



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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November 4, 2020
Court remand of HPC 2013.085
Site: 9-11 Aldersey Street

STAFF MEMO
9-11 ALDERSEY STREET
COURT REMAND of HPC 2013.085

I. SUBJECT PROPERTY (IMAGE)



Right: Aerial view of 9-11 Aldersey Street. Rough property lines indicated.

II. TEXT OF LEGAL NOTICE

The purpose of this public meeting/public hearing is to approve materials and minor architectural details for two new residential structures at 9-11 Aldersey Street and to approve the restoration of the existing historic structure located at same, as ordered by Judge William Ritter of the Massachusetts Superior Court, Middlesex District, in accordance with his remand order. A Certificate of Appropriateness will be issued. Somerville Historic Preservation Commission case number: HPC 2013.085. Applicant Name: Gerard Meehan, Trustee for G&T Realty Trust.

III. ROLE OF THE HPC

In his remand order, Judge Ritter directs the HPC to consider “reasonable conditions” for the exterior treatment of the two proposed new structures at 9-11 Aldersey Street. Buildings “A” and “C” refer to the new structures throughout the court proceedings as well as in the plan set provided to the HPC.

The HPC is prohibited from altering the following in the plans provided:

- number of buildings
- square footage of the new buildings
- size and number of units
- general layout.

The design, height and height variations, configuration, massing, layout, footprint, and square footage of these buildings will not change. Additions and side wings will not be removed or shifted and the buildings will remain in their proposed location on the lot.

For buildings “A” and “C”, the HPC may address exterior materials and minor architectural elements only.

Building “B” will be restored as per the initial Certificate of Appropriateness issued by the HPC as part of case HPC 2013.085. The Certificate of Appropriateness for the work on Building “B” will be re-issued and become part of one overall Certificate of Appropriateness for the entire site.

IV. PRESERVATION PLANNING COMMENTS

The Preservation Planner met virtually with the Applicant’s attorney and project team as well as Assistant City Solicitor Shapiro on October 14, 2020. During this meeting, the Preservation Planner and the project team addressed multiple design elements on Buildings “A” and “C”.

The goal of this virtual meeting was for the Preservation Planner to work with the project team to refine minor architectural design elements of the original proposal denied by the HPC and to discuss the materials to be used on the new buildings.

As the Court has provided limited time for the HPC to complete this review and issue a Certificate, the Preservation Planner’s input pertaining to materials and minor architectural details was intended to recommend changes to the previously-denied proposal such that modified plans would advance and re-set the starting point for the HPC review of these items. The modified plan set is intends to present:

- improved symmetry among the design elements across the facades (particularly window bays and type of windows (single versus double, arched or oval versus rectangular and square)
- eliminate as much “blank” façade space as possible
- material options including those for clapboarding and trim

- redesigned architectural components such as dormers and appropriately re-sized (enlarged) windows
- alignment of building components with other façade elements (such as the relationship between the dormer placement and the window bays and corner boards below)
- regulating lines across facades
- material changes on site plan (hardscape)

The plan set that Preservation Planning provided to the HPC for their review in anticipation of the November 4, 2020 meeting reflects the outcome of that virtual meeting. At the end of this memo, Staff has provided recommended conditions for the HPC to consider adding to the Certificate of Appropriateness.

V. SITE PLAN

The Preservation Planner notes that, though not required, the applicant team took the Preservation Planner's suggestion to eliminate the impervious (largely bituminous in nature) material originally proposed for walkways and drive areas. They have been replaced with brick (for the walkways leading from the Aldersey public way) and brick pavers (driveway and drive areas for garage access).

The applicant team also incorporated the Preservation Planner's suggestion that the retaining wall at the rear of the property be faced in field stone.

It is the Preservation Planner's position that these un-required changes provide a site plan that is an improvement over that which was originally presented as part of the HPC 2013.05 proposal in terms of visual appearance and materials.

