City of Somerville

Historic Preservation Commission

City Hall 3rd Floor, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville MA 02143

TO: Historic Preservation Commission
FROM: PPZ Staff
SUBJECT: 76 Highland Ave - HP25-000076
Dated: February 27, 2026

Historic Preservation Commission Members,

This memo is supplemental to the Alteration LHD Property Staff Report dated October 7, 2025 linked here.

This case has been in front of the Commission at three hearings. On October 7, 2025 (opening hearing), then continued and heard on the November 18, 2025, and December 16, 2025. During this last hearing, the HPC reiterated the applicant to submit a window condition assessment from a historic window expert. In order to confirm that the applicant was working with a genuine historic window expert, staff instructed the applicant to include the following in the report:

- examples of windows they've previously restored
- the age of the houses they were restored on
- the types of windows they have previously worked on
- the techniques used to restore the windows
- their familiarity with the Secretary of the Interior's standards.

The Applicant has provided the report below.

The report was prepared by *Lasky Homesmith Services* a local a handyman/carpentry service provider. Within the report the experts provided information on their previous window restoration work. However, this report did not contain pictures of these projects, state techniques used or any information in relation to the Secretary of the Interior's standards.

The report provides an overall window conditions assessment of 36 windows. The findings shared were based on visual inspection, operability testing, and material assessment.

If there are any questions about these matters, please reach out to historic@somervillema.gov and staff will assist in answering them.

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WINDOW CONDITION ASSESSMENT
and
PRESERVATION REPORT

Property Address: 76 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA

Prepared for: Li Liu

Prepared by: Alex and Jeff Lasky

Survey Performed on: 2/2/2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

Lasky Homesmith Services is a handyman/carpentry service provider in business since 2001. Our business is small repairs and modest improvements for homeowners. We are not a contractor; we do all the work ourselves. Approximately one third of our business is the mechanical restoration of the original rope-and-pulley double hung windows, often along with the installation of new storm windows.

Since 2001, we have restored well in excess of three thousand windows. While restoration has always been our preference, we have on a few occasions installed replacement windows.

Our work is largely confined the the mechanical restoration of the windows, and to carpentry repairs as needed. We have a 20 year history of working with a painting company who does the glass, glazing, and painting work.

Four pre-1900 projects are: 14 Irving Street, Brookline, MA (1885);13 Carruth Street, Dorchester, MA (1890); 87 Medford Street, Arlington, MA (1889); 34 Eldridge Street, Newton, MA (1880). It has not been my practice to take pictures of sash restoration; a rebuild of a double hung window frame can be viewed on my website: https://laskyhomesmith.com/double-hung-window-rebuild/.

2. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report documents the condition and preservation potential of the original double-hung wood windows at 76 Highland Avenue, Somerville. The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether the existing windows can be repaired and restored or whether replacement is warranted based on the observed conditions.

A few windows were either inaccessible or painted in, so 36 of the 40 original windows were evaluated. Based on visual inspection, operability testing, and material assessment, we assess that while a majority of the windows remain technically repairable, about one-third of the windows suffer significant damage and are poor candidates for restoration.

3. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

The purpose of this assessment is to evaluate the condition of the existing historic windows and whether they are appropriate candidates for restoration.

The assessment included:

- Interior visual inspection
- Evaluation of sash, frame, glazing, and hardware conditions
- Identification of deterioration patterns
- Assessment of repair feasibility

4. HISTORICAL CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE

The subject building is the George Loring House, built in 1895. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The existing double-hung wood windows are original. Aluminum storm windows have been installed over most of them, diminishing their historic appearance from the street.

5. EXISTING CONDITIONS ASSESSMENT

5.1 Materials and Construction

The windows are traditional wood double-hung units with single glazing, wood muntins, and mortise-and-tenon sash construction. The windows have a single pane lower sash, and a multi-pane upper sash. With a few exceptions, the panes in the upper sashes are the original “wavy” glass. It appears that the majority of the lower sashes have had the glass replaced with modern float glass, losing some of the window’s historic appeal.

5.2 Observed Deterioration

Common conditions observed include:

- Lower corners of the lower sashes have rotted out.
- Meeting rail of upper sashes are rotting and sagging.
- Corner joints of sashes have opened.
- Jambs have dry rot and the wood is splitting.

5.3 Operability and Hardware

Many windows were found to be partially or fully inoperable due to broken sash cords or paint buildup. These conditions are considered readily repairable.

Original or early hardware was present on most windows.

5.4 Weather Performance

Evidence of air infiltration and significant water intrusion was observed in many locations. The existing storm windows appear to be ineffective in protecting the original windows. To the extent that the bottom rails of many lower sashes have significant rot can only be attributed to water infiltration past the existing storm windows. We suspect that the gutters are not performing properly.

