



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

Thomas Galligani  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION  
*HISTORIC PRESERVATION*

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

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**Site:** 143 Walnut Street

**Case:** HP25-000114

**Applicant:** Peter Quinn Architects

**Owner:** Walnut Street 141 Development, LLC

**Legal Ad:** *The Applicant seeks to demolish an accessory structure on a Local Historic District (LHD) property.*



*Front Elevation of the accessory structure at 141-143 Walnut St*

**HPC Meeting Date:** April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2026

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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:** 143 Walnut Street is at the rear of the property of the John Ayer House and was likely constructed sometime between 1900 and 1907.

**Proposal:** The following scope is under the purview of the HPC

- Demolition of an accessory structure

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

## 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. The portions of the regulations that are most applicable to the proposed alterations are discussed below.

### **A. Demolition of the accessory structure**

The applicable Somerville LHD Design Guideline is *J. “Demolition”*.

#### **Preservation Planning Assessment:**

The applicant is proposing to demolish the accessory structure at the rear of the site. The structure is visible from the public way from McGregor Ave. The relevant portions of the Design Guidelines is Section II, J. Demolition, items 1:

Section II, J. Demolition item 1 read as follows:

1. *Demolition of part or all of a structure is considered to be an alteration to the exterior and is subject to the review of the Commission.*

Below is a full architectural description of the structure.

## III. IMAGES OF PROPERTY / AREA

*Context Map:*





*Above: Photo of the site's principle structure's front elevation*

*Photos of the subject property:*



Walnut-143 - Left Side Elevation



Walnut-143 - Rear Elevation

#### **IV. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION**

Please see the section below which discusses location, design, materials and any alterations of the accessory structure.

#### **143 Walnut Street**

The structure was likely constructed between 1900 and 1907 based on historic map information. The structure is a 1 ½-story, front-gabled roof structure, with shingled siding, a steep roof pitch, and was likely a carriage house or early garage.

a. Location: The structure is in its original location and was likely built on-site.

Design: 143 Walnut Street is a 1 ½-story, gable-fronted structure. Main massing presents a shallow eave with minor irregularities and projections.

### **Front Elevation**

First Story:

- Large multi-panel garage door system with recessed vertical detailing.

Second Story:

- Two evenly spaced boarded up windows
- Moderate eave overhang, boxed without brackets
- Front gabled roof with a steep pitch

### **Right Elevation**

First Story:

- asymmetrical boarded up window and door opening

Second Story:

- moderate eave overhang
- asymmetrical shed dormer

### **Left Elevation**

First Story:

- moderate eave overhang
- no windows or doors

Second Story:

- steep pitched gable roof

### **Rear Elevation**

First Story:

- three evenly spaced rectangular openings boarded up; were likely windows

Second Story:

- moderate eave overhang, boxed without brackets
- steep pitched gable roof

- symmetrical fenestration beneath gable
- double hung wood sash windows

b. Materials:

- *Main massing:* Wood Shingle siding over wood frame on upper ½ story; wood covering window and door area; asphalt shingles on roof; concrete masonry on main massing and foundation.

- c. Alterations: The structure at 143 Walnut St. was likely a carriage house, barn, or early garage originally. The carriage doors were likely adapted for automobiles at some point. Differences in materiality indicate a portion of the original structure was converted into residential at some point prior to 1907. Windows and doors have the boarded up and the roof appears to have been replaced.

Based on the observations of the building and a study of the historic maps, it is Staff’s position that the building largely retains the integrity of its original forms and massing, but use and materiality have changed significantly.

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

If the HPC votes to deny the removal of the replacement, they may then vote to approve a different method of replacement 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.

**V. FINDINGS & VOTE**

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

**VI. 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 zoning compliance/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. Failure to seek approval for changes may delay final sign-offs/Cos.
4. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning a minimum of 15 business days prior to arranging for a final inspection from ISD. Preservation Planners or their designee shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that it was executed in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness.

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

ATTACHMENTS:

- A. Form B
- B. Applicant Narrative

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	SMV.317
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Ayre, John House
<b>Common Name:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	141 Walnut St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Somerville
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	Winter Hill;
<b>Local No:</b>	
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	C 1870
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Second Empire;
<b>Use(s):</b>	Multiple Family Dwelling House; Single Family Dwelling House;
<b>Significance:</b>	Architecture;
<b>Area(s):</b>	SMV.BA
<b>Designation(s):</b>	Local Historic District (10/31/1989);
<b>Building Materials:</b>	Roof: Slate; Wall: Wood; Wood Clapboard; Foundation: Brick;
<b>Demolished</b>	No



The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

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>)

Data available via the MACRIS web interface, and associated scanned files are for information purposes only. THE ACT OF CHECKING THIS DATABASE AND ASSOCIATED SCANNED FILES DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTING A DEVELOPER AND/OR A PROPOSED PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE A PERMIT, LICENSE OR FUNDING FROM ANY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCY YOU MUST SUBMIT A PROJECT NOTIFICATION FORM TO MHC FOR MHC'S REVIEW AND COMMENT. You can obtain a copy of a PNF through the MHC web site ([www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)) under the subject heading "MHC Forms."

