



City of Somerville  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION**  
City Hall 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**

**PROPERTY ADDRESS:** 148 Morrison Avenue  
**PERMIT NUMBER:** HP25-000001  
**OWNER:** M. Leighton Collis & Catherine Collis  
**OWNER ADDRESS:** 5 Galen Avenue, Nantucket, MA 02554  
**APPLICANT:** M. Leighton Collis  
**APPLICANT ADDRESS:** 5 Galen Avenue, Nantucket, MA 02554  
**DECISION:** **Conditional** Certificate of Appropriateness  
**DECISION ISSUED:** April 1st, 2025

This decision summarizes the findings made by the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) regarding the **Local Historic District property at 148 Morrison Avenue.**

**SCOPE OF WORK**

- Alterations to the existing rowhouse, including:
  - Replacement of windows and doors
  - Replacement of gutters
  - Replacement of asphalt shingles on roof and restoration of roofline
- Demolition of existing rear addition and construction of new rear addition
- Construction of new backyard cottage
- Changes to landscape features.

**DETERMINATION**

Under the Somerville Historic Districts Ordinance (HDO) proposed alterations of Local Historic District (LHD) properties must conform to specific criteria set out in the *Design Guidelines*.

In the instance of 148 Morrison Avenue, the proposal, relative to the replacement of windows and doors, meets the following criteria set out in Design Guideline Section C, Windows and Doors:

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.*

Relative to the replacement of gutters and asphalt shingles, and the restoration of the roofline, the proposal meets the following criteria set out in Design Guidelines Section B, Roofs, which reads as follows:

1. *Preserve the integrity of the original or later important roof shape.*

3. *Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material that matches the old in composition, color, size, shape, texture and installation detail.*
4. *Preserve the architectural features that give the roof its distinctive character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers and brackets. Downspouts should be inconspicuously located and should be painted to match the color of the siding.*

Relative to the rear addition and Backyard Cottage, the proposal meets the following criteria set out in Design Guidelines Section E, New additions, which read as follows:

1. *New additions should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible in size, scale, material and character of the property and its environment. Where possible, new additions should be confined to the rear of the house.*
2. *It is not the intent of these guidelines to limit new additions to faithful copies of earlier buildings. New designs may also evoke, without copying, the architecture of the property to which they are being added, through careful attention to height, bulk, materials, window size, and type and location, and detail. A building should not, however, be altered to an appearance that predates its construction.*
3. *New additions or alterations should be done in a way that, if they were to be removed in the future, the basic form and integrity of the historic property would remain intact.*

Lastly, relative to the proposed fencing and stonewall, the proposal meets the following criteria set out in Design Guidelines Section H, Landscape Features and Paving, which read as follows:

1. *The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*
2. *It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.*
3. *The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.*
4. *The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.*

The Applicant has provided a plan set with the materials specified, which is attached to this decision.

Due to the description of the work, the images submitted by the Applicant, and the provisions set forth in the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) and related Design Guidelines, the HPC voted 5-0 to grant a **Conditional Certificate of Appropriateness**.

The Conditions attached to this Certificate are as follows and must be followed by the Applicant/Owner:

#### CONDITIONS

1. The Applicant/Owner shall file the Certificate with the Inspection Services Department (ISD) by uploading it to the Citizenserve permitting portal with their application for a 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.
4. The roofing material shall be architectural asphalt shingles or synthetic slate.
5. Perimeter fence along Morrison Avenue and Clifton Street shall be vertical cedar picket fence with a cedar cap rail.
6. Privacy fence between 148 Morrison Avenue and 146 Morrison Avenue shall be vertical cedar picket fence.
7. The condensers shall be placed on the flat roof portion of the connector seam between the existing structure and the rear addition; if that turns out to be unfeasible, the Applicant will seek approval from the Commission for an alternate location.
8. The wing wall along the Clifton Street-side of the principal structure shall be brick veneer.
9. Proposal shall be constructed in accordance with attached plans and material specifications.
10. Applicant shall submit an updated plan set and materials specification reflecting any changes made by the HPC or clarifications required by the same.
11. A written narrative or descriptive checklist identifying the completion or compliance with permit conditions must be submitted to the Inspectional Services Department with a copy to preservation Planning at least fifteen (15) business days in advance of a request for a final inspection.
12. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning at [historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov) a minimum of fifteen (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.

Contact shall be made at the following email address ONLY:

[historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov)

The Applicant must provide before and after photos of the project area in the email as .JPG attachments. The attachments cannot be embedded in the body of an email.

Issued on behalf of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC):

Eric Parkes, *Chair*  
Dick Bauer  
Ryan Falvey

Denise Price  
DJ Chagnon, *Alt.*