



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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

**STEP 2: DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED
STAFF REPORT**

Site: 10 Sargent Avenue

Case: HP25-000056

Applicant: Law Office of Michael LaRosa LLC

Owner: Patrick and Kayla Canty

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks to demolish a principal structure constructed a minimum of 75 years ago.*

HPC Meeting Date: September 16, 2025



Top: *Front elevation*

Bottom, left: *Rear elevation* **Bottom, middle:** *Left elevation* **Bottom, right:** *Right elevation*



The purpose of a staff report is to provide the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) with additional information and professional assessments regarding properties that are proposed for demolition. These assessments are based on the criteria allowed for consideration by the HPC in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (DRO). A Staff Report is not a determination/decision, nor does it constitute authorization in any form.

I. SUMMARY OF SEPTEMBER 16 2025 MEETING

At their regular public meeting on September 16, 2025, the HPC declared the building at 10 Sargent Avenue to be “Historically Significant”. Due to this determination, 10 Sargent Avenue has now moved to the second step in the demolition review process, which calls for the HPC to determine whether or not the building should be “Preferably Preserved”. A determination of “preferably preserved” does not permanently halt demolition of a building.

II. BUILDINGS UNDER CONSIDERATION

- a. Location: This building is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site sometime between 1974-1884.
- b. Design: The building is a two and a half story front gable, wood-framed Italianate house presenting a steeply pitched roof and deep eave throughout. The left side of the main massing extends toward the rear of the lot forming a rear addition whose right elevation becomes subservient to the rest of the main massing.



III. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PPZ Staff has not uncovered any additional information in the intervening weeks since the Historic Significance vote.

To see the historic maps and research regarding the building at 10 Sargent Ave and a general historic of the area, see the September 16, 2025 staff report on Historic Significance, which has also been attached to this report.

IV. DETERMINATION

The HPC must determine one of the following for the building at 10 Sargent Avenue:

- a. That the building is Preferably Preserved.
- b. That the building is not Preferably Preserved.
- c. That the building is not Preferably Preserved *with Conditions*.

See the following section V “findings” for guidance.

V. FINDINGS

The HPC needs to make a determination of whether or not the building at ***10 Sargent Avenue*** is to be preferably preserved and adopt findings.

a. Preferably Preserved

For a determination of **preferably preserved**, the HPC must make the following finding:

- *That the demolition of the building at 10 Sargent Avenue would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City.*

If the HPC makes the above findings, the Commission must state their reasons why they take their position.

b. Not Preferably Preserved

If the HPC makes the above finding, the Commission must state their reasons why they take their position.

c. Not Preferably Preserved with Conditions

For a determination of **NOT preferably preserved with Conditions**, the HPC must make the following findings:

- *That the building at 10 Sargent Avenue does not meet any of the criteria to be “preferably preserved”. The HPC may add any or all of the following conditions to this determination:*
 1. *Photographic documentation of the building to be demolished;*
 2. *Architectural renderings of the building to be demolished;*
 3. *Identification of materials for salvage material; and/or,*
 4. *A plan for installation of historic or interpretive signage at or near the site.*

If the HPC makes the above finding, the HPC must state their reasons why they take this position.

VI. VOTE

When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the building at 10 Sargent Avenue is or is not “preferably preserved”.



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STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 10 Sargent Avenue

