



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site:	227-229 Cedar Street 17 Murdock Street 21-25 Murdock Street (less than 50 years old)
Case:	HPC 2017.032
Applicant Name:	Cedar Murdock Partners LLC
Date of Application:	May 25, 2017
Recommendation:	Not Significant for all properties
Hearing Date:	June 27, 2017

I. Historical Association

Historical Context:

Clyde, Murdock, and Warwick streets may have been developed as a small neighborhood of houses adjacent to the Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company, owned by the Tufts family was located nearby on Cedar Street. The brickyard was fully exploited by 1858 when Asa Murdock, Cambridge dry goods dealer had the neighborhood surveyed and platted into roughly 7500 SF parcels. The deeds for the land all reference the neighborhood as the Patch. By 1874 the neighborhood was mostly built out with the cottages set on large yards with sufficient space to keep a few animals and grow produce. The purchasers were primarily laborers of Irish and Scottish descent as can be seen in the 1880 Census.

Brick making in Somerville was one of the earliest industries which was in its prime from 1860-1880. After the Great Fire of Boston all buildings were required to be constructed of non-flammable materials. By 1900 only one company, the Sanborn Brick Company remained in Somerville.

Other industries also flourished in the neighborhood, Royal White Laundry, Agar Consolidated Paper Company and Hires Root Beer also had manufactories in the Patch. Laundries and other such industries were and are perfect jobs for those lacking in language and other skills. According to oral tradition many of the immigrant wives found employment in the laundries.

Evolution of Site:

The buildings are a series of concrete block buildings constructed between circa 1920 and 1973. (see attached Sanborn maps.)



227-229 Cedar Street was constructed as 3 stores between 1900 and 1925 as can be seen in the Sanborn Maps. According to the building permit records, J. Cameli who was the laundry manager of a steam laundry (White Banner Laundry) did repairs to the building in 1940. The building was enlarged in 1941 and 1945 with J. Cameli handling the alterations. John Cameli was born in Italy and lived across Cedar Street with his wife and three children.

In 1919, the tenements located on Cedar Street Place burned and were razed. By 1925 they were replaced by a concrete block building at 17 Murdock Street for the steam laundry at which time an additional small building was added.

By 1959, the complex assumed its current configuration with the addition of a large garage at the back.

1973 The two houses at 21 and 25 Murdock Street were demolished and replaced by a warehouse building for sports equipment, SportBilt owned by Cecil N. Marchionne. Being less than 50 years old, this portion is exempt from demolition review. The other former White Banner Laundry buildings were also used by SportBilt.

Architectural Description:

The buildings are single-story concrete block with stucco along the Cedar Street and Murdock Street and stretch deep into the lot. The older buildings have undergone numerous alterations.

Summary:

227-229 Cedar Street is much altered 1920 storefronts that formed the original core of the White Banner Laundry. No information was found about the White Banner Laundry or J Cameli beyond the 1940 Census information noted above.

17 Murdock Street is also altered from its original structure with numerous additions and blocked windows.

21-25 Murdock Street was constructed in 1973 and exempt from demolition review.

Findings on Historical Association

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) **importantly associated with people, events or history** or (b) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (b) are at the end of the next section.*

(a) In accordance with the historic information obtained from *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff **do not find 227-229 Cedar Street or 17 Murdock Street** to be importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth.

The subject buildings are not found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City while laundry businesses provided first level jobs for recent immigrants, White Banner Laundry was not associated with any particular event or movement, nor was J. Cameli of any prominence in the community.

II. Historical and Architectural Significance

The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B).

The period of significance for 227-229 Cedar Street and 17 Murdock Street begins in the 1920s as a laundry facility and continued until about 1973 when the property was bought by Cecil Marchionne and changed to a sporting equipment warehouse.

Integrity

The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.

- a. **Location:** The buildings are located in what had been a workers neighborhood in close proximity to the railroad. The buildings have not been moved.
- b. **Design:** The buildings are basic boxes with little detail. There is an original high industrial chimney on the building that held the steam laundry.
- c. **Materials:** The buildings are predominantly concrete block structures, some decorative and some plain. The chimney is brick. The existing windows are not visible from the public right of way.
- d. **Alterations:** The original 1920s storefronts have been totally removed as of 1948. Windows on the other buildings have been blinded in many locations. The buildings are rambling and difficult to interpret.

Evaluation of Integrity:

The buildings have been altered and do not tell the story of the laundry or the 1920 storefronts in a coherent manner.

Findings for Historical and Architectural Significance

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) **historically or architecturally significant** (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (a) can be found at the end of the previous section.*

(b) In accordance with the *Finding on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, which assess the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff do not find 227-229 Cedar Street and 17 Murdock Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due to alterations and lack of distinction.