VI. MINOR ARCHITECTURAL CHANGES

Though the modified plan set has been provided to the HPC as a separate document, this section of the Staff memo provides side-by-side comparison images of the previously-denied building designs and the new, modified designs that are the result of the October 14, 2020 virtual meeting. Each façade of Building "A" and Building "C" is discussed individually. Staff calls out the changes on the post-meeting design.

This work undertaken by the Preservation Planner does not preclude the HPC from discussing with the applicant additional changes to the designs that are within the scope allowed by the Court remand.

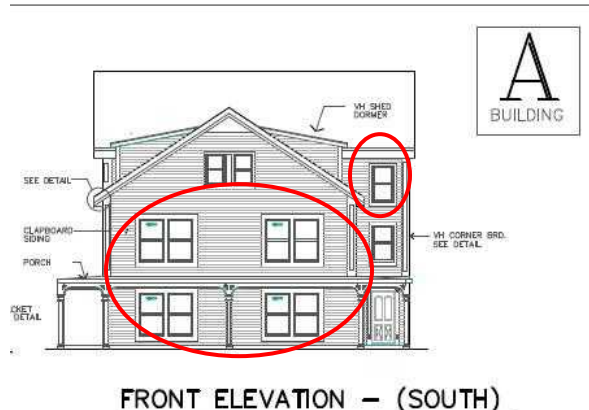
Building "A" front elevation

Post-meeting design changes include: re-sized windows, window on second floor above main entry door

Previously-Denied Design

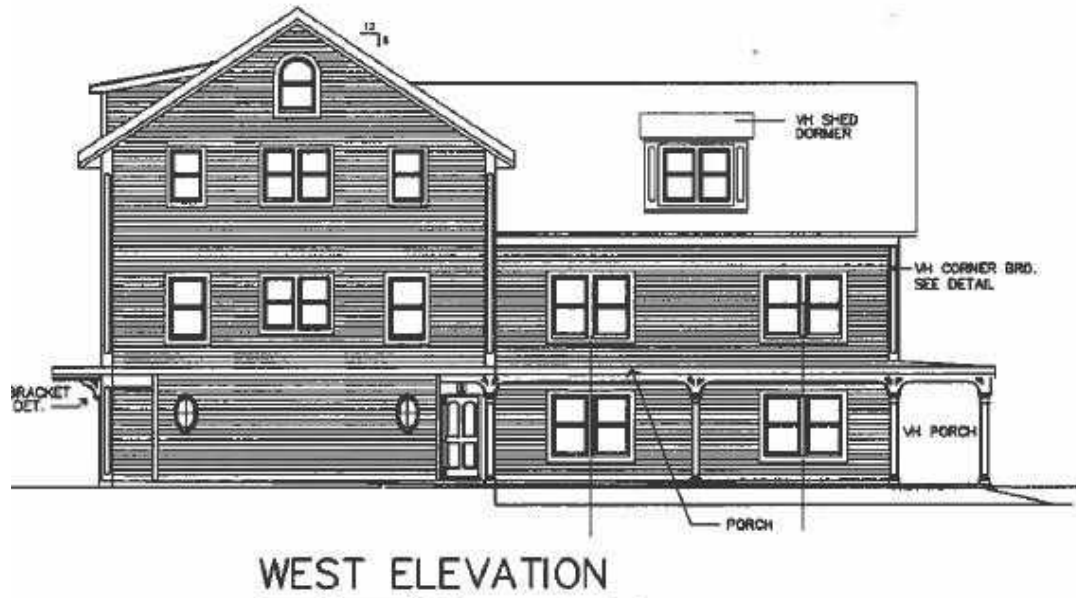


Modified Design



Building “A” left elevation

Post-meeting design changes include: re-sized windows, cross-gable replaces shed dormer and extends outward from façade to align with garage overhang roof below; changes to window groupings; arched window under gable changed to rectangular; removal of oval windows.