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Top: Front elevation

Bottom, left: Rear elevation

Bottom, middle: Left elevation

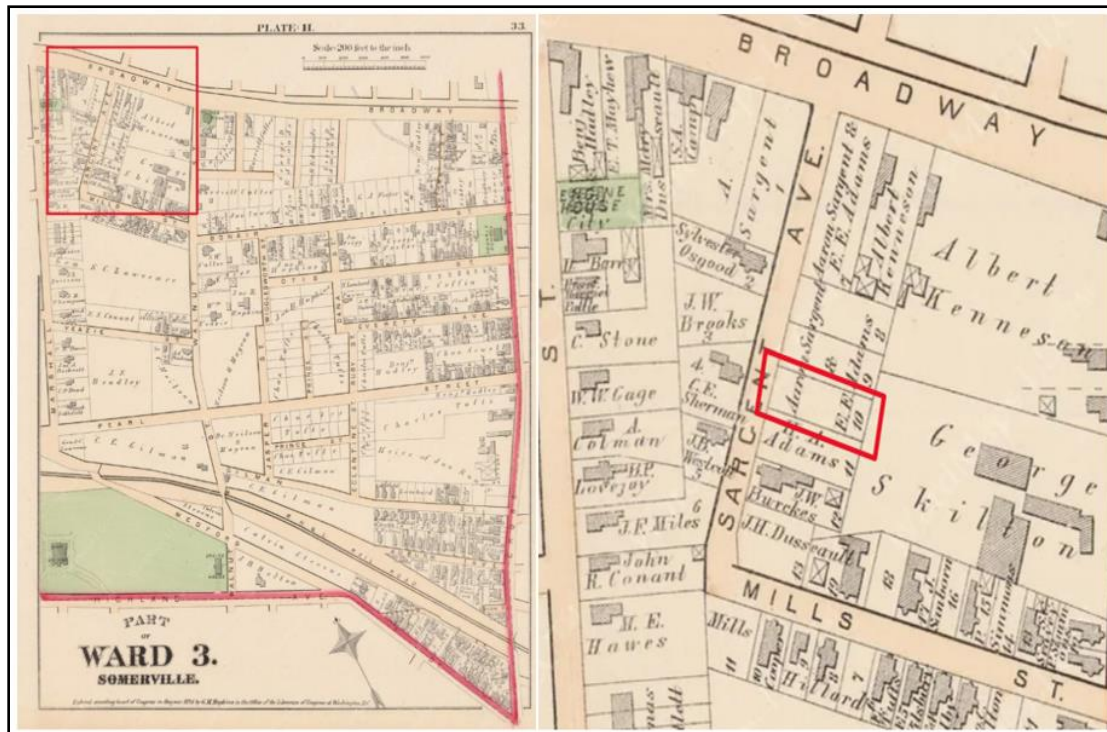
Bottom, right: Right elevation



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I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Historical Context: 10 Sargent Avenue (10 Sargent) is a two and a half story Italianate house located in the Winter Hill neighborhood. With minimal exceptions, both sides of Sargent Street are dominated by two-and-a-half story, gable-fronted Italianate residential buildings.

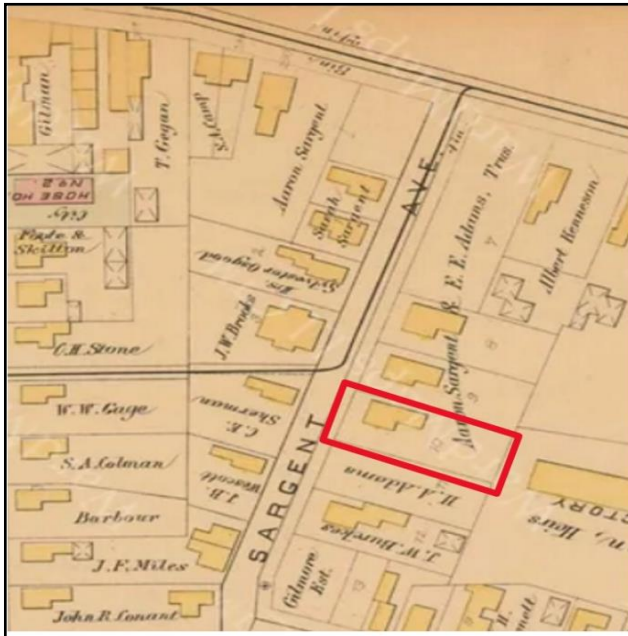


1874 Hopkins Map

Winter Hill is one of the first named neighborhoods of Somerville having its major roadway (Broadway, formerly Winter Hill Road) established in the 1630's. This main roadway was crossed by five (5), 17th century crossways (Walnut, School, Central, Lowell, and Cedar Streets) allowing for the establishment of an early Charlestown neighborhood settlement. Post its 1842 separation from Charlestown, this area of Somerville experienced rapid residential development due to the arrival of a horse car line that connected Winter Hill, Charlestown and Boston in the late 1850's. Sargent Ave was first mentioned in city directories in 1871/2 and platted on the first available city maps in 1874.

