



: July 18, 2017
C 2014.030 (2)
31 Benton Road

CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
JOSEPH A. CURTATONE
MAYOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

PRESERVATION STAFF REPORT

for

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site: 81 Benton Road c.1890 Lemuel Snow, Jr. House
Case: HPC 2013.075 Single Building Local Historic District 40 Bow Street
Date of Application: June 26, 2017

Applicant Name: Daniel Swartz, Trustee
Applicant Address: 81 Benton Road, Somerville, MA 02143
Owner Name: D G Properties, LLC
Owner Address: same as above

Petition: D G Properties, LLC, through its agent, Daniel Swartz, seeks permission from the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) to install a second front door.

HPC Hearing Date: July 18, 2017

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION: From the Form B.
This pattern-book Queen Anne house bears a resemblance in both form and decorative vocabulary to its neighbor at 85 Benton Road and both may possibly be the work of the same builder. 81 Benton Road is a 2-story gable-roofed house with a full-height gabled polygonal bay offset to the left. The gable roof of the bay projects slightly and is supported by over-scale consoles. The shed-roofed entrance porch has bulbous turned posts and openwork frieze. The placement of doors and windows suggest a sidehall floor plan.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL: The 1986 Form B has little information regarding the historic context of this building. This house and its neighbor 85 Benton Road are the only two houses shown on the street on the 1895 Bromley Atlas. By 1900, five more houses had been

constructed on Benton Road. According to a 1996 Planning Board report, the house had been an illegal rooming house. The new owner at that time was regularizing the house as a 2-family.

It is known that Lemuel Harlow Snow, Junior was the owner in 1895. The School Board gave him a posthumous citation for 22 years as a truant officer in 1908. According to a brief biography in Historic Leaves, he also worked for many years as a street car conductor on the old Cambridge Street Railway.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

Originally constructed as a single-family house, 81 Benton Road had been subdivided into two units with a shared entry. According to the Applicant, the interior arrangement of hall and doors made the second floor unit fully accessible to the ground floor tenants. The Applicant is reluctant to sacrifice the existing interior details of the house to achieve privacy for tenants of both floors and would like to install a second door matching the original door as an exterior entry into the front parlor in the original floor plan. The Applicant would like to install a second front door matching the original at right angles to the original front door. This is the second request for this alteration and the Certificate for the alteration had not been acted upon within a year of the issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness.

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

81	Benton Road	C/NA, C/A	Chris Riopel	1996.009	1) In-kind replacement of several wood window sashes. 1) Remove wrought iron handrail on front steps and install wood handrails and balusters to match existing porch rail as closely as possible; 2) Remove rear chimney and add a dormer on the rear of the building 3) Install a wood balustrade on top of rear addition for a deck; 4) Replace two second story windows with smaller wood windows and remove one small window at the rear of the southern elevation; and 5) Replace existing aluminum gutter with new wood gutters on front porch.
81	Benton Road	C/NA	Gordon Swartz	2014.029	1. The driveway shall be installed to match the existing in texture, size, shape, and installation detail. 2. The third floor rear deck shall be repaired and replaced in-kind to match the existing in texture, size, shape, and installation detail. 3. The missing, broken or loose slate shingles on the roof shall be replaced in kind to match the existing in texture, size, shape, and installation detail.

81	Benton Road	C/NA	Gordon Swartz	2014.030	1. The historic door would be retained. 2. The second entry door into the 'front parlor' ground floor unit match the existing in terms of <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Materials The window glazing shall have the same dimensions in height, depth and width as the existing front door. The new door shall have all the same proportions as the existing door including height, width and depth. The door shall have panels to match the existing panels in size, depth, number, location, and other details. The door casing shall have matching dimensions and details.
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III. FINDINGS FOR WINDOWS AND DOORS

The Somerville LHD guidelines pertaining to windows and doors are as follows:

C. Windows and Doors

- 1. Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.*
- 2. Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sill, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.*

The historic door would be retained. The Applicant intends to insert a second door opening into the front parlor and to match the existing door in all respects. The Applicant states that the interior arrangement of the building cannot be reconfigured to provide privacy for both units in the building. There is one entry to the house set deep within the front porch with a Queen Anne style window over the stairs to the south. See photo.

Staff finds that the proposed second door would be visible. Staff found that the house was converted officially to a two family in 1996.

