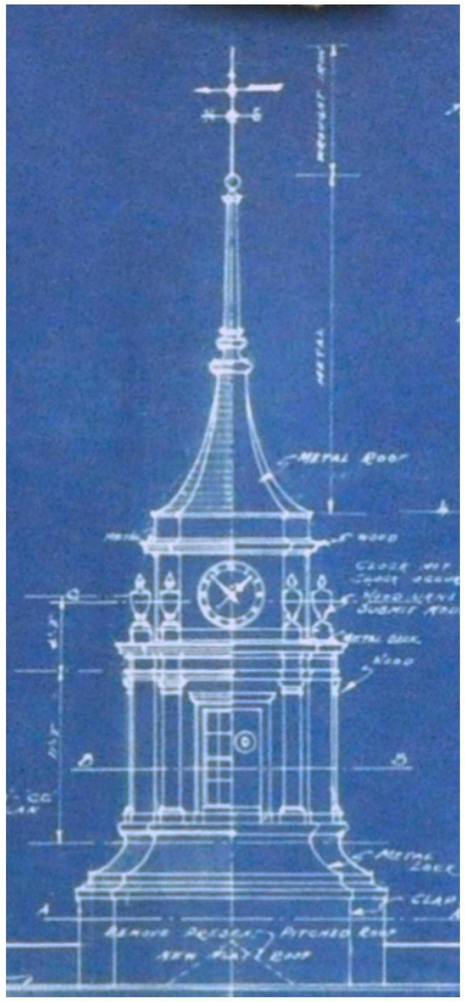
REPLACE EPDM ROOF WITH GREY TPO

REPLACE SLATE ROOF WITH NEW SLATES

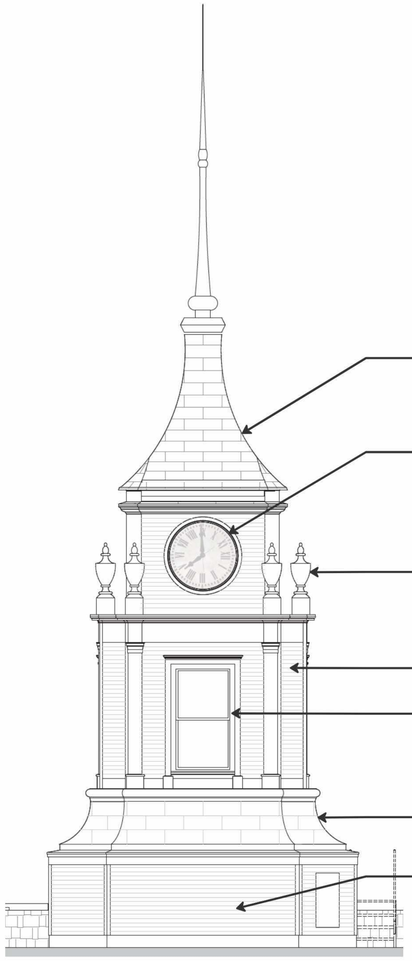
PROPOSED WORK

CUPOLA

Current Elevation



Elevation from 1920s Renovation



REPLACE COPPER ROOFING AND SHEATHING

RESTORE (4) CLOCK FACES

ADD NEW DECORATIVE URNS IN PVC

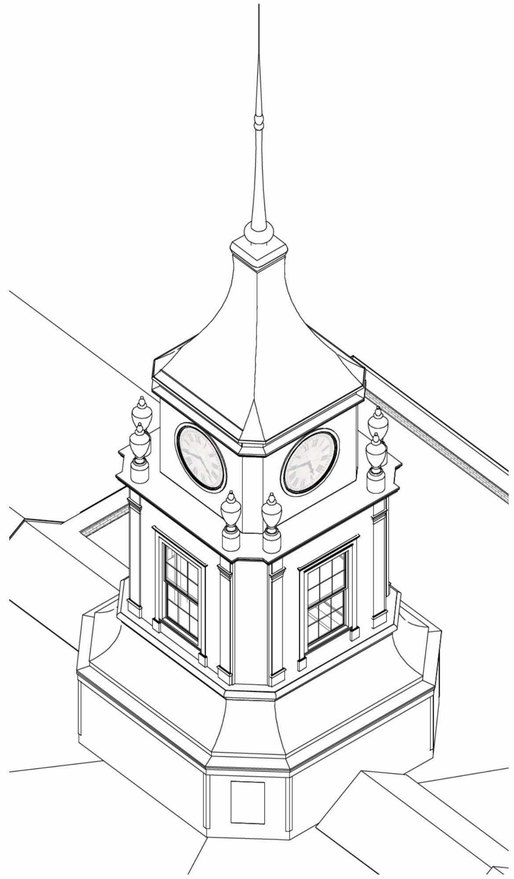
REPLACE SIDING AND TRIM WITH PVC

REPLACE WINDOWS WITH ALUMINUM CLAD WINDOWS

LEAVE EXISTING COPPER ROOFING

REPLACE EXISTING SIDING AND TRIM WITH PVC

Proposed Elevation



Axonometric View

PROPOSED WORK

CUPOLA

IDEAL MATERIAL FOR MILLING AND ROUTING

ATM's thick profile makes it an ideal material for fabrication. Its consistent density offers a superior product for milling and routing operations while maintaining strength.

The beauty and benefits of AZEK to Mill:

- Offered in full 1 1/4" and 1 1/2" thicknesses
- Save time and labor
- Stands up to harsh weather
- Resists stains, scratches and fading
- Quick and easy installation
- Resists mold, mildew and moisture damage

Finish Options

AZEK EXTERIORS AZEK® BEVEL SIDING With PaintPro® Technology

GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

The building structure and outside wall must be built to code, be weather-tight and waterproof, and have proper horizontal flashing and kick-out flashing prior to installing AZEK Bevel Siding. AZEK Bevel Siding will not solely protect against moisture penetration to the building or structure. Refer to your local building codes for wall construction, house wrap waterproofing, flashing and other wall preparations prior to installing AZEK Bevel Siding.