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

This file was accessed on: Friday, April 17, 2026 at 11:21 AM

LMS - 10/31/89 (10)

P.L. WINTER  
USGS BOSTON  
SHEET B

**FORM B - BUILDING**

**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
80 BOYLSTON STREET  
BOSTON, MA 02116

**AREA**

**FORM NO.**

winter  
Hill

317



**City** SOMERVILLE

**Address** 141 Walnut Street

**Historic Name** John Avre (Aver)

**Present Use** residential

**Original Use** residential

**DESCRIPTION**

**Date** ca. 1870

**Source** maps / directories

**Style** Second Empire / Italianate

detail

**Architect** \_\_\_\_\_

**Exterior Wall Fabric** clapboard

**Outbuildings** \_\_\_\_\_

**Major Alterations (with dates)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Condition** good

**Moved** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

**Acres** 3665 sq. ft.

**Setting** Southeast corner of Walnut

& McGregor Avenue (small cul-de-sa

residential neighborhood of late

19th century dwellings

Carole Zellie - 1980

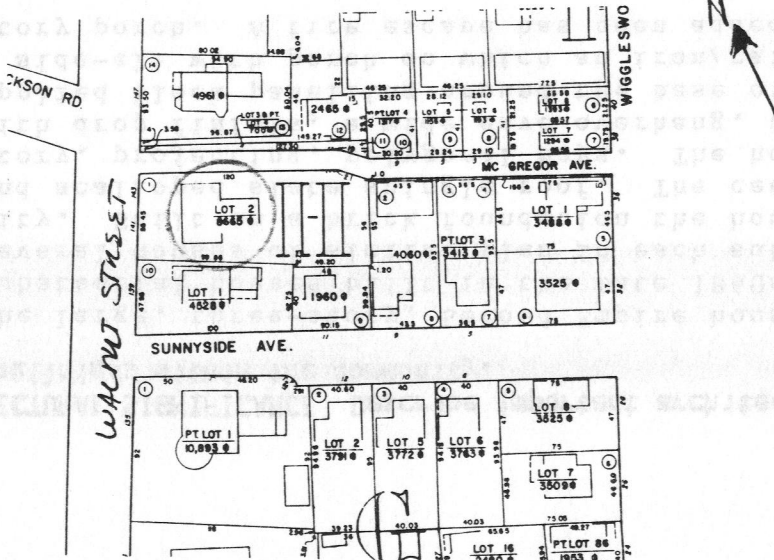
**Recorded by** Gretchen Schuler - 1980

Somerville Historic

**Organization** 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** \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA STATEMENT (if applicable)**

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

The large, three-story, Second Empire house is representative of the substantial houses built in the late 1860s and early 1870s. There are several houses of similar plan in each subdivision area throughout the City. Built on a brick foundation the house retains its clapboard siding and scalloped slate shingle roof. The center entrance is flanked by two-story, projecting, polygonal bays. The house retains its paired brackets with drop finials, a wide eave overhang, three pedimented dormers and applied block panelling around the base of the bays and porches. There is a side-ell with porch on which an iron railing has been added as a second story porch. A fire escape has been added to the south side of the house.

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

Winter Hill refers to a large area of development north of Highland, east of Lowell, west of Marshall and bordered on the north by Broadway. The actual geographic drumlin reaches its summit near the top of Adams and Central Streets, which were laid out and subdivided in 1847 but not developed, for the most part, until the 1880s and 1890s. Workers' housing was located in the Ten Hills area and on tracts of land west of Lowell and Adams Streets and east of Marshall Street. In contrast, this area was developed with large, detailed, businessmen's homes.

Although Walnut Street is east of Marshall Street, there were several substantial houses built early in the development of this area, making Walnut Street the exception with prosperous businessmen living here. This house was built by John Ayre (sometimes spelled Ayer) by 1871 (first directories) and was prominently situated near the summit of Walnut Street between Medford Street and Broadway. Ayre was a lumberdealer in Charlestown who also was a land speculator in Somerville. The 1880s owner David McGregor, after whom McGregor Road is named, was in the leather business in Boston. McGregor Road was planned but not constructed on the 1884 map.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES**

1. Atlas of Middlesex County, Somerville: 1874 ("J.F. Ayre"), 1884 ("D.C. McGregor"), 1895 ("David L. McGregor").
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                      .                      8/85



ARCHITECTURE  
PLANNING  
COMMUNITY DESIGN

**141-143 Walnut Street – Narrative for Historical Alteration Application**  
**Walnut-141**

**Prepared by Peter Quinn AIA**

Architect of Record

Application Date: 8 Dec 2025

Walnut Street 141 Development LLC is proposing to demolish the existing detached accessory garage.