



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

GEORGE J. PROAKIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION STAFF

SARAH LEWIS, *DIRECTOR OF PLANNING*
SARAH WHITE, *PLANNER/PRESERVATION PLANNER*
ALEX MELLO, *PLANNER*
MONIQUE BALDWIN, *ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT*

Case #: PB 2018-21
Date: March 21, 2019
Recommendations:

Special Permit and Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR): Conditional Approval*

* after acceptable redesign of Somerville Avenue frontage

PLANNING STAFF REPORT

Site: 300 Somerville Avenue

Applicant Name: Elan Sassoon

Applicant Address: P.O. Box 610312, Newton, MA 02461

Owner Name: 300 Somerville Avenue, LLC

Owner Address: 373 Highland Avenue, Suite 201, Somerville, MA 02144

City Councilor: J.T. Scott



Legal Notice: Applicant, Elan Sassoon, and Owner, 300 Somerville Avenue, LLC, seek Special Permits, Special Permit with Design Review and Special Permit with Site Plan Review to convert an existing church structure to 10 residential units with first floor commercial through the internal re-configuration of existing space and construction of additions/Gross Floor Area. Relief under SZO §4.4.1, 7.11*, Article 9 and Article 13. CCD-55 zone. Ward 2.

Dates of Public Hearing: Zoning Board of Appeals – March 20, 2019

*Relief is not needed under §7.11. Residential use is allowed in the CCD-55 zone as noted in §7.13.

I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Subject Property: The locus is situated along Somerville Avenue near the junction where Bow Street comes off of Somerville Avenue to the left. The property has more recently been used for religious purposes. The building presents 8,032 square feet of usable square feet and rests on a 6,664 square foot

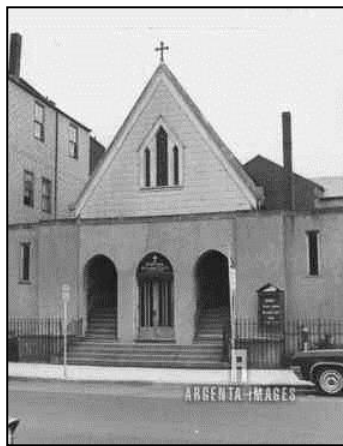
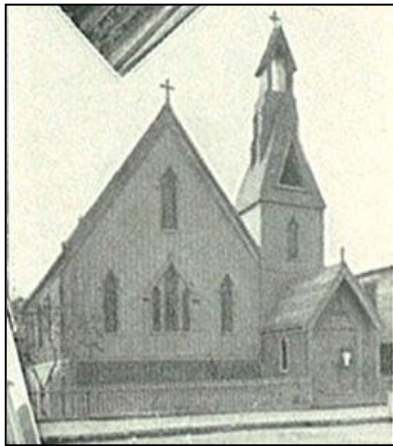
lot in the CCD-55 zoning district. The building runs from its Somerville Avenue frontage through the lot toward Washington Street, forming, as seen in line drawings and the aerial view, the “cross” formation seen with many older churches.



Above: Rough parcel area.

The portion of the building along Somerville Avenue was originally built circa 1870 as a church in the Gothic Revival style. Since its construction, this portion of the building has undergone significant exterior alterations as noted by the architectural historians who recently performed an architectural assessment of the structure¹.

The photo on the left below shows a c.1890s early photograph of the church closer to its Gothic Revival origin. The middle photo shows the church c.1960s when the façade had already begun to change and the steeple/bell tower had already been removed. The photo on the right is a recent street view of the building.

