



**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 PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT**

---

Site:	6-8 Spring Street
Case:	HPC 2017.036
Applicant Name:	Anthony Fava & Ryan Hunt
Date of Application:	May 30, 2017
Date of Significance:	June 27, 2017
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	August 1, 2017



*\*A determination of Preferably Preserved begins a nine month Demolition Delay.*

---

**I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance**

On Tuesday, June 27, 2017, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 6-8 Spring Street 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 / or**

(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.*

According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as c. 1887.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission found the subject building importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to

associations with the working class of Somerville, the Mansard style of architecture modified for workers housing, and the ownership of the building by prominent business man, William M. Armstrong.

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission found the subject building historically and architecturally significant due to integrity of form, massing, and building style. It is immediately recognizable as a Mansard workers cottage with intact details particularly the unusual brackets, the Beverley jogs and the original windows on the left side. Its proximity to the industrial corridor along Somerville Avenue and the Fitchburg Railroad Line is also of importance as source of employment.

## II. Additional Information

### *Additional Research:*

- The scale of the lower portion of Spring Street relates to the workers housing originally found along Somerville Avenue, Pitman Street, Garden Court and other side streets during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. New taller structures have been erected at the corner of Spring and Somerville Avenue. They do not affect the scale of the houses along Spring and Pitman Streets.
- There is Mansard cottage around the corner on Pitman Street that has been altered by the same developer who is requesting the demolition of 6-8 Spring Street.
- The 6-8 Spring Street is not a Mansard but more properly a gambrel. Beverly jogs are characteristic of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Massachusetts dwellings. There is only one known example in Somerville at 117 Washington Street (*ca.* 1783). The subject building may be an altered (given more fashionable brackets and fenestration) 18<sup>th</sup> century structure moved to this location in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. 28 Nashua Street and 78 Sycamore Street are to 18<sup>th</sup> century buildings that were relocated. Parker and Brighton Streets in Charlestown have similar roof lines on *c.* 1875. The actual age and style can only be determined by interior investigations.
- Armstrong's Cooperage was located at 74 Somerville Avenue, next to the Squires and North Meat Packing plants.

### *Comparable Structures:*

There are no completely comparable structures in this general neighborhood or elsewhere in the City. There are very few houses known to have Beverly jogs and none that are also gambrel or Mansard cottages. The Beverly jog is a characteristic late 18<sup>th</sup> century construction found in the Boston and North Shore areas of Massachusetts. 40 Pitman Street which had been a nearby Mansard cottage was enlarged to the extent that it can no longer be called a cottage.



**Relocated 18<sup>th</sup> Century Structures: 28 Nashua Street *c.* 1800 and 78 Sycamore Street, *c.* 1714**





117 Washington Street, c. 1783



J. Woodbury House, Salem c.1774



6-8 Spring Street, c. 1887?



Parker Street, Charlestown c. 1875

There are variations in the pitch of the gambrel roofs and the location of the Beverly jog in relation to the roof peaks. Note the 3 and 5 bay patterning of the known older houses and the placement of the second floor windows against the eaves.

A series of gambrel/mansard houses can be found on Parker and Brighton Streets in Charlestown and appear on the 1875 Hopkins Atlas. These do not have Beverly jogs, are single-family, are taller and have a similar pitch to the roof.

### III. 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:*

- a) *How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

The form and massing of this two-family dwelling is a rare residential building type within the City and elsewhere. The building is located a short half block off Somerville Avenue in a neighborhood of similarly scaled properties. There have been some recent late 20<sup>th</sup> century and early 21<sup>st</sup> century incursions of larger scale buildings although the adjacent industrial building is a single story.

*b) What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*

The Commission found that integrity of this two-family dwelling is retained within the location and form, as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design. The structure retains integrity of location through siting and orientation as well as through spatial relationships to other buildings along Spring Street. The main massing components are unchanged.

*c) What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*

The Commission found the subject building importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to associations with the working class of Somerville, the Mansard style of architecture modified for workers housing, and the ownership of the building by prominent business man, William M. Armstrong.

The Commission found the subject building historically and architecturally significant due to integrity of form, massing, and building style. It is immediately recognizable as a Mansard workers cottage with intact details particularly the unusual brackets, the Beverley jogs and the original windows on the left side. Its proximity to the industrial and commercial corridor along Somerville Avenue and the Fitchburg Railroad Line is also of importance as source of employment

*d) What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*

The subject parcel is highly visible on the lower section of Spring Street at the base of Spring Hill and is located just off Somerville Avenue. The loss of the building and a change of scale would irremediably alter the neighborhood.

