



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 2018.011

Date: April 17, 2018

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 24 Dane Avenue

Applicant Name: David De Sola

Applicant Address: 334 Washington Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Owner Name: Same

Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the double house

HPC Hearing Date: April 17, 2018



I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1895 vernacular Queen Anne 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 24 Dane 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 Commission found **24 Dane Avenue** to be 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. The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to associations with Irish immigration and the American Tube Works.

The Commission also found **24 Dane Avenue** historically and architecturally significant due to its relationship to the streetscape and its place within a group of similarly scaled buildings and due to its building style – Queen Anne, which is emblematic of the period in which it was constructed and as one of several similarly designed buildings within the neighborhood.

The period of significance for 24 Dane Avenue begins with its sale to an Irish immigrant family in 1895. They may have been the first residents as there is no indication of a structure on the site in the deeds prior to this time.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information has been found or received.

Comparable Structures:

This type of modest 2 ½ story vernacular Queen Anne style house is found throughout the eastern half of the City. However, Staff found no survey forms of comparable buildings in the Massachusetts Historical Commission files of Somerville properties. Below are three examples of similar houses in the neighborhood. Washington Street has many buildings with similar massing and form as shown in the photos below. 353 Washington Street has a nearly identical door hood. 10 Dane Avenue as a polygonal bay rather than a square one.





24 Dane Avenue, 353 Washington Street door hoods.

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 associations with Irish immigration and the American Tube Works. The American Tube Works held the patent for seamless copper tubing which made the transcontinental railway possible. Generations of recent immigrants supplied the work force for such industries.
- The Commission also found **24 Dane Avenue** historically and architecturally significant due to its relationship to the streetscape and its place within a group of similarly scaled

buildings and due to its building style – Queen Anne, which is emblematic of the period in which it was constructed and as one of several similarly designed buildings within the neighborhood.

- The period of significance for 24 Dane Avenue begins with its sale to an Irish immigrant family in 1895. They may have been the first residents as there is no indication of a structure on the site in the deeds prior to this time. There is some documentation that they worked at the nearby American Tube Works.
- 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 located close to Dane Avenue with leads to Leland Street. Both streets serve the neighborhood with little cut through traffic.
- c) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*
- The building is a fairly common example of vernacular Queen Anne style or Italianate style side hall entry plan housing with a bay window of one or two-stories. In this case there is simple door hood with a spindled bracket over the entry stoop.

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 wood-frame house is a frequent style of workers housing found in eastern Somerville. It retains its original form, detail and massing. The inhabitants did nothing that called attention to them in the Boston Globe. They are emblematic of the hard-working immigrants who made ends meet anyway they could including renting space to boarders.

III. RECOMMENDATION

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