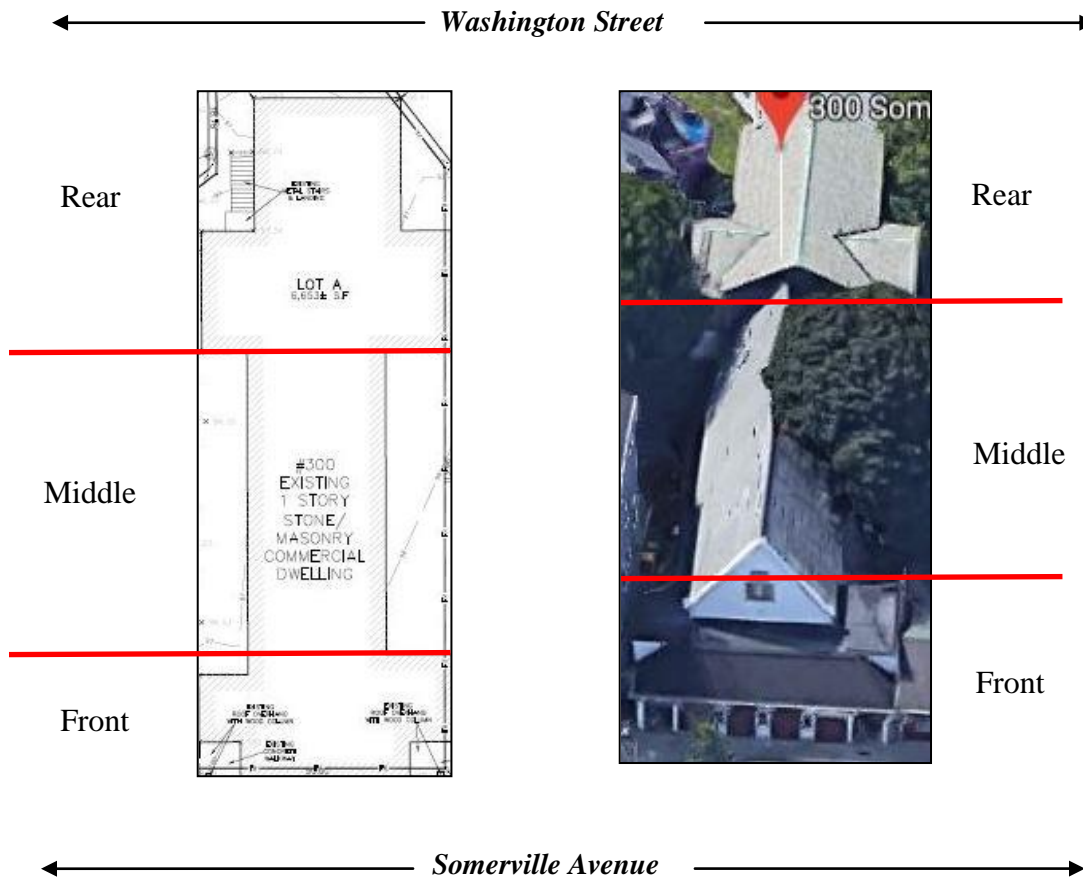


¹ The architectural survey form has been provided at the end of this report.

2. Proposal: The Applicant proposes renovating the existing building and converting it to mixed use. Two commercial spaces are proposed: one on the ground floor and one on the first floor of the renovated structure. Ten (10) residential units will be distributed across all floors (ground through third). One of these units will be provided at an affordable rate. A fractional payment will also be provided. The City's Housing Office will determine which unit will be made affordable and at what rate.

For discussion purposes, the building will be referred to in terms of its three principal sections as described and illustrated immediately below:

- Front (Somerville Avenue façade)
- Middle
- Rear (cast concrete/stucco-ed rear of building facing Washington St.)



A new façade is proposed for the front of the building and is intended to lightly illustrate, through views to the interior, the steep gable of the remaining church building. The middle portion of the building between the Somerville Avenue and Washington Street facades will be raised to accommodate new living space. Minimal exterior alteration is proposed for the rear, cast cement/stucco-ed portion of the church.

Access paths will flank the right and left sides of the building and this interior portion of the lot will be re-landscaped.

The proposed general programming for the commercial and residential units and associated parking is as follows:

Unit	Location	Total Sq. Ft.	PKG Req.
Commercial units			
Com. 1	Ground	1,005	Depends on combination of usage and sq footage
Com. 2	1st	674	Depends on combination of usage and sq footage
Residential units			
1	2 nd & 3 rd	1,210	1
2	Ground & 1st	1,246	1
3	Ground & 1st	928	1
4	Ground & 1st	975	1
5	Ground & 1st	972	1
6	Ground & 1st	1,446	1
7	2 nd & 3 rd	1,141	1
8	2 nd & 3 rd	1,026	1
9	2 nd & 3 rd	1,459	1
10	2 nd & 3 rd	1,713	1

Total: 10 spaces

The relief required for this project is as follows:

Item	Required	Existing	Proposed	Relief Needed
Parking	10	0	0	Special Permit ²
GFA	n/a	8,032	13,754	Special Permit

One affordable unit and a fractional payment will be provided under Article 13 of the SZO. Providing affordable units under Article 13 of the SZO does not require zoning relief. Invoking this article, however, allows for all parking relief needed to be granted under special permit only irrespective of the number of spaces of relief needed.