III. Recommendation

Recommendations are based upon an analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the permit application and the required findings for the Demolition Review Ordinance, which requires archival and historical research, and an assessment of historical and architectural significance, conducted prior to the public meeting for a Determination of Significance. This report may be revised or updated with a new recommendation and/or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through further research.

For a Determination of Significance, the structure must be either (A) listed on the National Register or (B) at least 50 years old.

(A) The structure is NOT listed on or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is the structure the subject of a pending application for listing on the National Register.

OR

(B) The structure, circa 1920-1950, is at least 50 years old.

AND

For a Determination of Significance under (B), the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant.

(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlas, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do NOT find 227-229 Cedar Street and 17 Murdock Street 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.**

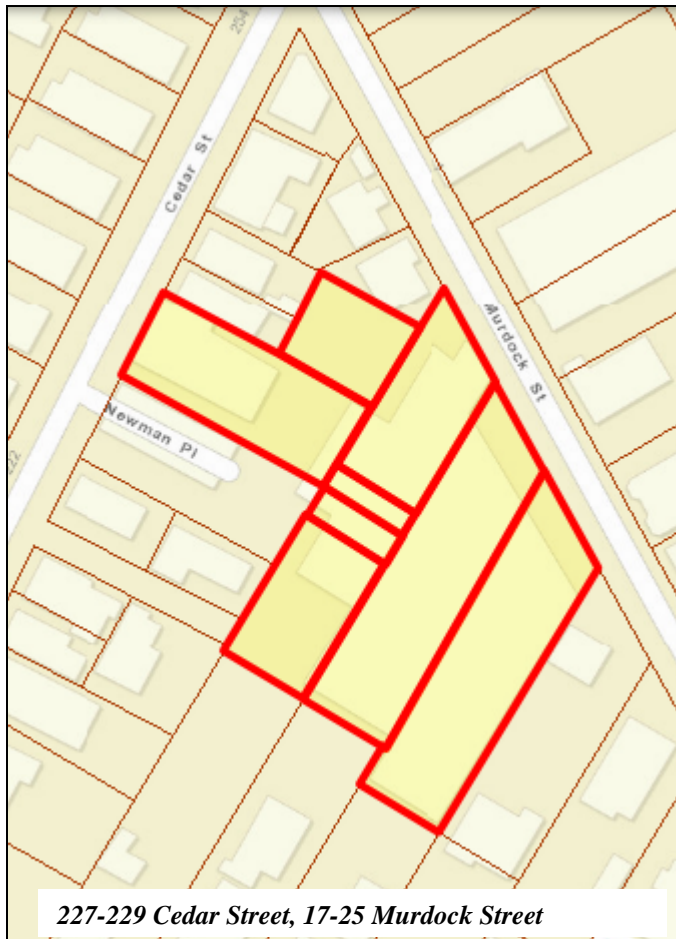
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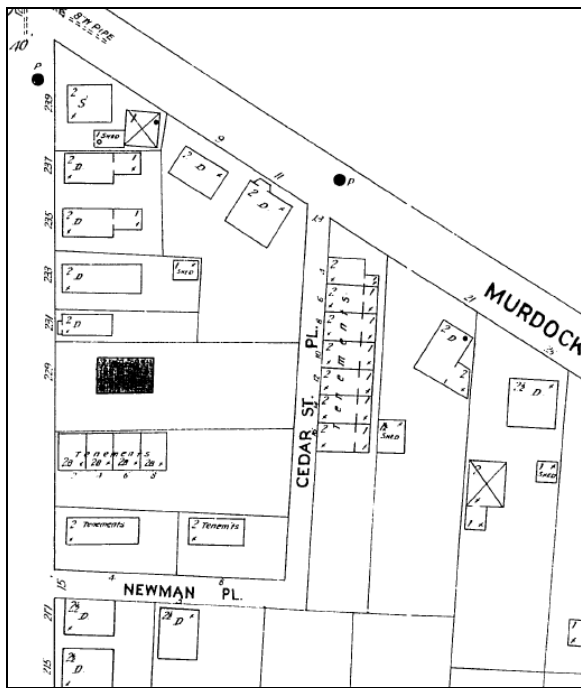
OR