6. CONDITION ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

We had considered rating each window and window sash on six metrics - mechanical, glass, glazing, rot, joints(structural), and an assessment of how much work is required to repair. This would have taken a considerable amount of time, and would have tended to obscure the primary issues. In the interest of efficiency, we have instead only called attention to those windows components where we assess that restoration requires an excessive and unreasonable effort, with the conditions noted. The exposition of these windows is in Appendix 1.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Replacing only some windows and not others only makes the appearance of a property, especially one of historic importance, even worse. We recommend the removal of the existing storm windows. And replacing the original double hung windows with windows similar to the Marvin Ultimate. These window have wood sashes, double insulated glass, simulated divided lites, and aluminum clad exterior faces. The same lite configurations as the originals should be retained.

While this may not align with current historic restoration standards, our recommendation seeks to achieve an appearance similar to the building's original look, while achieving the insulation benefits of modern windows and glass.

8. APPENDICES

8.1 WINDOW ISSUES

Individual windows are identified by the floor (1,2, or 3), which corner of the house (E, W, N, or S), or side of the house (NW, etc.) and the window number, counting from the left as one enters the room.

1, N, 1 Three upper sash panes replaced with etched glass

1, N, 2 Lower sash is missing

1, N, 3 Silicone caulking is spread on areas of the glass

1, E, 1 Damaged glass

1, E, 2 Corners of bottom rail have rot and detached from the stiles

1, NW, 1 (Dining Room) Meeting rail of upper sash is rotted

1, W, 2 Upper sash meeting rail, sagging and rotted; rotting jambs

Pantry Underside of bottom sash, bottom rail is rotted

2, N, 4 Upper sash meeting rail, rotted and separating; lower sash corner rotted and separating; jambs are rotted

2, E, 1 Lower sash, bottom rail, corners rotted and separating

2, S, 1 Upper sash meeting rail rotting; lower sash bottom rail corners are rotted and supported by angle irons screwed in rail and stiles

2, S, 2 Bottom sash corners rotted and missing material

2, E, 1 Upper sash rotted meeting rail; lower sash corners supported by angle irons

2, E, 2 Upper sash rotted meeting rail; lower sash corners supported by angle irons

3, N, 1 Upper sash, meeting rail is separating (from muntins and stiles)
Lower sash, corners rotted and separating

3, N, 2 Upper sash, meeting rail is separating;
Lower sash, corners rotted and separating, secured with angle irons

3, W, 1 Upper sash rotting meeting rail; rotting jambs

3, W, 2 Missing lower sash

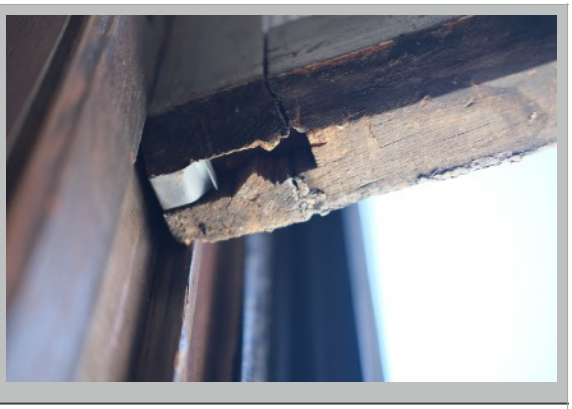
3, S, 1 Upper sash meeting rail is rotting

3, S, 2 Lower sash, bottom corners rot and separating

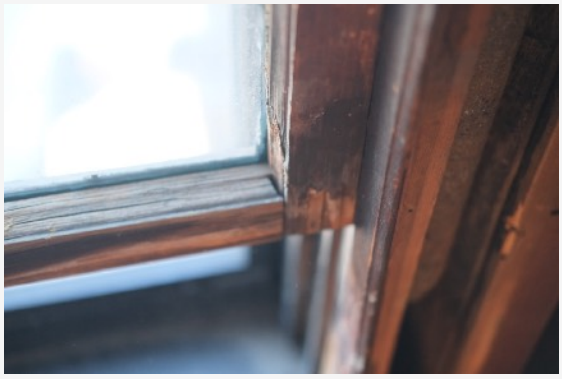
3, E, 1 Upper sash,, meeting rail rot and separating; damaged muntins
Lower sash, rotted corners.

8.2 PHOTOS

		
1 E 1 Damaged Glass		1 E 2 Rot - Detached Corners
		
1 N 1 Etched Glass		1 N 2 Missing Lower Sash
		
1 N 3 Silicone Caulk on Glass		1 NW 1 (DR) Meeting Rail Rot

		
1 NW 1 (DR) Meeting Rail Rot		1 PANTRY Rotted Separating Corner
		
1 W 2 Meeting Rail Rot		1 W 2 Meeting Rail Sagging
		
1 W 2 Rotting Jambs		2 E 1 Bottom Rail Sinking

		
2 E 2 Angle Iron Corners		2 N 4 Botom Rail Dropped
		
2 N 4 Bottom Rail Rot		2 N 4 Jamb Rot
		
2 N 4 Meeting Rail Rot		2 N 4 Meeting Rail Separating

		
2 S 1 Angle Iron Corner		2 S 1 Rotting Jambs
		
3 E 1 Damaged Muntin		3 N 1 Lower Sash Corner Rot
		
3 S 2 Bottom Rail Separating		3 W 1 Rotted Meeting Rail