Previously-Denied Design***Modified Design***

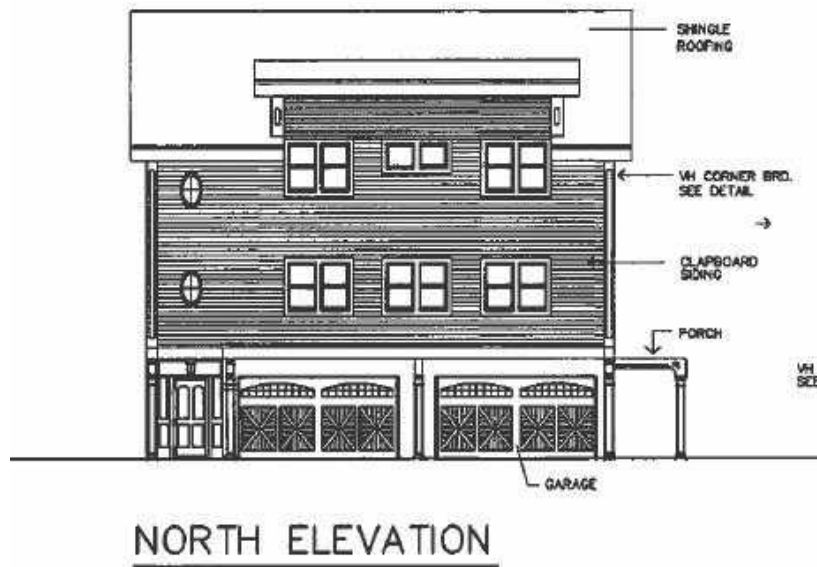
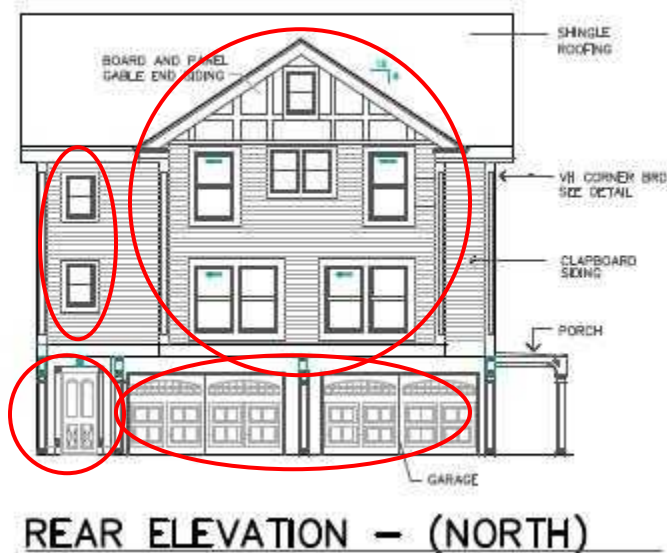
Building “A” right elevation

Post-meeting design changes include: re-sized windows, cross-gable replaces shed dormer and extends outward from façade to align with garage overhang roof below; changes to window groupings; arched window under gable changed to rectangular; removal of oval windows; change in side entry door design.

