



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 2019.010
Determined Significant: April 16, 2019

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 430 McGrath Highway

Applicant Name: Roger P. & Robert M. Peixinho, Trustees
Applicant Address: 430 McGrath Highway, Somerville, MA
Owner Name: Same
Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish a pre-1846 wood-frame house

HPC Hearing Date: May 21, 2019

I. MEETING SUMMARY: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

On Tuesday, April 16, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission voted unanimously (5-0) to determine the c. 1874 wood-frame dwellings at 7 Washington Street 'Significant' because the building, per Section 2.17.B of the Demolition Review Ordinance 2003-05, is "at least 50 years old, and is or has been determined by the Commission to be a significant building or structure after a finding that the building or structure is either:

- i. "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 of Massachusetts, or
- ii. "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, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished.”

The period of significance for 430 McGrath begins with its construction *prior to 1852*. The Greek Revival style is a uniquely American house form. This style was popular 1820-1860 and is characterized pedimented front or side gables, a colonnade, and other classical architectural motifs. The front door surround is of particular note.

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its Greek Revival architecture, and its associations with the locally prominent Munroe and Edgerly families.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information was found.

Comparable Structures:

Two story gable-end dwellings with three bays are common throughout the City and compose a majority of the residential housing stock within the City. This building type is generally constructed as a single or two-family dwelling and can reflect several different period styles. This particular building is in the Greek Revival style, which is uniquely American. The Greek Revival buildings are characterized by a shallow full pediment, tall ground floor windows and wide trim boards.

- 8 Mount Vernon Street, Ebenezer Davis House c. 1852 (LHD)
- 16 Mount Vernon Street, H.M. Hutchings House c. 1852 (LHD)
- 37 Walnut Street, Robert Munroe House c. 1852 (LHD)



430 McGrath Highway, c. 1852



8 Mount Vernon Street, c. 1852 (LHD). 16 Mount Vernon Street, c. 1852 (LHD); 37 Walnut Street, c. 1852 (LHD)

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 (cladding and altered porch, which are easily removed). See the Staff Report on the Determination of Significance for more information
- (b) *What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*
- The period of significance for 430 McGrath begins with its construction *prior to* 1852. The Greek Revival style is a uniquely American house form. This style was popular 1820-1860 and is characterized pedimented front or side gables, a colonnade, and other classical architectural motifs. The front door surround is of particular note.
 - The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its Greek Revival architecture, and its associations with the locally prominent Munroe and Edgerly families.
- (c) *.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 on McGrath Highway, previously Medford Street, one of the oldest streets in the City.
- (d) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*
- Pre-1852 buildings are rare in the City. The 1850 census shows the population to be approximately 3500 or less than a thousand homes. Many have been demolished.
 - The City of Somerville has several Greek Revival buildings retaining varying degrees of architectural integrity. 430 McGrath Highway is one of only two known Greek Revival structures along the corridor.

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?

430 McGrath Highway is a rare example of a Greek Revival building on a major local artery. Its architecture relates directly to mid-19th century and despite some alterations it exhibits a high degree of integrity. The building is associated with the Edgerly and Munroe families for over fifty years.

III. RECOMMENDATION

*Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 430 Washington Street to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.*