SHEATHING / SUBSTRATE

- ENSURE wall is flat, even and in plane prior to installation. AZEK Bevel Siding will contour to undulation in the substructure
- Minimum 7/16" OSB installed over 16" on-center studs

WEATHER-RESISTANT BARRIER

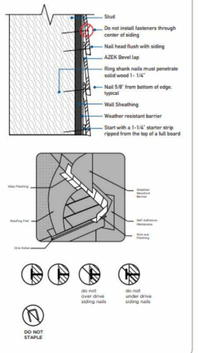
- Install WRB in accordance with the local building code
- For best results, use a drainable WRB

FLASHING

- Install kick-out flashing in accordance with the local building code
- Install all other horizontal flashings in accordance with the local building code

FASTENERS

- Use 0.092" diameter with a minimum 2" length hot-dipped galvanized or stainless-steel ring shank nail
- Starter strips can be installed with 15- or 16-gauge exterior grade finish nails
- Fasteners should be snug or flush; do not over driven

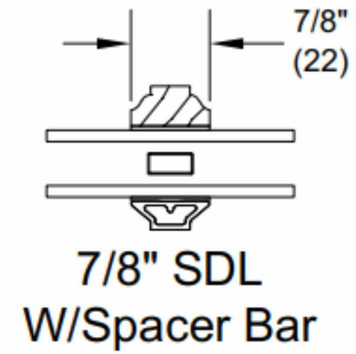


SIZING

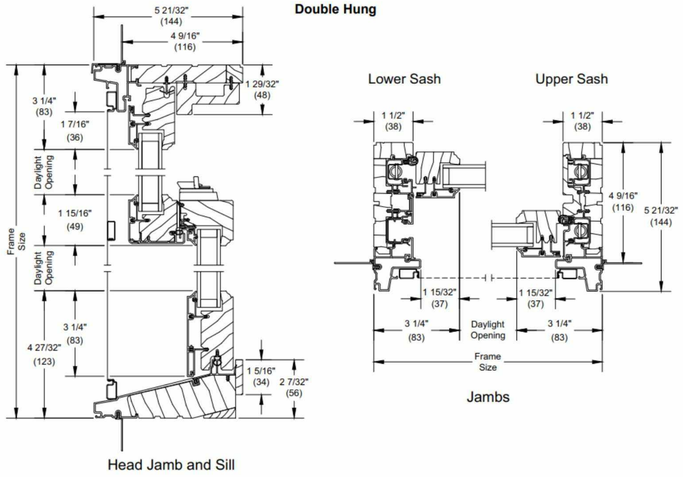
AZEK Bevel Siding with PaintPro Technology

- 5.25" x 7/16" (4" Reveal)
- 12' Lengths
- 25 Boards per Square
- Subtle texture to look like primed cedar

Custom and Standard PVC Material

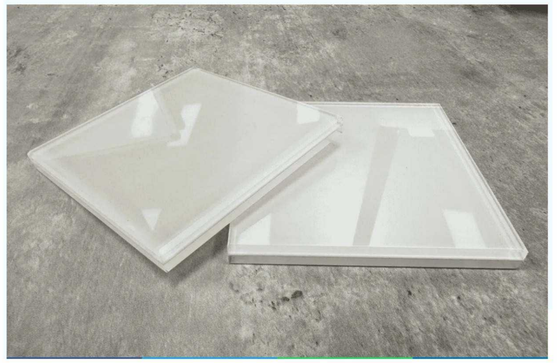


Simulated Divided Lites



Aluminum Clad Windows surrounded by Custom Trim to Match Existing

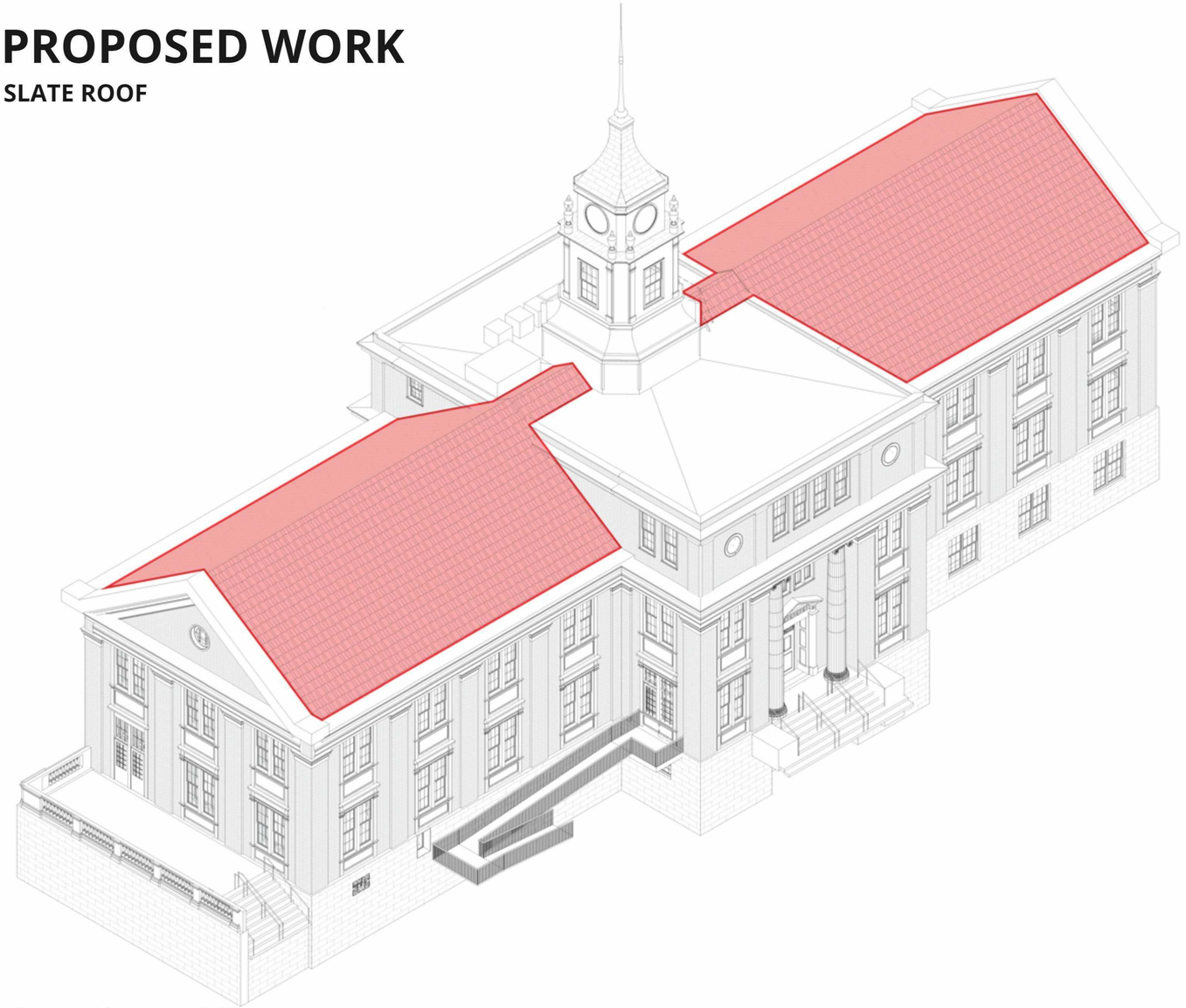
White Translucent Laminated Glass | SDG High Quality LamiGlass Color PVB Series



