



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JACOB D. WILSON
MAYOR

THOMAS F GALLIGANI
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ALTERATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPERTY
STAFF REPORT

Site: 21 College Hill Road

Applicant Name: Ferrante Construction (Sonny Ferrante)

Owner Name: Johnathan Nyberg

Petition: The Applicant proposes to add a backyard cottage to an LHD property.

HPC Hearing Date: August 4, 2026



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 property is a c. 1850 Greek Revival Home known as the Thomas Cook House. The property is in a residential area in the West Somerville neighborhood. A full description of the property is provided in the attached Form B survey held by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC).

Proposal: The Applicant proposes a new backyard cottage to be constructed.

II. ANALYSIS

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

Due to the addition being an alteration to a Local Historic District (LHD) property, the HPC has purview over this work.

The proposed change would add a backyard cottage to the lot.

Backyard Cottage

Materials: The applicant proposes using:

- 25 Year Architectural Asphalt Shingles
- Cementitious Clapboards
- Fiberglass Double Hung Windows
- PVC Exterior Trim
- Composite White Railings

The applicable design guidelines can be found under:

E. New Additions

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 now, 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.*

Preservation Planning believes that this proposal is subservient to the main massing of the structure. The existing main structure limits the area where an addition or backyard cottage would feasibly and compliantly be placed to the rear of the structure facing the street.

Staff suggest removing the lattice material underneath the stoop and revising the horizontal band between the first and half-story to mimic that of the main structure.



Main Structure



Proposed Backyard Cottage

III. VOTE

HPC Determination

The HPC must determine if, based on a review of the documentation presented, the proposed project complies with the Design Guidelines.

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

IV. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

Preservation Planning recommend the following conditions be attached to any Certificate of Appropriateness that the HPC might grant for this project. The HPC may also add further conditions as-needed during their deliberations.

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 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 the reissuance 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 Planning Preservation for their review to determine if the changes come under the purview of the HPC.