Due to the financial challenges led by Civil War (1861-1865), residential development stagnated. Developers did not have the financial power to build homes and were only able to plat the subdivisions. The financial instability of the time made for development in the area to really take hold starting in the 1880s and onwards. After the Civil War the cost of residential buildings was directly impacted by industrialization, making location a key factor of development. The increase of transit systems allowed wealthier workers to move further from congested and noisy industrial areas, and caused the land value closer to the industrial sites to become cheaper.

Winter Hill, east of Marshall Street, was developed for working class housing due to its proximity to industrial areas. Winter Hill west of Marshall Street (on the top of the hill) had a better location in terms of views to Boston and a topographical separation from the industrial part of the neighborhood. This western portion of Winter Hill shows a larger, grander housing style purpose and spec-built for salesmen and businessmen from Boston, Charlestown and Somerville.



1884 Hopkins Map

The 1874 Hopkins map above shows 10 Sargent owned by Aaron Sargent and E. E. Adams ¹(it is unclear what the business/legal relationship was between these two individuals, although Aaron Sargent was eventually married to Maria Adams, there was no definitive evidence found that suggested the two were related). Aaron Sargent was Somerville's first City Treasurer and is the likely namesake of the street. Though he owned 10 Sargent and the three left-abutting parcels, records show that he lived most of his years on Broadway. Sargent Ave was platted in the early 1870s and within the next decade the 1884 Hopkins Map shows the residential development . here was underway.

Through the information found in the Somerville directories there are various residents who lived or boarded at 10 Sargent Ave between its construction until 1909, showing that this property was a rental property built for investment purposes by the owners.

As seen between the 1874 and 1884 Hopkins maps, the abutting parcels, also owned by Aaron Sargent and E. E Adams, follow similar development patterns. It is likely that these three structures were built and developed at the same time, based on their common ownership and historic maps.

While Aaron Sargent never lived on Sargent Ave, he was an active participant in Somerville's local government, and held various positions such as School Board Member, Town Auditor, Water Board member, and finance committee member. His obituary from 1913 states that he spearheaded the movement to enact a city charter and was appointed the first city treasurer of Somerville.



Aaron Sargent's Obituary

He was married to Maria Adams the year he moved to Somerville. He took an active interest in town affairs, being on the School Board from 1858 to 1862; town auditor from 1860 to 1862 and again from 1868 to 1871; on the town's water board from 1858 to 1871 and on the finance committee from 1868 to 1871.

He was one of the leaders in the agitation for a city charter which went into effect in 1872. He treasured the quill with which the charter was signed by the Governor and which was presented him by Gen Chas. H. Taylor, who was then Governor's secretary.

Being thoroughly acquainted with the financial affairs of the town he was at once elected city treasurer. He continued in the office by successive elections until 1881, when he resigned. He was commissioner of the sinking funds from 1876 to 1888, also treasurer of Woodlawn Cemetery for several years, retiring about 12 years ago.

The table below shows the tenants who lived at 10 Sargent between its first appearance on city maps until 1950. The people who boarded this house held working class jobs, and in this period, boarding was a more

¹ In the 1874 Hopkins Map A. Sargent and E. E Adams also jointly owned three abutting properties to the left, numbered 9, 8, and 7 Sargent.

affordable option than renting for those who had working class wages, plus boarding often included meals and housekeeping services. The location of Sargent Avenue close to the railroad and growing industrial uses were factors that influenced creating houses for the working-class in Somerville.

Tenant Log:

Name	Year(s) of Residency	Occupation	Relationship	Residency Type
Aaron Sargent	N/A	1 st City of Somerville Treasurer		Co-Owner – Lived at 290 Broadway
E. E Adams	N/A	Unknown	Unknown	Co-Owner with Aaron Sargent
James Fowle	1884 -1888	Travelling Agent		Boards
Frank Fuller	1887-unknown	Carpenter		Boards
John Fuller	1887-unknown	Carpenter		Boards
Samuel Learned	1887-unknown	Printer		Boards
Sargent Adams Trust	1895	N/A		Owner per deed
Harry Hardi	1899-1990	Carpenter		Boards
Nellie Tucker	1899-1990	Unknown		Boards
John Barker	1901-1904	Railway Mail Clerk		Boards
Edward Kelley	1899-1909	Agent 63 Court		Boards
Charles Stone	1905-1909	Salesman		Boards
Norman Hudson	1949-1955	N/A		N/A

The below maps provide visual reference to the small but steady changes that the neighborhood faced in the following 30 years. The one significant addition visible in these maps for 10 Sargent Ave appears on the 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map. On this map a blue colored building is shown at the rear of the lot. On these Sanborn maps a blue colored building is indicative of stone, concrete, or cinder block construction. These types of buildings were built all over Somerville during the first 30-40 years of the 20th century on residential properties. Such buildings were typically used as automobile garages, as was the case at 10 Sargent Street. The “A” on the Sanborn map refers to an “Automobile House”. The appearance of these garages throughout the City points to residents’ growing capacity to purchase something that was considered a luxury item at the time...and to Somerville becoming a much more auto-centric community.



