



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 2019.016
Determined Significant: April 16, 2019

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT
for
Determination of Preferably Preserved

Site: 7 Washington Street

Applicant Name: WashDev2 LLC

Applicant Address: 22 McGrath Highway, Somerville, MA

Owner Name: Same

Owner Address: Same

Petition: Applicant seeks to demolish a circa 1869 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 7 Washington Street begins with its construction *prior to* 1874. The Mansard or Second Empire style is characterized by the double-pitched roof with a steep lower slope and dormers, and use of brackets and cornices. This style was popular 1855-1885.

The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its Mansard style architecture, and its associations with the notable Lariat family. It is one of two remaining Mansard cottages on Washington Street and sets the tone for the neighborhood going up Mount Vernon and Crescent Streets.

II. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

No additional information was found.

Comparable Structures:

The Second Empire or Mansards were a very popular style from 1855-1885. They are characterized by the double pitched roof with dormers. Somerville has several on its Local Historic District list. There are also a number of them scattered throughout Somerville. Looking at the $\frac{3}{4}$ view of the Boston and East



16 Lincoln Street LHD (c. 1885); 47 Franklin Street LHD (1869); 70 Pearl Street LHD (1870)



East Somerville showing the grouping of Second Empire homes in the neighborhood of 7 Washington Street

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 these structures (the only portion of the building within the purview of the HPC), retains a high degree of architectural integrity despite the simplification of the form. The street level additions on the buildings may be removed without substantial damage to the form of the buildings. The alterations reflect the evolution of this property through key eras of architectural change (cladding aside, which is easily removed). See determination of significance.

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

- The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its Mansard style architecture, and its associations with the notable Lariat family. It is one of two remaining Mansard cottages on

Washington Street and sets the tone for the neighborhood going up Mount Vernon and Crescent Streets. The Lariat family was known for their gold leaf. One was also noted as a balloonist.

(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 Washington Street, one of the oldest streets in the City, near the Sullivan Square intersection and the off ramp from I-93 close to the Boston / Charlestown line.

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

- The City of Somerville has many Second Empire or Mansard style wood-framed buildings scattered throughout the City in various states from near pristine to so altered that the building is not recognizable as a Second Empire or Mansard style home.

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 building is common throughout Somerville. The two small Second Empire homes on Washington Street epitomize the more domestic character that portions of the street had prior to the mid-20th century and serve as a gateway to the East Somerville neighborhood. The cultural association with the Lauriat family needs further research.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the information provided and an assessment of the building, Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission finds the property at 7 Washington Street to be **PREFERABLY PRESERVED**.