3. Green Building Practices:

The application states that the project will not exceed the stretch code.

4. Comments:

Ward Councilor: Councilor J.T. Scott has been involved with this project and has held a neighborhood meeting on the proposal.

Design Review Committee (DRC): The DRC reviewed this proposal on two occasions: February 7 and February 28, 2019. At their first meeting, the DRC asked the Applicant to return with further information regarding connectivity (egress and handicapped accessibility), building operations/services regarding location of mechanicals, mailboxes, and similar; landscape; design (regarding dormer slope).

² When affordable housing is provided under Article 13 of the SZO, all parking relief can be granted under special permit irrespective of the number of spaces of relief needed.

At their second meeting on February 28th, the Applicant discussed the above-noted items. The DRC spoke favorably of the proposed 300 Somerville avenue façade design and approved the proposal.

II. FINDINGS FOR SPECIAL PERMITS (SZO §4.4.1, Article 9, Article 13 and SPECIAL PERMIT WITH SITE PLAN REVIEW (SPSR)):

In order to grant a special permit, the SPGA must make certain findings and determinations as outlined in §5.1.4 of the SZO. This section of the report goes through §5.1.4 in detail.

1. Information Supplied:

The Staff finds that the information provided by the Applicant conforms to the requirements of §5.1.2 of the SZO and allows for a comprehensive analysis of the project with respect to the required Special Permits.

2. Compliance with Standards: *The Applicant must comply "with such criteria or standards as may be set forth in this Ordinance which refer to the granting of the requested special permit." Further, Section 4.4.1 of the SZO states that "[l]awfully existing one-and two-family dwellings which are only used as residences, which are nonconforming with respect to dimensional requirements, may be enlarged, extended, renovated or altered by special permit granted by the SPGA in accordance with the procedures of Article 5."*

Section 4.4.1 of the SZO allows for legally-existing, non-conforming structures other than one- and two-family residences to be enlarged by Special Permit as long as the proposed changes do not create a situation that is more detrimental to the site or surrounding neighborhood than current conditions.

GFA

Increasing the GFA of a structure by more than 25% requires a Special Permit. In the case of 300 Somerville Avenue, the GFA is increasing from 8,032 to 13,754. As discussed throughout this report, Staff finds that this proposal overall will be an asset to Union Square through the addition of 10 residential units (with one affordable and a fractional payment) and two new commercial spaces. In order to accomplish this amount of density, a significant increase in GFA is required. A significant portion of the existing building will be retained, but the GFA increase will be realized largely through the reconfiguration of unused interior spaces as well as the build-up of the middle "body" portion of the existing building.

3. Consistency with Purposes: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "is consistent with (1) the general purposes of this Ordinance as set forth in Article 1, and (2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those purposes at the beginning of the various Articles."*

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to lessen congestion in the streets; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to prevent the overcrowding of land; to avoid undue concentration of population; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to adequately protect the natural environment; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

Staff also finds that the proposal to be generally consistent with the purpose of the CCD-55 district which is to:

- *Encourage active mid-rise commercial and residential uses that contribute to a multi-modal-friendly street;*
- *Increase commercial investment in high-profile, accessible areas including retail that is largely neighborhood-serving in multi-tenant, mixed-use buildings;*
- *Preserve and complement historic structures;*
- *Discourage inappropriate, auto-oriented, significant trip-generating uses along transit corridors, and;*
- *Promote pedestrian and bicycle activity.*

The proposed alterations to the building are designed to provide a mixture of ground and first floor commercial spaces with residential uses behind and above. As the most recent use of this property is non-commercial, the proposed commercial spaces bring this structure more in line with the goals of the CCD zone. This property is located in the hub of Union Square and currently provides no parking spaces on-site. There will continue to be no on-site parking under the proposed conditions. As this property is sited less than ¼ mile from a major (future) transportation hub, the new Union Square Green Line station, it is appropriate that pedestrian access is encouraged rather than vehicular dependency.