Laminated Glass with PVB Interlayer at Clock

PROPOSED WORK

SLATE ROOF



Proposed Axonometric View

ALPINE SNOWGUARDS

SUBMITTAL DOCUMENT SET
PP325

PP325 Two or Three Pipe-Style Snow Guard

Available Materials:

- Aluminum with Stainless Steel Base Plate (Aluminum accessories)
- Brass with Stainless Steel Base Plate (Brass accessories)
- Brass with Brass Base Plate (Brass accessories)

Available Finishes:

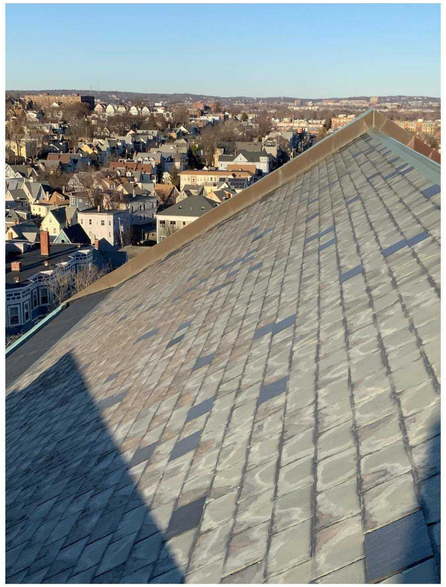
- Mill Finish (Standard)
- RAL Tiger Drylac powder coating options (additional charge)

Features/Advantages:

- Base Plate can be flashed with compatible target patch (optional)
- Base plate available in multiple sizes (see "Base Plate Sizes" tab)
- Bracket measures 6" L x 1 3/8" W x 6 13/16" H overall
- 3 configurations include 2-Pipe, 3-Pipe, 2 Hi-Pipe (Hi-Hole)
- All configurations accept 1" OD Pipe (Tubing) and are compatible with the use of Ice Flags and Ice Screens
- Internal and External Couplings, End Collars and End Caps are available for this system

PP325 Imagery:

