



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 2019.030

Date: June 18, 2019

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 501 Mystic Valley Parkway

Applicant Name: 501 MVP, LLC

Applicant Address: 165 Hunt Road, Chelmsford

Owner Name: DiCecca Realty Trust

Owner Address: 18 Gunning Point Road, Falmouth, MA

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish the c. 1949 brick dwelling at 501 Mystic Valley Parkway

HPC Hearing Date: June 18, 2019

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. **Subject Property:** The subject property is a c.1949 1 ½ story mid-century modern brick 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 On Tuesday, May 21, 2019, the Historic Preservation Commission voted (6-0) to determine the c. 1949 brick dwelling dwelling at 501 Mystic Valley Parkway '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 501-503 Mystic Valley Parkway begins with its construction in 1949-1950.

The subject building is found importantly associated with Anthony W. DiCecca, a prominent lawyer in the area.

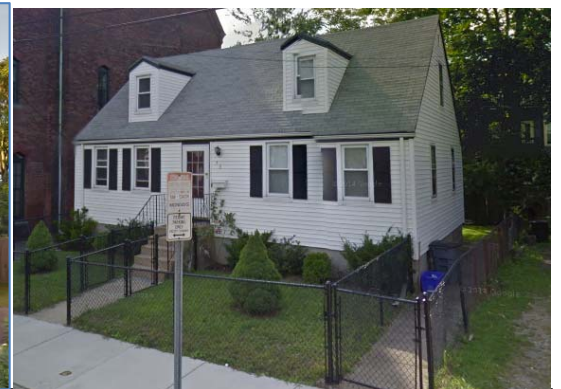
The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its clear mid-century modern style not typical of Somerville architecture. The alterations are clearly reversible.

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 age of the structure, the modest 1½ story massing, material and size. There are no exact equivalents. Only 7 buildings of 1 to 1 ½ stories tall were built in the years 1949-1950. One was so massively altered to be unrecognizable. Two were diminutive workers houses, which leaves the three buildings pictured here. They are all wood-frame and constructed in a more traditional Cape Cod style than the modern brick H-shaped house at 501 Mystic Valley Parkway. The DiCecca house is unique, constructed of brick with interior and exterior details that point to a design by a known architect and a clear conversation between that architect and the client.



2 Wheeler Street, 51 Sawyer Avenue, 10 Wesley Park

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 (rooftop hot tub). 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 association with Anthony W. DiCecca, a prominent lawyer in the area who had been the City Solicitor on 1949-1950. His wife was active in several clubs and societies. Anthony W. DiCecca who grew up in the Brickbottom area of Somerville, represents the assimilation of the Italian immigrant into the Massachusetts mainstream in the course of a generation.
- The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its clear mid-century modern style and the detailing that points the design as the product of a trained and known architect. The building is atypical of Somerville architecture.

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 and a high hedge which separates the house and yard from the Parkway.

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

- The City of Somerville has few examples of modern mid-century architecture. The three schools (Conway, Pope and Healey) designed by Perley F. Gilbert Associates in the late fifties have been demolished. There are no other known houses of this era constructed of brick.



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 501 Mystic Valley Parkway is a unique architect-designed mid-20th century modern structure in the City. It has strong associations with Anthony W. DiCecca, prominent lawyer in the area who had been the City Solicitor on 1949-1950. His wife was active in several clubs and societies. Anthony W. DiCecca who grew up in the Brickbottom area of Somerville, represents the assimilation of the Italian immigrant into the Massachusetts mainstream in the course of a generation.

III. RECOMMENDATION

