



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

Joseph A. Curtatone

Mayor

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

KRISTENNA CHASE, *PRESERVATION PLANNER*
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER*

Case #: HPC 2017.087

Date: December 19, 2017

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 22-24 Fountain Avenue

Applicant Name: BBC Services, Inc.

Applicant Address: 11 Wheatland Street #3,
Somerville, MA

Owner Name: Same

Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the double house

HPC Hearing Date: December 19, 2017



I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1874 double-house.
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant seeks to demolish the existing structure.

I. MEETING SUMMARY: Determination of Significance

On November 26, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 22-24 Fountain Avenue is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:

Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;

and

- (i) *The structure is 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;*

and

- (ii) *The structure is historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.*

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to associations with the working class who immigrated primarily from Ireland and Italy.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to strong associations to Somerville's working class. The structure has the simple massing and form characteristic of the time and purpose of the housing with minimal alterations.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information has been received.

Comparable Structures:

There are few structures that are appropriate to compare with the subject dwelling due to the combination of the potential age of the structure, the modest 1½ story massing, and siting with regard to the side-gable.



12 Mount Vernon Street, NR (c. 1850); 18 Mount Vernon Street, LHD (c. 1850); 19 Greenville (1850)



11-13 Flint Street LHD (c. 1858), 15-17 Flint Street LHD (c. 1860)

II. PREFERABLY PRESERVED

If the Commission determines that the demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City, such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure. (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 4.2.d)

A determination regarding if the demolition of the subject building is detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City should consider the following:

How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?

a) *What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*

- The exterior of the structure (the only portion of the building within the purview of the HPC), retains a high degree of architectural integrity and reflects the evolution of this property through key eras of architectural change (asphalt shingle cladding aside, which is easily removed). See determination of significance for a summary of the historic architectural features of this structure.

What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?

- This structure is significantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its Italianate style, association with the working class who immigrated primarily from Ireland and Italy.

b) *What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*

- The structure is set back from the street with a large front yard.

c) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*

- The City of Somerville has few structures from the 1850s without massive alterations. This type of double house is not the most common style of 19th century building in the City although it is a recognizable characteristic structure. The building does not appear on the 1852 Draper Map but is found on the 1874 Hopkins Atlas. The simplicity of the design indicates that the building is more likely to be constructed at the earlier end of the time period.

Upon a consideration of the above criteria is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?

Staff finds that this type of double-house is an important style of workers housing found in eastern Somerville. The size and location of this building indicates that it is the oldest one on the Street.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 22-24 Fountain Avenue to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*