Snowguards



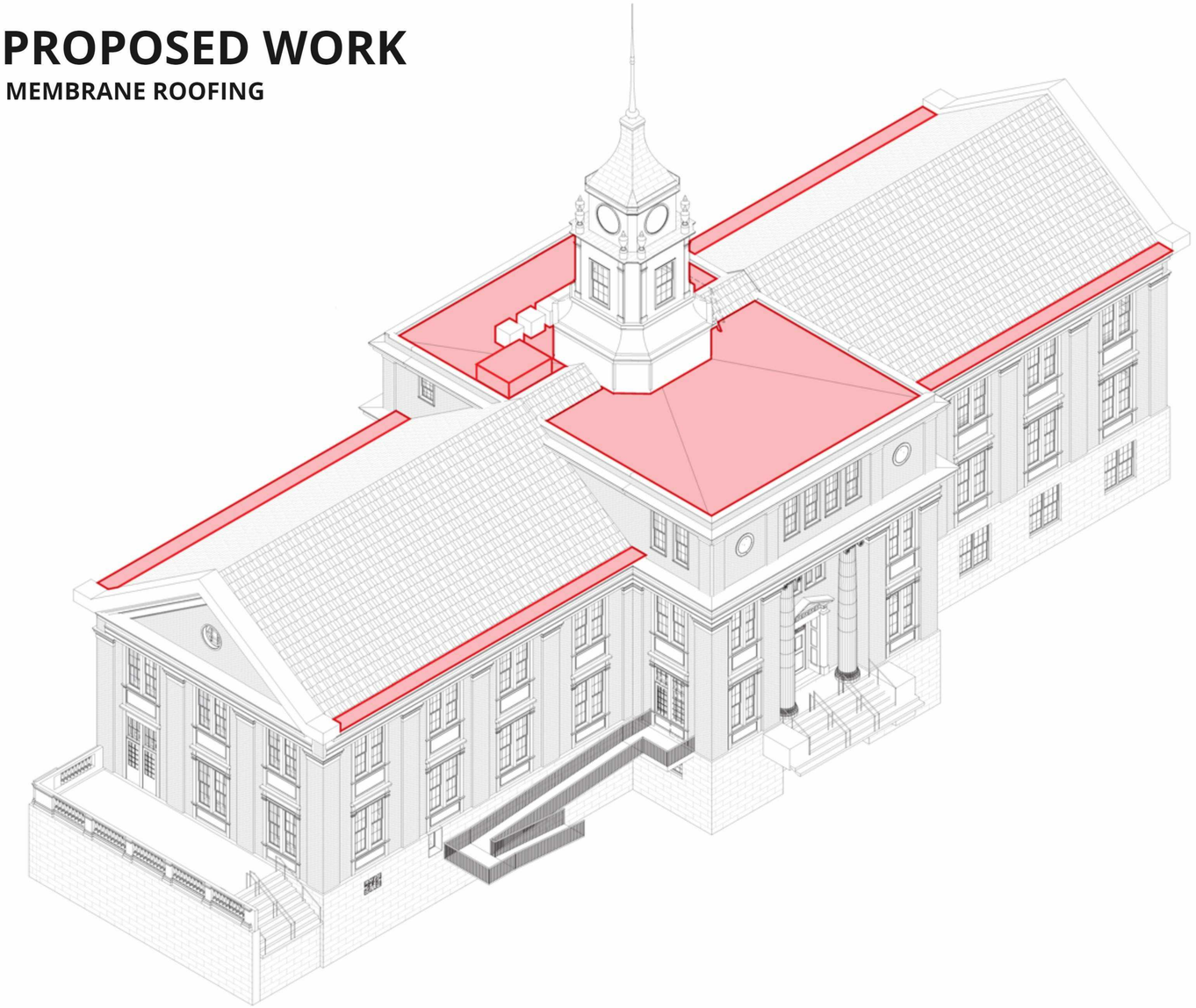
UNFADING BLACK

UNFADING GREEN

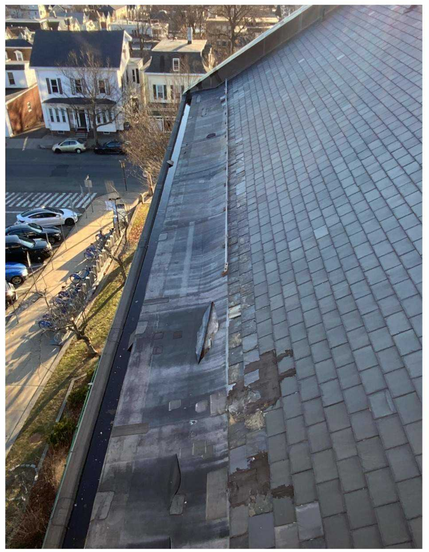
Roof Color Research

PROPOSED WORK

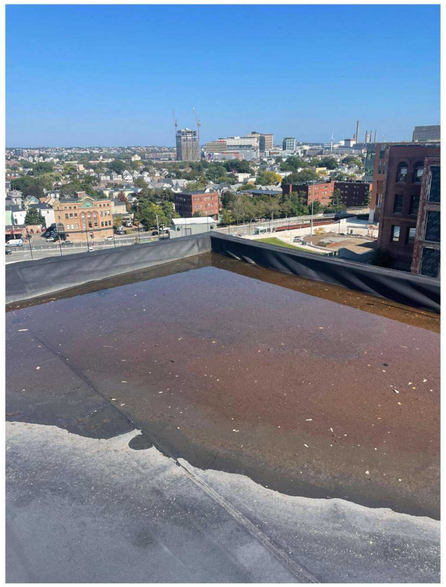
MEMBRANE ROOFING

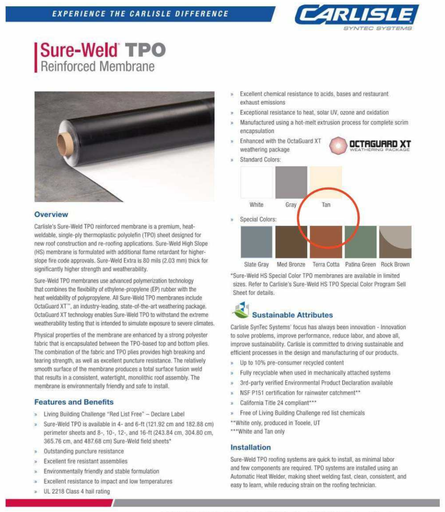


Proposed Axonmetric View



Grey TPO Roofing Membrane





EXPERIENCE THE CARLISLE DIFFERENCE

CARLISLE SYNTEC SYSTEMS

Sure-Weld® TPO
Reinforced Membrane

- Excellent chemical resistance to acids, bases and restaurant exhaust emissions
- Exceptional resistance to heat, solar UV, ozone and oxidation
- Manufactured using a hot-melt extrusion process for complete scrim encapsulation
- Enhanced with the OctaGuard XT weathering package. OCTAGUARD XT WEATHERING PACKAGE
- Standard Colors:

White Gray Tan

- Special Colors:

Slate Gray Med Bronze Terra Cotta Patina Green Rock Brown

*Sure-Weld HS Special Color TPO membranes are available in limited sizes. Refer to Carlisle's Sure-Weld HS TPO Special Color Program Sell Sheet for details.

Overview

Carlisle's Sure-Weld TPO reinforced membrane is a premium, heat-weldable, single-ply thermoplastic polyolefin (TPO) sheet designed for new roof construction and re-roofing applications. Sure-Weld High Slope (HS) membrane is formulated with additional flame retardant for higher-slope fire code approvals. Sure-Weld Extra is 80 mils (2.03 mm) thick for significantly higher strength and weatherability.

Sure-Weld TPO membranes use advanced polymerization technology that combines the flexibility of ethylene-propylene (EP) rubber with the heat weldability of polypropylene. All Sure-Weld TPO membranes include OctaGuard XT™, an industry-leading, state-of-the-art weathering package. OctaGuard XT technology enables Sure-Weld TPO to withstand the extreme weatherability testing that is intended to simulate exposure to severe climates.

Physical properties of the membrane are enhanced by a strong polyester fabric that is encapsulated between the TPO-based top and bottom plies. The combination of the fabric and TPO plies provides high breaking and tearing strength, as well as excellent puncture resistance. The relatively smooth surface of the membrane produces a total surface fusion weld that results in a consistent, watertight, monolithic roof assembly. The membrane is environmentally friendly and safe to install.