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

The rarity of the building type is of especial interest. There are no similar examples to be found anywhere within the City limits. It should be noted that this is a rare type of building throughout New England. Further interior investigation which would reveal the age and construction of 6-8 Spring Street is needed for a full evaluation.

***Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?***

The Commission found the subject building importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to associations with the working class of Somerville, the Mansard style of architecture modified for workers housing, and the ownership of the building by prominent business man, William M. Armstrong.

The Commission found the subject building historically and architecturally significant due to integrity of form, massing, and building style. Staff finds that the gambrel workers cottage with intact details particularly the unusual brackets, the Beverley jogs and the original windows on the left side is unique. Its proximity to the industrial and commercial corridor along Somerville Avenue and the Fitchburg Railroad Line is also of importance as source of employment

Significance is also due to the ability of the subject parcel to convey integrity regarding location and form as well as, to a moderate degree, design. The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above convey that this type of dwelling is rare throughout New England. The associated



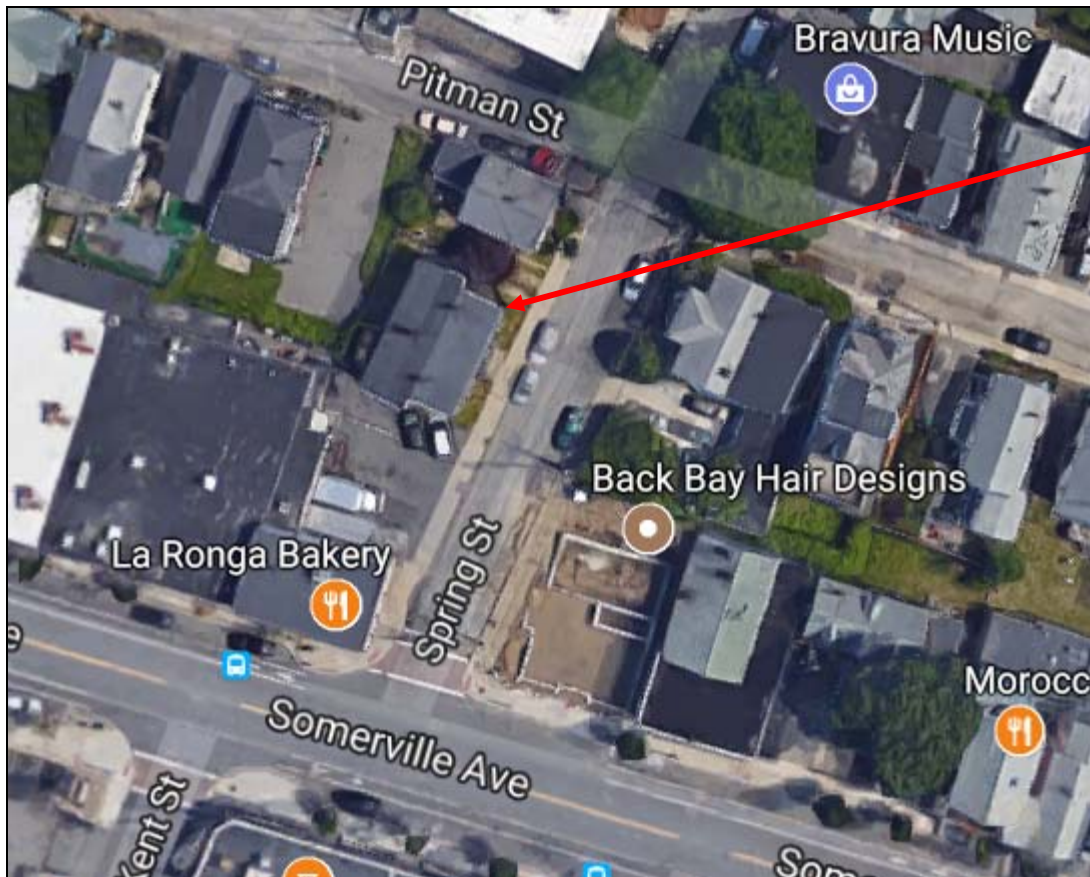
streetscape is characteristic of the working class neighborhoods developed over time. Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 6-8 Spring Street detrimental to the heritage of the City.

#### IV. 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 hearing for a Determination of Preferably Preserved. 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.*

In accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 4.D, Staff find the potential demolition of the subject structure detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently not in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the rarity of this type of residential dwelling and associated streetscape within the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 6-8 Spring Street Preferably Preserved.**

*If the Historic Preservation Commission determines the structure is Preferably Preserved, the Building Inspector may issue a demolition permit at anytime, upon receipt of written advice from the Commission that there is no reasonable likelihood that either the owner or some other person or group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the subject building or structure (Ord. 2003-05, Section 4.5).*



6-8 Spring Street, aerial view