4. Site and Area Compatibility: *The Applicant has to ensure that the project "(i)s designed in a manner that is compatible with the characteristics of the built and unbuilt surrounding area, including land uses."*

Surrounding Neighborhood:

300 Somerville Avenue is located at the nexus of Somerville Avenue and where Bow Street curves off to the left. Just two blocks further along the street, Somerville Avenue intersects with Washington Street which is anchored by St. Joseph Parish on the far right corner of the intersection.

This portion of Somerville Avenue is lined with single-story, commercial storefront buildings faced with cast concrete, brick, or wood. Two- and three- story commercial and mixed-use buildings of varying styles (flat-roofed, gabled, Mansard) dot the thoroughfare. 300 Somerville Avenue abuts 31 Union Square, a late 19th-century commercial building that currently houses Work Bar on the first floor.

Impacts of Proposal (Design and Compatibility):

Staff is less enthusiastic than the DRC about the design of the Somerville Avenue façade of the building.

The proposed rehabilitation of the middle “body” of the structure and the retention and minimal alterations to the rear portion of the church will be minimally visible from the Washington Street and Somerville Avenue public ways.

However, it is Staff’s position that the proposed Somerville façade needs some re-design in order for it to better acknowledge the general form of the remaining church frontage and contrast less with the general late 19th- / early 20th-century architecture of the surrounding neighborhood. Staff has no opposition whatsoever to modern design. It is Staff’s position however, that additional work on this modern design is

needed in order for this portion of the rehabilitated building to function more harmoniously with the overall streetscape of Union Square.

From a use perspective, Staff finds that the proposal to create a mixed-use site (2 commercial and 10 residential units that includes an affordable unit along with a fractional payment) will upgrade the site and this portion of Union Square in terms of added density and promoting pedestrian-oriented commercial spaces.

Applications for Special Permits with Site Plan Review in Residence Districts must meet the design guidelines under SZO §5.2.4. The design guidelines for residential districts are as follows:

- a. ***Buildings should be generally of the same size and proportions as those existing in the neighborhood. This shall apply in cases of multi-family development as well as one-, two-, and three-family units. For example, if relatively small two- and three-family structures are common in a neighborhood where multi-family development is proposed, the multi-family development should be physically broken into components that, from a design perspective, are housed in buildings of similar width, depth, and height as those typically found in the neighborhood.***

The existing building is a long, large building that is the result of several additions, multiple alterations and deletions. The proposal to renovate the building such that each portion of the building (front, middle, rear) is three stories in nature, is consistent with numerous buildings along Somerville Avenue.

- b. ***Use of traditional and natural materials is strongly encouraged (e.g. wood clapboard, wood shingles, brick).***

The cast concrete/stucco-ed rear portion of the church building will remain clad as such. The materials for the middle body of the building and as well as those used for a re-designed Somerville Avenue façade will be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff (as conditioned). Materials such as stone, brick, glass, wood will be preferred.

- c. ***Additions to existing structures should be consistent with the architecture of the existing structure in terms of window dimensions, roof lines etc.***

The dimensions of the existing structure vary significantly from the Somerville front of the lot to the rear due to the number of additions and alterations the building has undergone over the decades. As proposed, though the middle “body” of the building will be raised in height, the Applicant aims to minimize the view of these renovations from Somerville Avenue. The currently- proposed Somerville Avenue frontage design is not consistent with the architecture of the existing structure. However, Staff believes that with additional work, the proposal can be altered to provide a more harmonious presentation along the street front with the rest of Somerville Avenue as well as a more cohesive relationship with this architecturally-challenging structure.

- d. ***Although additions should not clash with or be incompatible to the existing structure, it is acceptable and even desirable for the new construction to be distinguishable from the existing building, perhaps by maintenance of design elements of the original building that would otherwise be lost (e.g. false rakes, fasciae, and the like).***

The proposed Somerville Avenue design, as proposed, is distinguishable from the existing structure in terms of design, form, and materials, yet efforts have been made to reference the gable end of the existing church building. Adding a modern addition to an “old” building is a practice that allows for each portion of the building being renovated to clearly stand on its own. This practice is accepted across disciplines, including historic preservation as outlined in the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards* regarding new additions to old or historic buildings. That said, as noted several times throughout this report, the current front design needs to be re-worked.

