



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 2018.105
Date Received: October 9, 2018

Recommendation: Conditional Approval

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT

Site: 50 Sargent Avenue

Applicant Name: David Glod

Applicant Address: 52 Massapoag Way, Dunstable, MA 01827

Owner Name: John and JoAnn Murray

Owner Address: 50 Sargent Avenue, Somerville, MA 02145

Petition: Glod Restoration & Renovation, Contractor for John and JoAnn Murray, Owners, seeks permission from the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to alter entry porch to meet code.

HPC Hearing Date: November 13, 2018

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject residential building is located on a local arterial across the street from the East Somerville Community School. See Form B for details.
2. **Proposal:** The Applicant proposes to alter the front entry porch to meet code. The current half-wall is too low and the stair spacing is incorrect. The half-wall porch enclosure is not characteristic of an Italianate style building.

They propose to reconstruct the porch with a post, rail and baluster system. Winder steps would allow the stairway to fit within the current configuration. The original steps would have descended straight from the doorway and extend onto the sidewalk. These would be too steep for current code or extend onto the sidewalk.



50 Sargent Street – 2010 photo

II. FINDINGS on

D. Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements

1. Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later important features, including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ornamental ironwork and other important decorative items. If new pieces are needed, they should match as closely as possible the style, shape, scale and materials of the old. Avoid replacing wood posts and railings with metal ones, or wood porch decks with concrete.

Preservation Considerations for Porches

1. The scale and massing of a porch should not be altered. All decorative details such as balusters, balustrades, columns, and brackets should be retained.
2. Original masonry elements in porches should be retained and preserved. If mortar needs repair, the color and pointing should match the original mortar, if possible, and be compatible with that of the original masonry. Replacement masonry elements should be compatible with the style and materials of the historic building (for further details, see exterior siding and walls).
3. Even if an entrance is not used, it should remain in place if its porch is integral to the building design. Abandoned entries can be put back into use at a later date.
4. *If elements of the porch must be replaced, they should exactly match the originals in design and materials, based on photographic or physical evidence, or else they should make reference to the porch design of other houses in the neighborhood of the same style and period. Synthetic materials are highly discouraged.*
5. Replacement posts and railings should match the proportions and stylistic elements of the existing porch, or else, at the discretion of the SHPC, they may be designed to minimize their visibility. *If prominent, new posts and railings should not look either too beefy or too skinny in comparison to other porch elements such as corner posts and other details.*
6. The spacing of replacement balusters should be in proportion to the style of the historic building.
7. Cast or wrought-iron porch supports should not replace brick or wooden posts.
8. *Steps should be made of materials compatible with the style of the historic building.*
9. *Porch skirting may be made out of lattice or boards, either sawn or vertical. Synthetic materials, with or without fake wood grain, are not allowed. Lattice spacing should be tight enough to minimize the visibility of the interior space and structure under the porch.*
10. Additional porch elements should not be added if they did not exist historically. For instance, the addition of decorative "gingerbread" brackets to a Craftsman-style porch is inappropriate.
11. Balustrades or railings should not be added unless there is historical evidence that a balustrade existed on the porch. *Railings that must be added for modern code considerations should be compatible with the design, materials and scale of the original porch. If alteration to the height of the railing or balustrade is required by building code, new designs should retain the proportions of the original railing height.*
12. The addition of a porch which would not have existed on a house historically, such as an elaborate, highly detailed porch on a secondary entrance, is strongly discouraged.
13. *Open porches and porticos should not be permanently enclosed or filled with windows.*
14. *Pressure-treated wood must be painted or wrapped and match the style and appearance of other historic wooden elements.*
15. *Any new porch work must not destroy, damage, or obscure historic details and must be reversible.*

In a densely built environment like Somerville, porches also act as a transitional area between private interior space and the surrounding neighborhood. Similar to porches, other transitional areas include balconies, decks, and covered entries.

Staff Findings: Staff finds that the planned alterations to the porch do not significantly detract from the historic character of the Italianate house. The porch will be more open and not obscure the entry. It will be constructed of traditional materials and in a neutral design.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the information provided and an assessment of the proposal against the Somerville LHD guidelines and ordinance, Staff recommends A Certificate of Appropriateness with the following conditions:

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. If changes are necessary to the proposed design for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.
3. The front porch shall be rebuilt using a simple wood rail, baluster and post system.
4. The porch and steps shall fit into the existing footprint.
5. A new porch skirt may be vertical wood sawn board or lattice oriented in either a diagonal or vertical directions.
6. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate and approved plans.