Features and Benefits

- Living Building Challenge "Red List Free" – Declare Label
- Sure-Weld TPO is available in 4- and 6-ft (121.92 cm and 182.88 cm) perimeter sheets and 8-, 10-, 12-, and 16-ft (243.84 cm, 304.80 cm, 365.76 cm, and 487.68 cm) Sure-Weld field sheets*
- Outstanding puncture resistance
- Excellent fire resistant assemblies
- Environmentally friendly and stable formulation
- Excellent resistance to impact and low temperatures
- UL 2218 Class 4 hail rating

Sustainable Attributes

Carlisle SynTec Systems' focus has always been innovation - innovation to solve problems, improve performance, reduce labor, and above all, improve sustainability. Carlisle is committed to driving sustainable and efficient processes in the design and manufacturing of our products.

- Up to 10% pre-consumer recycled content
- Fully recyclable when used in mechanically attached systems
- 3rd-party verified Environmental Product Declaration available
- NSF P151 certification for rainwater catchment**
- California Title 24 compliant***
- Free of Living Building Challenge red list chemicals

**White only, produced in Tooele, UT
***White and Tan only

Installation

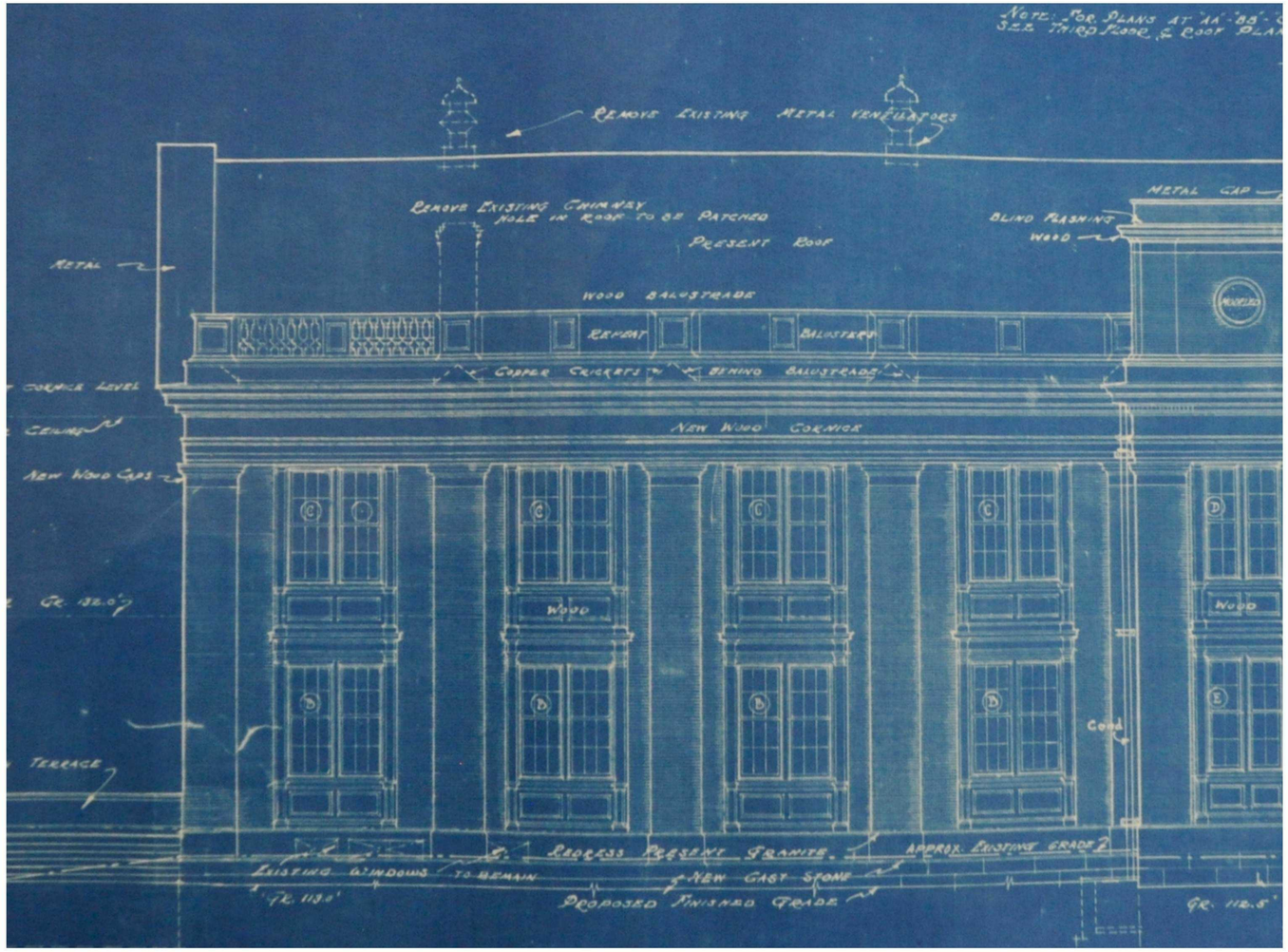
Sure-Weld TPO roofing systems are quick to install, as minimal labor and few components are required. TPO systems are installed using an Automatic Heat Welder, making sheet welding fast, clean, consistent, and easy to learn, while reducing strain on the roofing technician.