Previously-Denied Design***Modified Design***

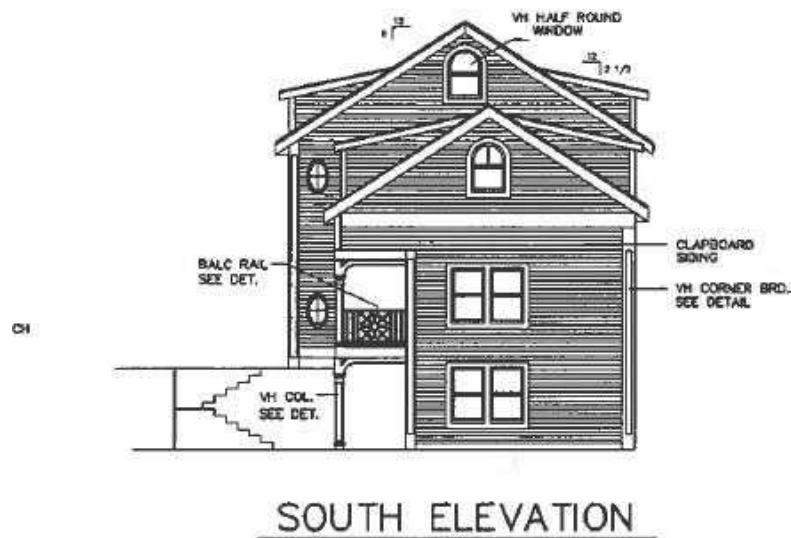
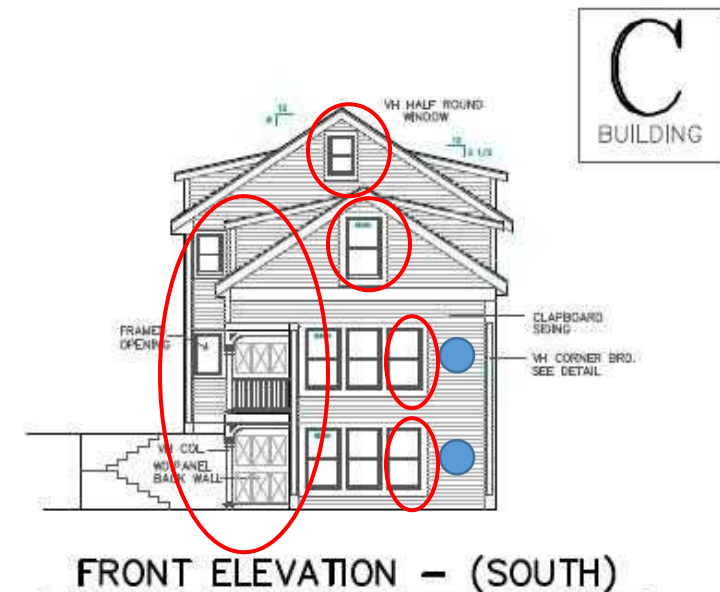
Building “A” rear elevation

Post-meeting design changes include: re-sized windows, cross-gable replaces shed dormer and extends outward from façade to align with garage overhang roof below; changes to window groupings; oval windows changed to rectangular; changes to garage door panel design; change to entry door design.

Previously-Denied Design***Modified Design***

Building “C” front elevation

Post-meeting design changes include: re-alignment and resizing of windows; including of additional window on first two floors of front façade; conversion of arched windows to rectangular; conversion of oval window to rectangular and framed opening, change of front deck railings from highly stylized to simple baluster, decorative paneling on left first story elevation to cover exposed concrete foundation, decorative paneling on wall of front elevation porch. Staff recommends that a small square window (location noted by blue dots). This would fill significant empty space on the front façade. Full-size windows would crowd the façade.

Previously-Denied Design***Modified Design***

Building “C” left elevation

Re-alignment of dormers: rear addition dormer brought back from roof ends and windows changed from double to triple. Windows on second story of rear addition changed from double to single, re-spaced and re-sized; alterations to panels on garage doors; alteration to bottom panel on entry door. Main body: dormers re-aligned to reside in the same vertical visual plan as the first and second-story windows. Porch rails changed from highly-stylized to simple baluster. Windows re-sized.