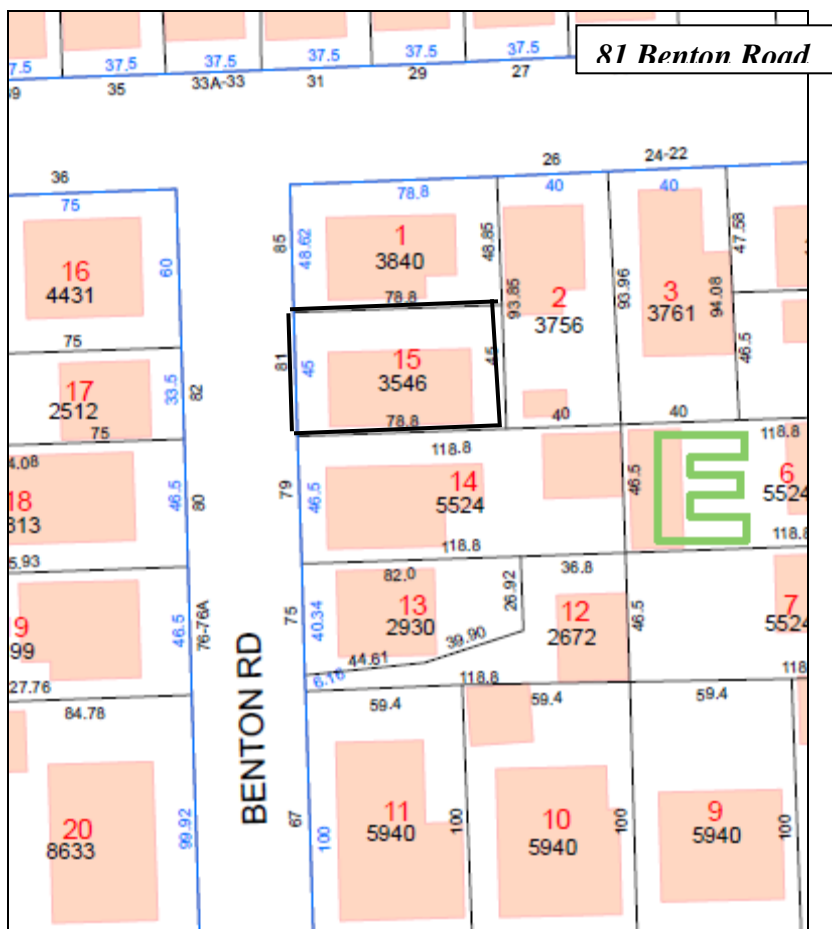
Staff finds that the proposed arrangement of front doors to be unusual. Typically on a two- or three-family house, there are either side by side doors or an entry vestibule with one door to the exterior. The house was constructed as a single-family and converted to an illegal rooming house. The house has been used since 1996 as a two-family home with no further change of external conditions. The house is a typical Queen Anne with an impressive front entry porch, door and side window illuminating the stairs.

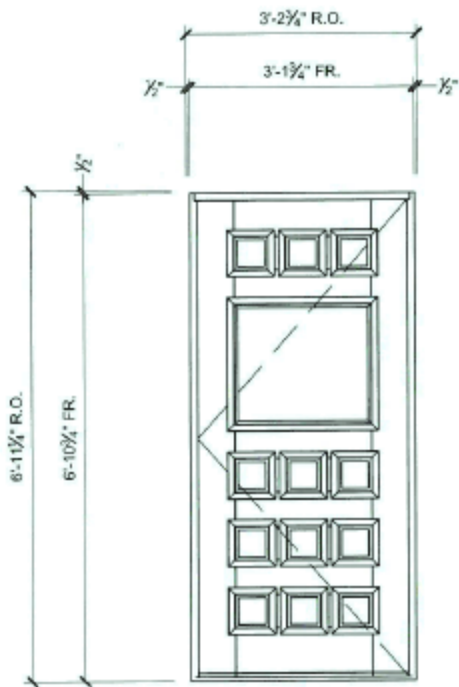
III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the 81 Benton Road Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Daniel Swartz a conditional Certificate of Appropriateness for 81 Benton Road based upon the following conditions and contingencies:**

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 historic door would be retained.
4. The second entry door into the 'front parlor' ground floor unit match the existing in terms of
5. Materials
6. The window glazing shall have the same dimensions in height, depth and width as the existing front door.
7. The new door shall have all the same proportions as the existing door including height, width and depth.
8. The door shall have panels to match the existing panels in size, depth, number, location, and other details.
9. The door casing shall have matching dimensions and details.
10. Applicant shall contact HPC Staff upon completion of the work for sign-off that the work was executed in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness (C/A).





A 1
LINE #: 10 QTY

Line #	Description
10	Special Entry Systems, Inswing Door Left, 37.75 X 82.75, 4-9/16"