800-479-6832 | P.O. Box 7000 | Carlisle, PA 17013 | Fax: 717-245-7053 | www.carlislesyntec.com

FUTURE WORK

BALUSTRADE

Historic Images of Somerville City Hall After 1920s Renovation



Historic Drawing of Somerville City Hall

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System
Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.37
Historic Name:	Somerville City Hall
Common Name:	Somerville High School - Somerville Town Hall
Address:	93 Highland Ave
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	Central Hill;
Local No:	142; 61-F-2;
Year Constructed:	1852
Architectural Style(s):	Colonial Revival;
Architect(s):	Howard, Edward Clock Company; Ritchie, Parsons and Taylor; Sargent, T. M.;
Use(s):	City Hall; Library; Police Station; Public School; Town Hall;
Significance:	Architecture; Community Planning; Education; Politics Government;
Area(s):	SMV.C, SMV.AY
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (03/11/1985); Nat'l Register MRA (09/18/1989); Nat'l Register Individual Property (09/18/1989);
Building Materials:	Roof: Slate; Wall: Brick; Wood;
Demolished	No

LHD - 3/11/85
NRMRA/IND - 9/18/89
(1C)

MHC # 37

OFFICE COPY
DO NOT REMOVE

FORM B - BUILDING

AREA C, AY

FORM NO. ~~142~~ 37

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOS

Ske
in
gec
bet
int
Inc

ation

gs

See Attached Assessor's Map

UTM REFERENCE Z 19 E 327/250 N 4694/670

USGS QUADRANGLE Boston North

SCALE 1:25,000

Town Somerville

Address 93 Highland Avenue

Historic Name Somerville High School / Somerville Town Hall / City Hall

Use: Present institutional/city office

Original educational / institutional

DESCRIPTION

Date 1852 / enlarged & altered 1896, 1902, 1924.

Source Samuels, Somerville Past and Present.

Style Georgian Revival

Architect current facade by Ritchie, Parsons & Taylor
Tim Sargent

Exterior Wall Fabric brick

Outbuildings same parcel as high school and library-owned by City

Major Alterations (with dates) additions and alterations - 1896, 1902, 1924.

Condition good

Moved no Date n/a

Acreage more than one acre

Setting Part of institutional complex of City at Central Hill, on main transportation route.

Recorded by Gretchen G. Schuler

Organization Mass. Historical Commissic

Date September, 1988

P1-Central
USGS-BOSTON
SECT-B

SMV.37

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)

The Somerville City Hall retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association with the development of the civic life of Somerville. It is significant for its importance in the history of Somerville and for its architectural integrity. The Somerville City Hall fulfills Criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places on the local level.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

The present Somerville City Hall is a result of a series of alterations, and adaptive reuse additions made to a building originally constructed on Central Hill as the High School in 1852. That structure in the Greek Revival tradition was a two-story building of pressed brick. The first major enlargement occurred in 1896 when a rear wing was added (the portion projecting towards Highland Avenue). The second addition occurred in 1924 when the entire building, orientation, and size was changed. The new, large north wing restored the symmetrical facade. The gable end pediment of the original building was removed and a third story was added. The entrance was relocated to the original block (where it remains), and Georgian Revival details, including the two colossal Ionic columns set in antis, the broad wood spandrels between first and second story windows, and the clock tower, spire and weathervane, were part of the 1924 rehabilitation.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE Explain the role owners played in local or state history and how the building relates to the development of the community.

The Somerville City Hall rests on historic Central Hill where it is an integral part of the Highland Avenue streetscape and the civic center of the City. Built first as a Greek Revival high school in 1852, the building eventually housed the town offices in 1867 when the Forster Schoolhouse on Sycamore Street, the location of the Town Hall offices, burned. In 1872 the new Latin High School (no longer extant) was built on Central Hill to accommodate the expanding school age population, the Town of Somerville was incorporated as a City and the 1852 High School building became the City Hall. In 1873 a Public Library was opened at the rear of the building in an area vacated by the police who moved to the newly constructed Police Station in Union Square.

The 1896 expansion of the City Hall was in response to the rapid growth of the city government. Plans were drawn by Boston architect, Thomas T.M.Sargent. By this time the entire building was needed for city government. The library had moved to its own building in 1885. The 1924 renovation and enlargement of the City Hall was done by Boston based architects, Ritchie, Parsons and Taylor.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Draper, Martin, Map of Somerville, 1852.
Hopkins, G.M. Atlas of the City of Somerville, 1874.
Samuels, Edward, Somerville: Past and Present, 1897.
Somerville Journal.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community: Somerville	Form No: ~~142~~ 37
Property Name: Somerville City Hall	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

Historical Significance (Con't)

The Somerville City Hall, a building of firsts, the first Somerville High School, the first Somerville City Hall, and the first Somerville Public Library, is an important building in the development of Somerville. The building is the functional and symbolic focus of local government activity for the community.