Previously-Denied Design***Modified Design***

Building “C” right elevation

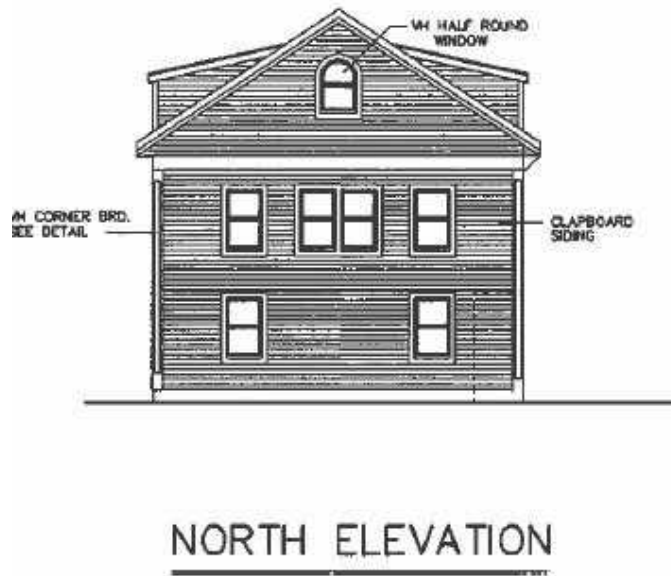
Front portion of building: dormers pulled away from end of roof plane and space between dormers diminished; windows re-sized. Rear portion of building: windows re-sized, windows in dormer increased from double to triple, windows added to either side of entry door, lower panel design of entry door changed.

Previously-Denied Design***Modified Design***

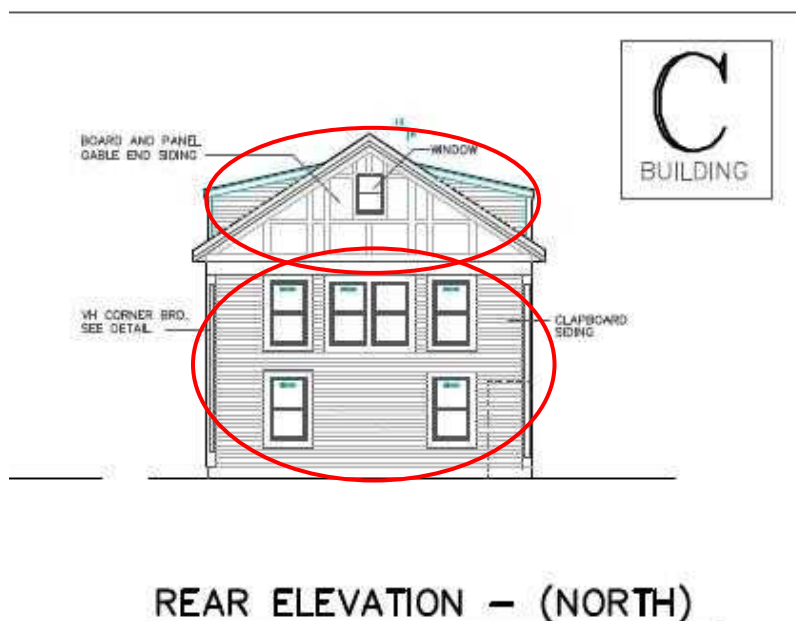
Building “C” rear elevation

Window under gable peak changed from arched to rectangular, horizontal clapboarding on pediment changed to cross-hatch design; windows re-sized.

Previously-Denied Design



Modified Design



VIII. APPLICABLE DESIGN GUIDELINE

It is the Preservation Planner's position that, in terms of the materials to be used on a structure in a Local Historic District (LHD), the existing Design Guidelines predominantly address this concern as it pertains to existing structures. The current Design Guidelines do not address materials for the construction of wholly new structures. The closest applicable Design Guideline is a portion of item 1 of "***E. New additions***".

The applicable portion of this Design Guideline that applies to the Court's remand order reads as follows, with the applicable portions indicated in ***bold italics*** only:

E. New additions

1. New additions should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and ***should be compatible in size, scale, material*** and character of the property and its environment. Where possible, new additions should be confined to the rear of the house.

