



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

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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

Site: 396-398 Broadway

Case: HP25-000093

Applicant: Jason Tribandis

Owner: Daniel Bowles (on behalf of 396-398 Broadway Condominium Trust)

Legal Ad: *The Applicant seeks a Certificate of Appropriateness to alter an LHD property by replacing existing wooden gutters with aluminum gutters*

HPC Meeting Date: December 2, 2025



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 Second Empire house known as the Downer-Cutler Double House. This property is located in the Winter Hill neighborhood.

A full description of the property is provided in the attached Form B survey, conducted by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Proposal: The applicant proposes the following:

- Full gutter replacement of existing wooden gutters with seamless 5" K-Style gray aluminum gutters.



Figure 1 - 396-398 Broadway front facade with line marking existing gutter

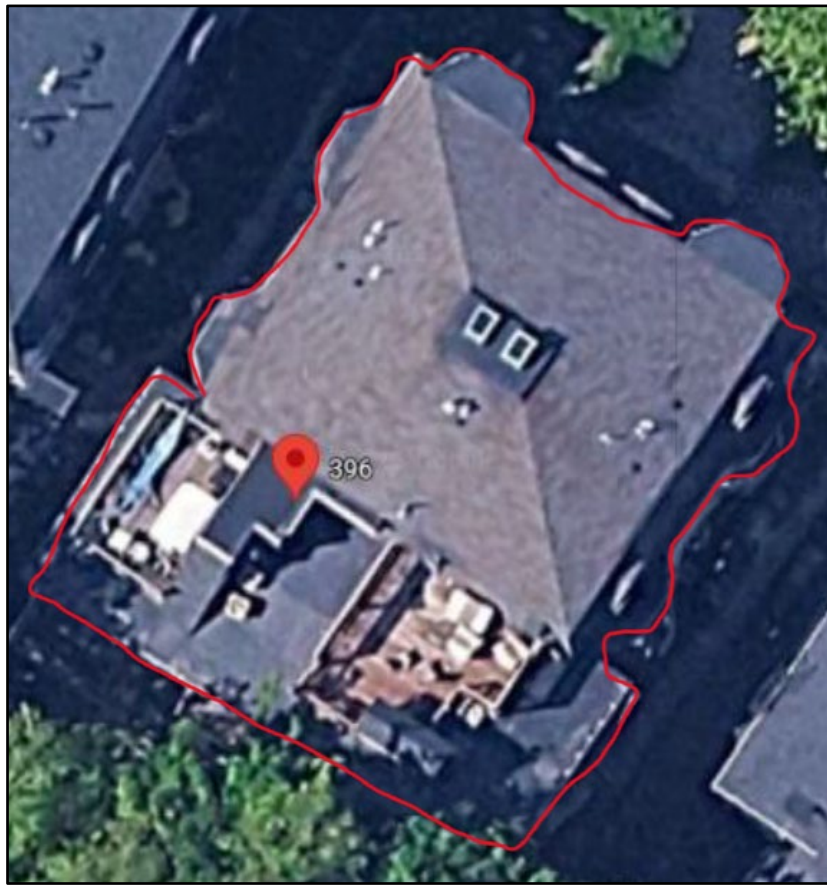


Figure 2 - Aerial view of 396-398 Broadway, with red line marking gutter system



Figure 3 - Left view of locus showing some of the gutters and downspouts visible to street.

II. FINDINGS

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

A. Replacement of gutters

The applicable Somerville LHD Design Guideline is ***B. “Roofs”***

Preservation Planning Assessment:

The existing gutters are integral architectural parts of the details at the edges of the cornices. The gutters seamlessly complement and blend in with the overall Second Empire home design. The relevant portions of the Design Guidelines address the treatment of gutters and downspouts in Section II, B. Roofs, item 4:

SECTION II, B. Roofs, items 4 read as follows:

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.*

The applicant is proposing to replace existing wooden gutters with K-style metal gutters. The applicant explained within the narrative that current gutters are rotten, and several areas have completely decayed to the point that there are holes and weeds growing between the joints.

As mentioned above, the proposed material is 5” K-style gray aluminum gutters, which the applicant explained that the profile and color of the original system will be matched to ensure that new gutters do not disturb the building’s historical character.

If the HPC votes to approve the replacement, recommended conditions appear below

If the HPC votes to deny the replacement, they may then vote to approve repair and restoration of gutters with conditions added.

HPC Determination:

- The HPC must determine if, based on a review of the documentation presented, the proposed project complies with the Design Guidelines.
- The HPC must structure their motion to include their own specific findings on the proposed project.