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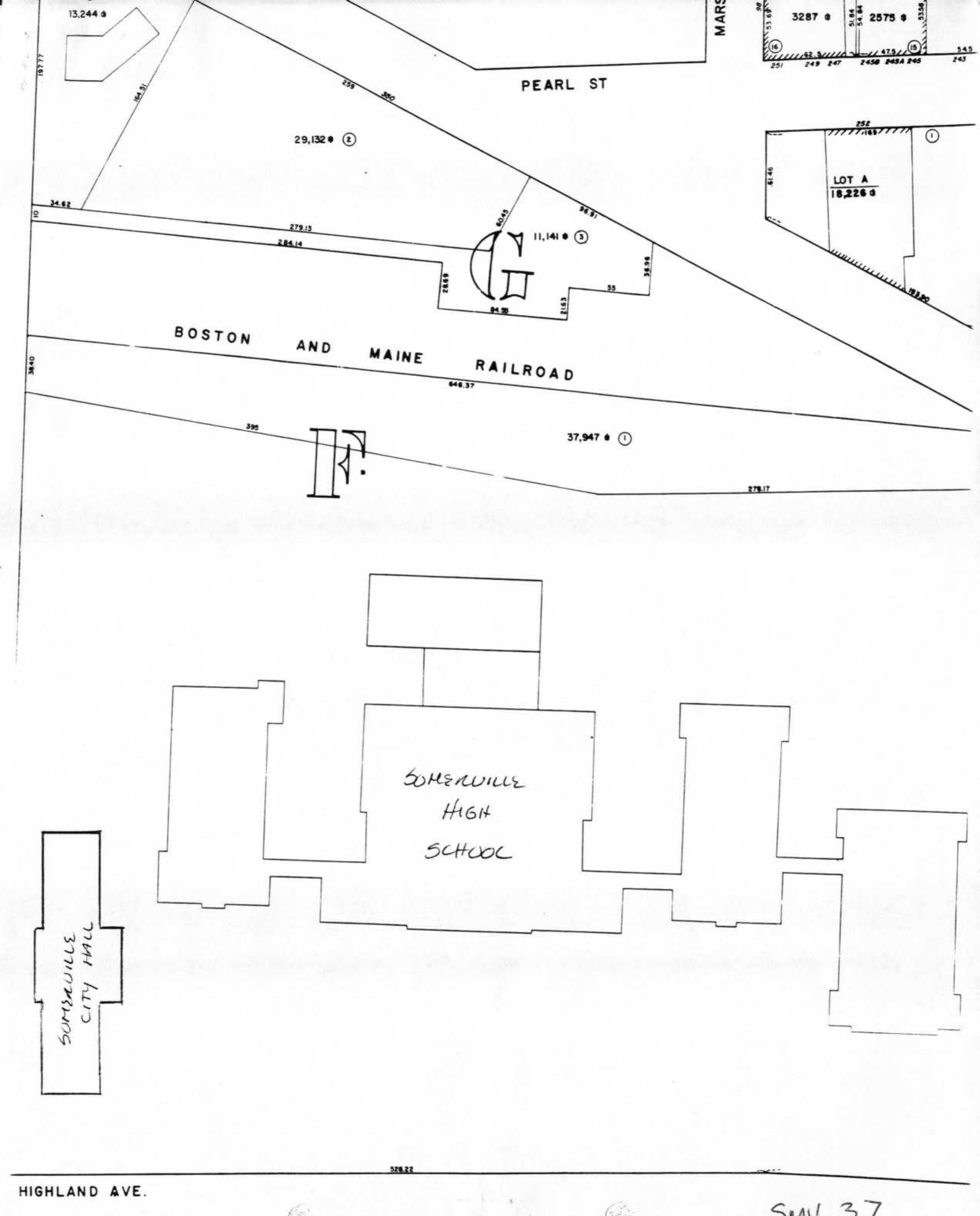
13,244 d
PEARL ST
MARS
3287 d
2575 d
29,132 d (2)
LOT A
18,226 d
11,141 d (3)
G
BOSTON AND MAINE RAILROAD
37,947 d (1)
F
SOMERVILLE HIGH SCHOOL
SOMERVILLE CITY HALL
HIGHLAND AVE.

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FORM B - BUILDING

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

In Area no.	Form no.
C	~~61-F-2~~ 37

wn Somerville

dress 93 Highland Avenue

me City Hall

esent use City Hall

esent owner City of Somerville

scription:

te 1852, enlarged and altered in 1896, 1902 and 1924

Source

yle Vernacular adapation of academi Beaux-Arts classicism, current facade designed by Ritchie,

Architect Parsons and Taylor of Boston (neo-Georgian)

Exterior wall fabric brick

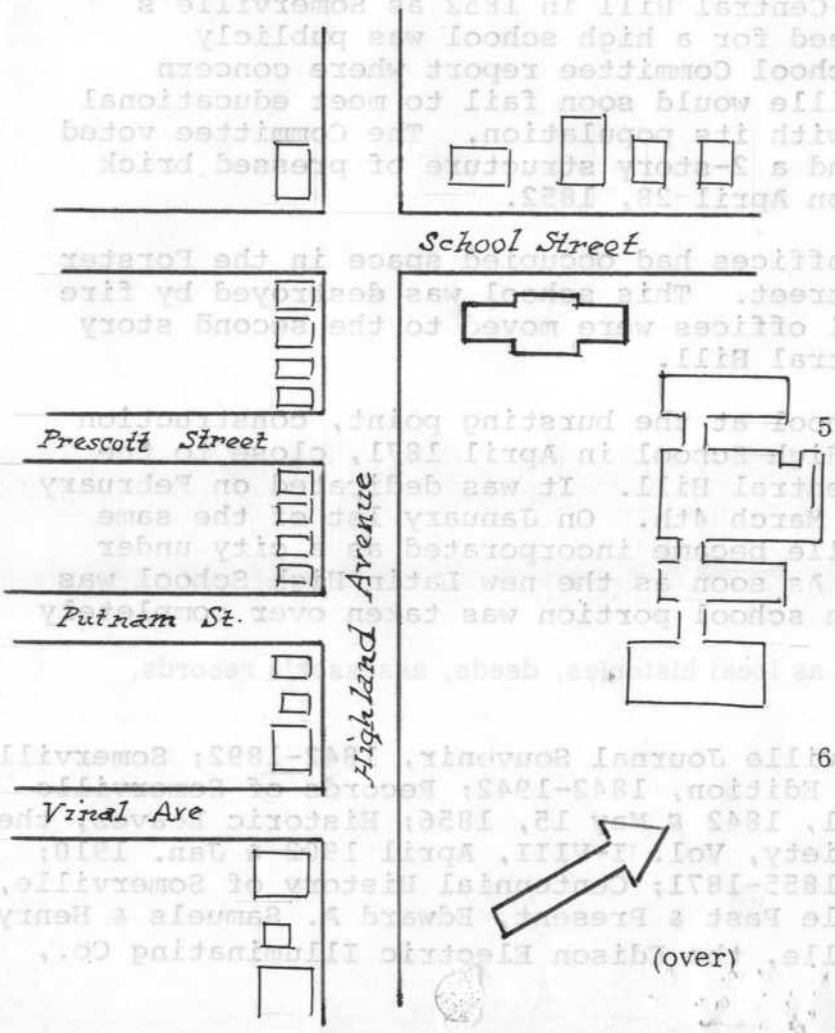
Outbuildings (describe)

Other features

Altered 1896 Date 1902 1924

Moved Date (see accompanying sheet)