It is the position of the Preservation Planner that, as these buildings are new construction, use of "traditional" and/or "non-traditional" materials (with the exception of vinyl trim and/or vinyl siding) is appropriate. As the overall design of Building "A" and Building "C" does not mimic any of the historic structures either in this particular LHD nor within the City entire, whether the materials used on the exterior of these buildings are "traditional" or "non-traditional" is immaterial to the overall outcome. The quality of the selected materials and the quality of their installation will be key to the final outcome of the project.

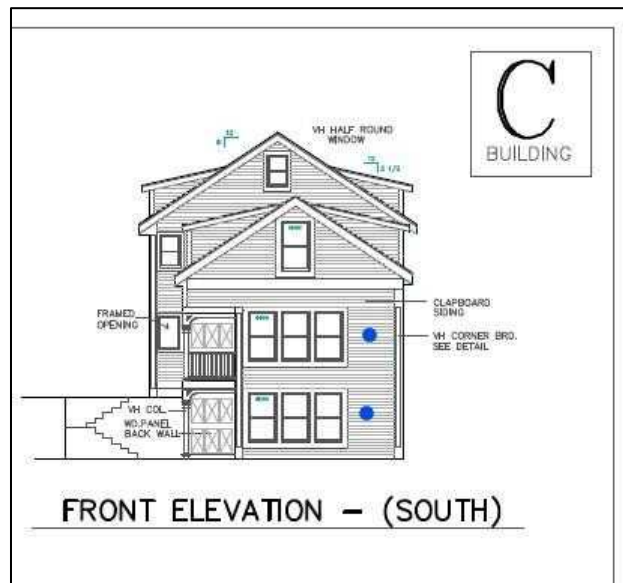
In terms of "scale", the only modification to the previously-denied plans that requires such an assessment is the modification made on the rear elevation of Building "A". The previously-denied plans presented a long shed dormer above the garage entry. This has been changed to a cross-gable. It is the position of the Preservation Planner that this cross gable should be evaluated only in terms of how it relates in size and scale to the building section to which it is attached. The Preservation Planner has taken this position because the overall design, scale, massing, location, and footprint of Buildings "A" and "C" are immutable according to the Court remand. Therefore, the only logical point of comparison for this cross-gable is the rear portion of Building "A". The Preservation Planner offers that this cross-gable is compatible in scale with the rear portion of Building "C" to which it is attached.

VII. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

The Preservation Planner recommends that the following conditions specific to Building "A" and Building "C" be added to the Certificate of Appropriateness.

1. The Applicant shall submit the Certificate of Appropriateness to the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) when applying for their permits.
2. The Applicant shall have the option to alter the material type used on the siding and trim for Building "A" and Building "C" as follows, should they so choose:
 - a. Siding: shall be hardwood or cementitious. If cementitious clapboarding is used, it shall be of smooth finish.
 - b. Trim: shall be hardwood, cementitious, or composite material

- c. Vinyl siding and/or vinyl trim shall not be permitted.
- 3. Railings (including top rails) and balusters for the porches on Building “C” shall be constructed of wood with the following options available:
 - a. Stained hardwood
 - b. Painted hardwood
 - c. Painted pressure-treated wood.
- 4. Roof shingles shall be a grey architectural shingle, with the shade of which shall be the Applicant’s choice.
- 5. All entry doors and garage doors shall be made of hardwood.
- 6. A small, square window shall be installed on the first and second story elevations of the front façade of Building “C”. This window shall contain one lite. The general location for each of the windows is indicated by the blue dots in the drawing immediately below:



- 7. All windows shall be one-over-one (with the exception of the two windows to be added to Building “C” as indicated in Condition #6 above) with the following stipulations:
 - a. Windows shall be of a quality such that a “warped” or mirrored reflection is not cast off from the glass.
 - b. Windows shall be solid wood OR shall be wood with an aluminum exterior that presents a matte finish.
 - c. Window casings shall comply with the materials requirements set forth in Condition #2 above. Window casings shall be installed such that they are not flush with the window itself in order to prevent the appearance of a flat façade and allow for shadow lines to be cast.