- e. *Where practical, new or infill building construction should share the same orientation to the street as is common in the neighborhood. When not contrary to any other zoning law, front and side yards should be of similar dimensions as those typical in the area.*

The main façade of the proposed building is oriented toward the street, in keeping with standard design practices implemented in the core of an urban area. The front and side yards are compliant with zoning.

- f. *Driveways should be kept to minimal width (perhaps a maximum of twelve (12) feet), and be designed so that no vehicle parked on the drive may straddle the public sidewalk in any way. Low barriers or plantings may be required to separate the parking area from the pedestrian space.*

N/A

- g. *Transformers, heating and cooling systems, antennas, and the like, should be located so they are not visible from the street or should be screened.*

This staff report has been conditioned in that items such as this shall be screened and that trash and recycling shall be picked up by private contractor. Trash and recycling shall be required to be stored inside until trash/recycling day.

- h. *Sites and buildings should comply with any guidelines set forth in Article 6 of this Ordinance for the specific base or overlay zoning district(s) the site is located within.*

Staff finds that, except for the items needing relief as noted at the outset of this report, the proposal meets the zoning for the CCD-55 district.

5. Functional Design: *The project must meet “accepted standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, and site construction.”*

Based upon feedback received to-date from various City departments, the project meets accepted standards and criteria for the functional design of facilities, structures, and site construction. Any necessary mitigation or minor design changes have been incorporated into the recommended conditions section and/or noted in other assessment sections of this report. If any further mitigation or design changes are needed once work on the site is in-progress, such issues will be addressed by appropriate City departments as-needed at that time.

6. Impact on Public Systems: *The project will “not create adverse impacts on the public services and facilities serving the development, such as the sanitary sewer system, the storm drainage system, the public water supply, the recreational system, the street system for vehicular traffic, and the*

sidewalks and footpaths for pedestrian traffic.”

The site is nearly completely covered by building and impervious material. Currently, there is only 9% landscaping on the site. All of this impervious material will be removed as part of this proposal and the landscaping will be increased to 22% (this is accomplished along the right and left side yards of the property. Impacts on the sanitary sewer system are likely, due to the number of units proposed. Therefore, it is a condition that if the minimum threshold is met, the Applicant shall make an I/I payment.

It is the intent of the CCD zones to encourage pedestrian access to commercial and residential sites. This project has been designed to be pedestrian-friendly given its Union Square location. As noted earlier, it is within ¼ mile of the Union Square Green Line stop.

7. Environmental Impacts: *“The proposed use, structure or activity will not constitute an adverse impact on the surrounding area resulting from: 1) excessive noise, level of illumination, glare, dust, smoke, or vibration which are higher than levels now experienced from uses permitted in the surrounding area; 2) emission of noxious or hazardous materials or substances; 3) pollution of water ways or ground water; or 4) transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception.”*

The proposed mixed commercial and residential use will not adversely impact the environment. No new noise, glare, smoke, vibration, nor emissions of noxious materials, nor pollution of water ways or ground water, nor transmission of signals that interfere with radio or television reception are anticipated as part of the proposal.

Typical construction noise and odors for a project this size can be expected. Ultimately, oversight and enforcement of environmental issues on the site rests with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and not with the City of Somerville.

8. Consistency with Purposes: *“Is consistent with: 1) the purposes of this Ordinance, particularly those set forth in Article 1 and Article 5; and 2) the purposes, provisions, and specific objectives applicable to the requested special permit with site plan review which may be set forth elsewhere in this Ordinance, such as, but not limited to, those at the beginning of the various sections.”*

Staff finds that the proposal is consistent with the general purposes of the Ordinance as set forth under §1.2, which includes, but is not limited to to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the inhabitants of the City of Somerville; to provide for and maintain the uniquely integrated structure of uses in the City; to protect health; to secure safety from fire, panic and other dangers; to provide adequate light and air; to facilitate the adequate provision of transportation, water, sewerage, schools, parks and other public requirements; to conserve the value of land and buildings; to adequately protect the natural environment; to encourage the most appropriate use of land throughout the City; to protect and promote a housing stock that can accommodate the diverse household sizes and life stages of Somerville residents at all income levels, paying particular attention to providing housing affordable to individuals and families with low and moderate incomes; and to preserve and increase the amenities of the municipality.