4. Map. Draw sketch of building location in relation to nearest cross streets and other buildings. Indicate north.



5. Lot size: N/A

One acre or less ___ Over one acre X

Approximate frontage N/A

Approximate distance of building from street N/A

6. Recorded by M.A. Campbell, K.Tuttman, W.Mulligan, J.Fitzmaurice

Organization Office of Planning & Community Development

Date September 22, 1978

(over)

7. Original owner (if known) City of Somerville

Original use 1st Public High School for City of Somerville

Subsequent uses (if any) and dates City Hall, beginning 1872

8. Themes (check as many as applicable)

Aboriginal		Conservation		Recreation	
Agricultural		Education	✓	Religion	
Architectural	✓	Exploration/ settlement		Science/ invention	
The Arts		Industry		Social/ humanitarian	
Commerce		Military		Transportation	
Communication		Political	✓		
Community development					

9. Historical significance (include explanation of themes checked above)

The Somerville City Hall rests on historic Central Hill where it is an integral part of the Highland Avenue streetscope. (see Area Survey for Highland Avenue)

The present Somerville City Hall is the result of a series of alterations, and adaptive reuse additions made to a building originally constructed on Central Hill in 1852 as Somerville's first high school. The need for a high school was publicly recognized in 1850 in a School Committee report where concern was expressed that Somerville would soon fail to meet educational requirement commensurate with its population. The Committee voted to erect a high school, and a 2-story structure of pressed brick was dedicated and opened on April 28, 1852.

Until 1867, the Town Hall offices had occupied space in the Forster Schoolhouse on Sycamore Street. This school was destroyed by fire in 1866, and the Town Hall offices were moved to the second story of the high school on Central Hill.

With the original high school at the bursting point, construction was begun on a new Latin High School in April 1871, close to the existing high school on Central Hill. It was dedicated on February 27, 1872, and occupied on March 4th. On January 1st of the same year, the town of Somerville became incorporated as a city under Mayor George O. Brastow. As soon as the new Latin High School was in use, the abandoned high school portion was taken over completely

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

Somerville Journal; Somerville Journal Souvenir, 1842-1892; Somerville Journal-Press, Centennial Edition, 1842-1942; Records of Somerville School Committee, March 21, 1842 & May 15, 1856; Historic Leaves, the Somerville Historical Society, Vol. I-VIII, April 1902 & Jan. 1910; Somerville Town Reports, 1855-1871; Centennial History of Somerville, American Legion; Somerville Past & Present, Edward A. Samuels & Henry H. Kimball, 1897; Somerville, the Edison Electric Illuminating Co., 1909

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:	Form No: 61-F-2
Property Name:	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

9. Historical Significance (cont.)

for use as the City Hall. Offices and committee rooms were provided for the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and for the common council on the second floor. On the first floor were small rooms for the City Clerk, City Treasurer and City Engineer. First floor space was also provided for the Assessors and the Police Court. The Mayor had no private office space until 1881, when Mayor Cummings placed a desk and chair in the committee room adjoining the Aldermen's chamber.

A Public Library was opened at the rear of the City Hall on May 1, 1873. It was enlarged in 1875 into part of the area vacated by the Police Court, which had been moved to the new Police Station on Bow Street in Union Square. In the summer of 1885, the Public Library was moved to a new building constructed between the Latin High School and City Hall. At this time also, a major reorganization took place in the arrangement of the city offices.

Over the next few years, the rapid expansion of the city government created an urgent need for more space in City Hall. Plans were solicited from a number of architects, but the costs of constructing a new building were prohibitive. In 1896, the problem was temporarily solved by renovating and enlarging the existing structure. Plans were prepared by the Boston architect, Thomas T. M. Sargent, from sketches made by the City Treasurer, John F. Cole. The addition took the form of a rear wing placed perpendicular to the existing structure at its northern end. It was executed in the same style: plain brick walls with 2-story engaged pilasters between each set of upper and lower windows. To relieve the plainness of the structure, made more evident by its increased size, a bracketed iron cornice was added. In 1902, a balustraded verandah and porch supported by Doric columns were constructed at the new main entrance to the building at the southern end facing Highland Avenue. This conformed in style to the porch at the juncture of the old and new wings, constructed in 1896.

The second major renovation and enlargement of City Hall was executed in 1924 by the Boston architects, Ritchie, Parsons and Taylor. A second wing was added to the northern end of the original structure identical to the southern wing, restoring the symmetrical appearance of the facade. The pediment was removed from the original block, and a third story was added to it, capped by a clock tower, spire and weathervane. Both existing porches were removed, and the entrance was changed again to the eastern end of the original perpendicular block additions, placed behind two colossal Ionic columns set in antis. All of the facade windows were connected vertically by broad wooden spandrels. Finally, a balustrade (now removed), was added above the cornice on both wings.

Staple to Inventory form at bottom

SMV.37

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Community:	Form No: 61 F-2
Property Name:	

Indicate each item on inventory form which is being continued below.

9. Historical Significance (cont.)

The city clock was made by the E. Howard Clock Company, originally of Medford, and first served as a town clock in the old First Unitarian Church tower.

The church which stood on Central Hill, opposite the head of Putnam Street, was removed to make room for the English High School building. Thus, the clock was taken apart and stored for a generation before being given to the Somerville Historical Society, who in turn reestablished its position of prominence in the newly constructed City Hall tower.

Somerville City Hall is the functional and symbolic focus of local government activity for the community. There are many firsts associated with the building, to include: the first City Hall, the first High School, the first Public Library in Somerville.

The building has been a part of the line of many important people who have served their community well, both within and without Somerville. In way of example, the Honorable Edward (Captain) Glines was first introduced to City Hall when it was the high school. He returned later as president of the Community Council and member of the School Committee. In later years after serving in the House of Representatives and State Senate, he returned as Mayor. He had been appointed Commissioner of Subsistance by President William McKinley during the Spanish-American War.

The development and growth of City Hall in many ways parallels the development of Somerville, and its significance to the community is one that is alive and continuing today.

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town: Somerville Property Address: 83 Highland Ave.

Area(s): SMV Form No.: 37