- d. Windows shall be reviewed and approved or denied by the Preservation Planner for Building “A” and Building “C”. The Applicant shall submit photos and material specs of the windows proposed. Photos shall be color and shall show the full window in profile and the window in section.

The final review process is a collaborative and often iterative process intended to provide the owner with some flexibility relating to materials. To that end, the Applicant shall submit his proposal(s) via email to historic@somervillema.gov, together with supporting text and photo examples as well as a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness for reference. The Preservation Planner shall exercise reasonable efforts to complete the materials review within fourteen (14) business days of the receipt of the Applicant’s email. The Applicant shall exercise reasonable efforts to respond to the Preservation Planner’s questions and/or requests for additional samples/information in order for the materials review to be completed within the 14 business day period. If the Preservation Planner does not reply to the materials review request within 21 business days, the materials shall be deemed approved.

8. Architectural panels covering the cement foundation on Building “C” and covering the south wall of the second story front porch of Building “C” shall be made of one of the following:
 - a. Painted hardwood
 - b. Painted pressure-treated wood
 - c. Painted/paintable cementitious material
 - d. Paintable composite material.
9. Should steps be required to be installed in order to access the front and/or side entries of Building “A” and Building “C”, the materials used for those steps and associated railings shall be submitted to the Preservation Planner for review and approval or denial. Vinyl rail, top-rail and baluster systems shall not be permitted.

The final review process is a collaborative and often iterative process intended to provide the owner with some flexibility relating to materials. To that end, the Applicant shall submit his proposal(s) via email to historic@somervillema.gov, together with supporting text and photo examples as well as a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness for reference. The Preservation Planner shall exercise reasonable efforts to complete the materials review within fourteen (14) business days of the receipt of the Applicant’s email. The Applicant shall exercise reasonable efforts to respond to the Preservation Planner’s questions and/or requests for additional samples/information in order for the materials review to be completed within the 14 business day period. If the Preservation Planner does not reply to the materials review request within 21 business days, the materials shall be deemed approved.

10. The architectural and design features of Building “A” and Building “C” are fixed through the issuance of this Certificate of Appropriateness to which the plans are appended. It is understood that, during the course of construction, an Applicant may wish to change some of these architectural and design features. The Applicant must submit a request to the Preservation Planner for these architectural and design changes prior to implementing them in the field.

It will be up to the professional discretion of the Preservation Planner as to whether the requested changes are “minor” in nature or whether they require the review and approval of the full Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) in a duly noticed public hearing.

Changes deemed minor in nature shall be reviewed and approved, denied, or alternatives negotiated by the Preservation Planner. If the proposed changes are denied by the Preservation Planner, the Applicant may put forth his proposal to the full Commission for their consideration at a duly noticed public hearing.

11. Materials to be used for the brick walkways and brick paver drive areas shall be reviewed and approved by the Preservation Planner.

The final review process is a collaborative and often iterative process intended to provide the owner with some flexibility relating to hardscape materials. To that end, the Applicant shall submit his proposal(s) by an email to historic@somervillema.gov, together with supporting text and photo examples as well as a copy of the Certificate of Appropriateness for reference. The Preservation Planner shall exercise reasonable efforts to complete the landscaping materials review within fourteen (14) business days of the receipt of the Applicant’s email. The Applicant shall exercise reasonable efforts to respond to the Preservation Planner’s questions and/or requests for additional samples/information in order for the landscaping materials review to be completed within the 14 business day period. If the Preservation Planner does not reply to the landscaping materials review request within 21 business days, the materials shall be deemed approved.

12. The Applicant shall contact the Preservation Planner at historic@somervillema.gov a minimum of 21 business days prior to final ISD sign-off so that the Preservation Planner and/or their designee can confirm that the project was completed according to HPC approvals.