9. Preservation of Landform and Open Space: *The Applicant has to ensure that “the existing land form is preserved in its natural state, insofar as practicable, by minimizing grading and the erosion or stripping of steep slopes, and by maintaining man-made features that enhance the land form, such as stone walls, with minimal alteration or disruption. In addition, all open spaces should be designed and planted to enhance the attractiveness of the neighborhood. Whenever possible, the development parcel should be laid out so that some of the landscaped areas are visible to the neighborhood.”*

The site currently contains one large structure that runs through the lot from Somerville Avenue at the front towards Washington Street at the rear. The site is mostly covered with building and with bituminous material. The site is flat and completely devoid of natural features. The site is proposed to include increased permeability and 22% landscaping.

10. Relation of Buildings to Environment: *The Applicant must ensure that “buildings are: 1) located harmoniously with the land form, vegetation and other natural features of the site; 2) compatible in scale, design and use with those buildings and designs which are visually related to the development site; 3) effectively located for solar and wind orientation for energy conservation; and 4) advantageously located for views from the building while minimizing the intrusion on views from other buildings.”*

The proposed use of the site, mixed commercial and residential, is compatible with the CCD-55 zone and with the majority of the neighborhood. The front of the building will face the Somerville Avenue public way as do the other residential buildings on the street. Currently, there are no plans for solar installation, however. The abutters on the right and left sides of the property will have some of their views of the site interrupted. See earlier portions of this report for an assessment of design.

11. Stormwater Drainage: *The Applicant must demonstrate that “special attention has been given to proper site surface drainage so that removal of surface waters will not adversely affect neighboring properties or the public storm drainage system. Storm water shall be removed from all roofs, canopies, and paved area, and routed through a well-engineered system designed with appropriate storm water management techniques. Skimming devices, oil, and grease traps, and similar facilities at the collection or discharge points for paved surface runoff should be used, to retain oils, greases, and particles. Surface water on all paved areas shall be collected and/or routed so that it will not obstruct the flow of vehicular or pedestrian traffic and will not create puddles in the paved area. In larger developments, where practical, the routing of runoff through sheet flow, swales or other means increasing filtration and percolation is strongly encouraged, as is use of retention or detention ponds. In instances of below grade parking (such as garages) or low lying areas prone to flooding, installation of pumps or other devices to prevent backflow through drains or catch basins may be required.”*

The proposed project improves the permeability of this site through the installation of permeable hard surfaces and landscaping. The project further includes substantial pre-construction site work that will address water flow through the site itself. As is typical of a project of this scale, this report is conditioned to require the Applicant to submit their civil engineering plans to the City’s Engineering Department for their review, comment, and sign-off. The landscaping percentage will increase from 9% - 22% which will further help with permeability.

12. Historic or Architectural Significance: *The project must be designed “with respect to Somerville’s heritage, any action detrimental to historic structures and their architectural elements shall be discouraged insofar as is practicable, whether those structures exist on the development parcel or on adjacent properties. If there is any removal, substantial alteration or other action detrimental to buildings of historic or architectural significance, these should be minimized and new uses or the erection of new buildings should be compatible with the buildings or places of historic or architectural significance on the development parcel or on adjacent properties.”*

As the property is not being demolished, it does not come under the purview of the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). As this portion of Union Square is not a local historic district (LHD), it also does not come under the purview of the HPC. Though the creation of a Union Square LHD is part of the Union

Square neighborhood plan, due to the significant alterations this building has already undergone, as evident photographically and as noted by architectural historians, it is unclear as to whether this building would be included in such a district given its loss of architectural integrity. Regardless, this building does not fall under HPC purview. That said, as noted earlier in this report, changes to the Somerville Avenue façade design could make the proposal more sympathetic to the origins of the original church building on the site.

13. Enhancement of Appearance: *The Applicant must demonstrate that “the natural character and appearance of the City is enhanced. Awareness of the existence of a development, particularly a non-residential development or a higher density residential development, should be minimized by screening views of the development from nearby streets, residential neighborhoods of City property by the effective use of existing land forms, or alteration thereto, such as berms, and by existing vegetation or supplemental planting.”*

See Staff’s earlier comments in this report relative to the Somerville Avenue façade design.