III. FINDINGS & VOTE

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

IV. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

IF the HPC approves replacement gutters for this property, Preservation Planning recommends the following conditions be attached to any Certificate of Appropriateness that the HPC might grant for this project:

1. The Applicant shall obtain all necessary permits for this project through the Inspectional Services Department (ISD). The Applicant must upload a copy of this Certificate to their BUILDING PERMIT application and obtain any necessary division/departments signoffs.
2. This Certificate is for the above-described work only. Any changes to this proposal shall first be submitted to Preservation Planning at historic@somervillema.gov for review and approval PRIOR to implementation. Failure to do so will nullify this Certificate and delay final sign-offs/CO.
3. Work for which this Certificate is granted must commence within one year of issuance. If work does not commence within one year or pauses for a significant period of time such that the expiration date of the Certificate passes, the Applicant shall be required to apply for this Certificate to be re-issued. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning at historic@somervillema.gov for instructions.

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.334
Historic Name:	
Common Name:	Downer, Cutler Double House
Address:	392 Broadway
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	Winter Hill;
Local No:	
Year Constructed:	C 1874
Architectural Style(s):	Second Empire;
Use(s):	Multiple Family Dwelling House;
Significance:	Architecture;
Area(s):	SMV.BA, SMV.CG
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (10/31/1989); Local Historic District (04/28/2022);
Building Materials:	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Wall: Wood; Wood Clapboard;
Demolished	No



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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>)

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

This file was accessed on: Wednesday, November 19, 2025 at 9:55 AM

Date: November 25, 2025

Case: HP25-000093

Site: 396-398 Broadway

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
80 BOYLSTON STREET
BOSTON, MA 02116

AREA**FORM NO.**

Winter Hill

334

SOMERVILLE

392-394, 396-398, 400 Broadway

Cutler Downer (develop

1023

1024

Present residential

Original residential

PTION

ca. 1874

maps/ directories

Second Empire

Architect

Exterior Wall Fabric clapboard, syntheti
siding, asphalt brick

Outbuildings

Major Alterations (with dates)

synthetic sidings

Condition fair

Moved Date

Acreage 6400 + 6390 + 5638 sq. ft.

Setting Three building on the southeast

corner of Broadway and Central, on

heavily travelled route undergoing

constant change, residential & comme

Carole Zellie - 1980

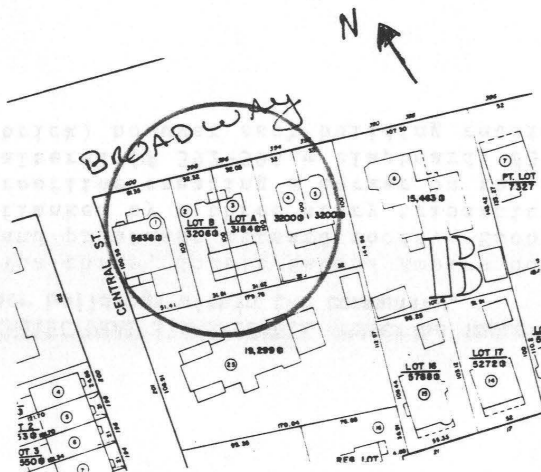
Recorded by Gretchen Schuler - 1988

Organization Somerville Historic
Preservation Commission

Date May, 1988



Sketch Map: Draw map showing property's location
in relation to nearest cross streets and/or
geographical features. Indicate all buildings
between inventoried property and nearest
intersection(s).
Indicate north



UTM REFERENCE

USGS QUADRANGLE

SCALE

SMV.334

NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE** Describe important architectural features and evaluate in terms of other buildings within the community.

The three, double Second Empire houses have similar plans, exterior facades and prominent mansard roofs. Each has a center entrance of two doors flanked by a three story tripartite bay which is carried through the roofline creating a dormer on the double houses. The siding has been altered (# 392-394 = clapboard, #396-398 = synthetic siding, #400= asphalt brick) however each building retains the brackets and dentil details.

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

Much of Broadway developed after the Civil War and many of the substantial homes, belonging to locally prominent businessmen, were in the Second Empire Style. From many of these houses, sited on natural summits, one enjoyed vistas of Charlestown and the Mystic River. Local industry and workers' housing was confined to areas north of Broadway in the Ten Hills area. Most of the large Broadway homes were owned by the occupants, with the exception of some speculative development of which these three double mansard rowhouses are examples.

Cutler Downer, who lived at #170 Central Street and owned large tracts of land in the area, built these three houses. Subsequent owners and occupants had various jobs in Boston and Somerville. For example, Edward Waldron who lived at #396 Broadway was a general agent for the International Steamship Company in Boston.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

1. Atlas of Middlesex County, Somerville: 1874 ("Cutler Downer", all three), 1884 ("Sarah Lathrope", no name on two), 1895 ("Gustaf Lyon & Henry H. Upham, Edward Waldron, Martha Noyes")
2. City Directories, 1870s-1890s.
3. City of Somerville, Beyond the Neck: The Architecture and Development of Somerville, Massachusetts, 1983.
4. Registry of Deeds, Middlesex County: Book Page .