(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the**

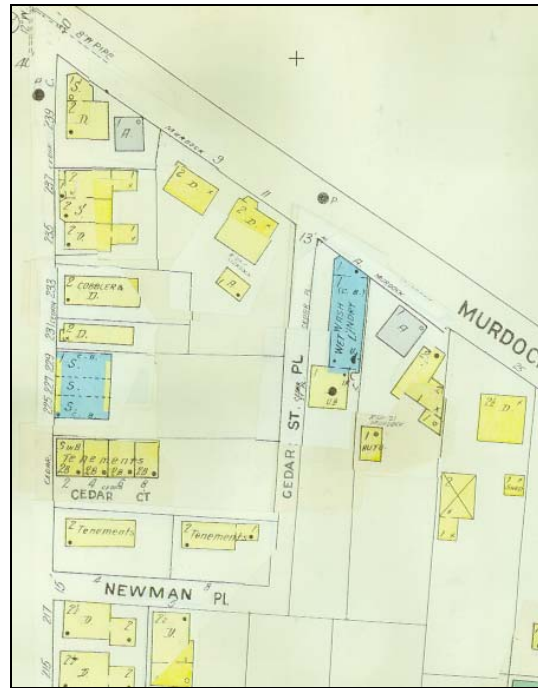
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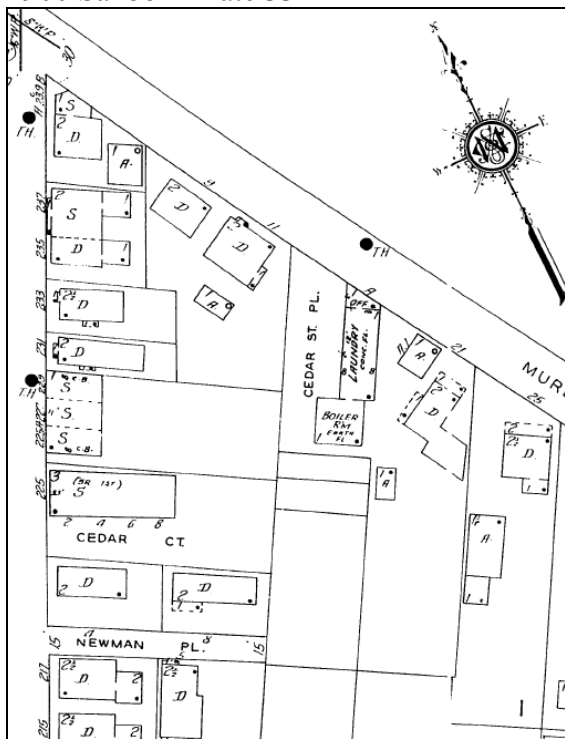