1884 Hopkins Map



1900 Sanborn Map



1925 Sanborn



Top Left: 1884 Hopkins Map, close-up of 10 Sargent Ave

The 1884 Map is the first time the structure is shown. It is a plain square building.

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Middle: 1900 Sanborn Map, close-up of 10 Sargent Ave

No changes shown on the plot, though there are more similar footprints of buildings nearby.

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Top Right: 1925 Sanborn Map, close-up of 10 Sargent Ave

Addition of a hollow concrete cement block structure in the back.

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Bottom: Near-map satellite image (April 2025) of current condition of 10 Sargent Ave.

II. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Please see the section immediately below which discusses location, design, materials, and any alterations as the same information would be written here, just in longer form.

The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.

1. 10 Sargent Avenue

The period of relevance for the house starts c.1874

- a. Location: This structure is in its original location. The building was constructed on-site sometime between 1874-1884.
- b. Design: The building is a two and a half story front gable, wood-framed Italianate house presenting a steeply pitched roof and deep eave throughout. The left side of the main massing extends toward the rear of the lot forming a rear addition whose right elevation becomes subservient to the rest of the main massing.
 - Front Elevation
 - Three bays wide with left side entry hall; bay symmetry remains intact

- 1-over-1 double-hung windows throughout, including under gable peak
- Arched window casing under gable peak
- Five steps leading to covered landing and front entry door
- Right Elevation
 - two bays deep with 1-over- double hung windows
- Left Elevation
 - Originally two bays deep; later windows interspersed; bay symmetry varies
 - Three standard 1 over 1 windows, one single-pane window, and one smaller one-over-one window
- Rear Elevation
 - Varied window sizes and positioning
 - Rear door and egress stairs
 - Bay symmetry varies
- c. Materials:
 - Foundation: Concrete (possibly parged over brick)
 - Windows: Likely aluminum
 - Entry door:
 - Siding: Aluminum
 - Trim: Wood & aluminum
 - Steps: Concrete-topped brick with metal railings
 - Roof: Asphalt shingles
 - Chimney: Brick
- d. Alterations: Modern replacement of doors and windows. Eave brackets likely removed; original door hood likely removed/ entry canopy is late 20th century; front steps and railings; foundation likely parged brick or re-poured as cement; large windows added to right elevation foundation; deck added to rear addition.

Evaluation of Integrity of 10 Sargent Ave: Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff's position that the building retains most of the integrity of its original form. Alterations have occurred to this structure which obscure some original details; however, the original massing, scale and key Italianate architectural details such as the deep eave, steeply-pitched roof, and single arched window under the gable peak remain intact. 10 Sargent Street is one of several Italianate Victorian period homes of similar style along both sides of Sargent Street. Other Italianate style Victorian period homes along this street present some additional architectural details that reflect the overarching tastes of the time and show that some elements of the Italianate style are regularly reflected in working class housing.

III. FINDINGS

For a Determination of Significance, subject building must be found either (i) importantly associated with people, events, or history and/or (ii) historically or architecturally significant. The Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) must make these findings. The portions of the Demolition Review Ordinance (DRO) related to these findings are included below:

A. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

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.

Residential Structure

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the building at 10 Sargent Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the building at 10 Sargent Avenue does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “a”.

B. HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, 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.

Residential Structure

1. The HPC must make a finding as to whether or not the building at 10 Sargent Avenue meets any of the criteria stated above.
2. The HPC must specifically state why the building at 10 Sargent Avenue does or does not meet the threshold for historic significance under finding “b”.

If the HPC makes the above finding, the HPC must state their reasons why they take this position.

IV. VOTE

1. When bringing the matter to a vote, the HPC must include the reasons why the building at 10 Sargent Avenue is or is not “historically significant”.