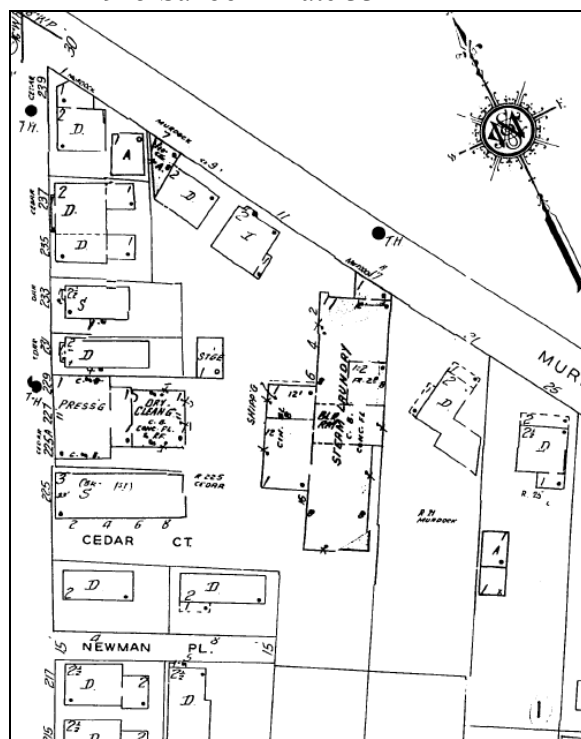
1900 Sanborn Plate 33



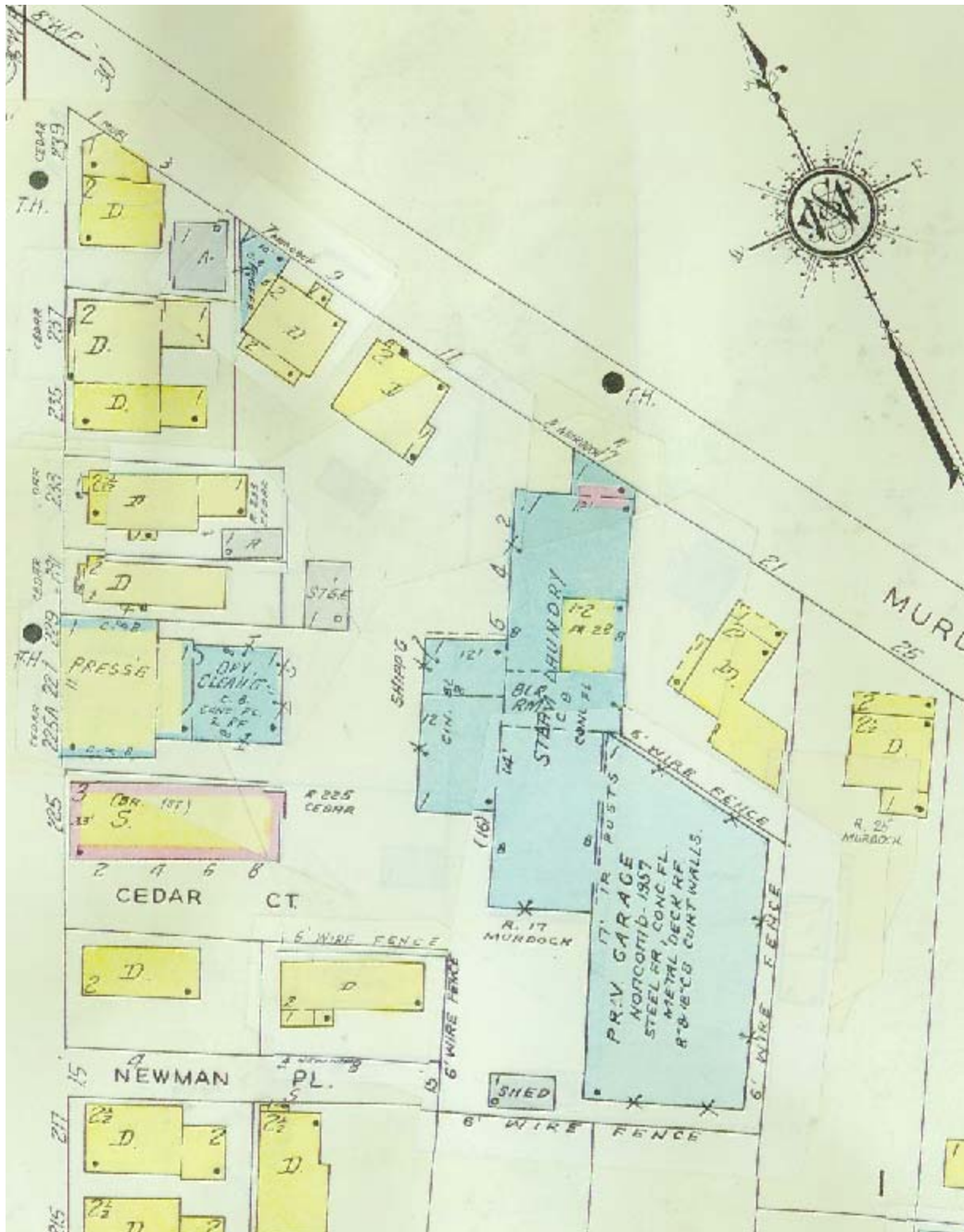
1925 Sanborn Plate 33



1934 Sanborn Plate 241



1950 Sanborn Plate 241



1959 Sanborn Plate 241



21-25 Murdock Street, 1973 structure



21-25 Murdock, 17 Murdock Street – 1973 and 1919 structures







<i>LOCATION</i>	<i>NAME</i>	<i>SOURCE</i>	<i>NOTES</i>
2 Cedar Street Place	W. Beecy	1919-1-103 building permit	buildings torn down after fire
227 Cedar Street	J. Cameli	1940-1-116 building permit	repair bldg; general rep only, laundry & cleaning
227 Cedar Street	J. Cameli	1940-1-127 building permit	wooden canopy over rear door, constr of wood beams
227 Cedar Street	White Banner Laundry	1941-1-213 building permit	see plans
227 Cedar Street	J. Cameli	1945-1-43 building permit	connect 2 bldgs with shed roof
227 Cedar Street	J. Cameli	1945-1-237 building permit	add extension to rear of bldg as per plans
227 Cedar Street	C. Marchionne	1973-1-234 building permit	closing in of windows
227 Cedar Street	Sportbilt	1983-1-689 building permit	vinyl siding alum gutters
229 Cedar Street	J. Cameli	1948-2-663 building permit	remove present structured glass front & replace with stucco
17 Murdock Street	W. Kinsman	1924-2-1027 building permit	cut hole back wall for steel smoke pipe, new heat
17 Murdock Street	J. Cameli	1939-1-56 building permit	repair hot work tank shed wooden shed
17 Murdock Street	White Banner Laundry	1941-1-258 building permit	addition to present bldg rear 18'
17 Murdock Street	J. Camelia	1949-1-67 building permit	repair fire damage
17 Murdock Street	W. Laveley	1950-1-441 building permit	build water pochester below grade w/ 8" cinder
25 Murdock Street	C. Marchione	1973-2-494 building permit	demolish single family dwelling
21 Murdock Street	C. Marchione	1973-2-495 building permit	demolish two family dwelling
23 Murdock Street	C. Marchionne	1973-2-519 building permit	warehse for sporting goods, build a masonry