14. Lighting: *With respect to lighting, the Applicant must ensure that “all exterior spaces and interior public and semi-public spaces shall be adequately lit and designed as much as possible to allow for surveillance by neighbors and passersby.”*

Staff has included a condition that all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.

15. Emergency Access: *The Applicant must ensure that “there is easy access to buildings, and the grounds adjoining them, for operations by fire, police, medical and other emergency personnel and equipment.”*

Emergency personnel will have access to the building from the front. The building is also required to meet state fire code, including full sprinkling. The City’s Fire Prevention personnel are responsible for inspecting and approving the building according to fire regulations.

16. Location of Access: *The Applicant must ensure that “the location of intersections of access drives with the City arterial or collector streets minimizes traffic congestion.”*

N/A

17. Utility Service: *The Applicant must ensure that “electric, telephone, cable TV and other such lines and equipment are placed underground from the source or connection, or are effectively screened from public view.”*

The Applicant is required to present their electrical/utility plan to Lights & Lines and Highways.

18. Prevention of Adverse Impacts: *The Applicant must demonstrate that “provisions have been made to prevent or minimize any detrimental effect on adjoining premises, and the general neighborhood, including, (1) minimizing any adverse impact from new hard surface ground cover, or machinery which emits heat, vapor, light or fumes; and (2) preventing adverse impacts to light, air and noise, wind and temperature levels in the immediate vicinity of the proposed development;”*

Minimal negative impacts are anticipated as a result of the proposed residential use. The site will be

improved through new drainage systems, landscaping, and pervious material. Furthermore, there will not be machinery that emits heat, vapor, light or fumes beyond those of a typical multi-unit residential use.

19. Signage: *The Applicant must ensure that “the size, location, design, color, texture, lighting and materials of all permanent signs and outdoor advertising structures or features shall reflect the scale and character of the proposed buildings.”*

N/A

20. Screening of Service Facilities: *The Applicant must ensure that “exposed transformers and other machinery, storage, service and truck loading areas, dumpsters, utility buildings, and similar structures shall be effectively screened by plantings or other screening methods so that they are not directly visible from either the proposed development or the surrounding properties.”*

Staff has conditioned this report to require interior storage of trash/recycling and private pick-up. Private snow removal is also required. Trash and recycling storage will be in the building until the night before pickup.

21. Screening of Parking: *The Applicant must ensure that “the parking areas should be screened or partitioned off from the street by permanent structures except in the cases where the entrance to the parking area is directly off the street.”*

N/A

Article 9 of the SZO

The application includes a request for a Special Permit for relief from the number of required parking spaces. Pursuant to SZO §9.13.g, projects incorporating inclusionary housing may reduce the total number of parking spaces if the Applicant submits documentary evidence that parking is adequate to serve the development. The requirements of Article 9 shall be considered met if approval is granted for the requested Special Permit under SZO §9.13.

As noted earlier in this report, when inclusionary units are being provided under Article 13 of the SZO, parking parking relief can be requested as a Special Permit, regardless of the number of spaces of relief that are needed. Pursuant to §9.13 of the SZO, Staff provides the following assessment:

1. *Increase in traffic volumes:* Given that 10 residential units will be provided on the 109-111 Prospect Street site, it can be assumed that some increase in traffic volumes will occur due to the uptick in site density. However, this property is sited less than ¼ mile from the future Green Line stop in the heart of Union Square. The proposal to not provide parking in this location is consistent with the proposed zoning for this area.
2. *Increased traffic congestion or queuing of vehicles:* The project is in the heart of Union Square. This area is undergoing significant infrastructure work and will continue to over the next several years. It is certainly possible that there will be increased traffic congestion and queuing of vehicles during the lengthy transformation of this area *in general*, however, this will be largely due to the massive changes to the transportation systems and infrastructure in this area as opposed to this specific project.

The property has most currently served as a house of worship and provides no on-site parking for parishioners. Houses of worship hold events and meetings beyond “regular” service hours.

Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that the more consistent comings-and-goings to this *general area* by future residents of this site will be less impactful on traffic congestion and vehicle queuing than with well-attended church events.

3. *Change in the type(s) of traffic*: Construction-related vehicles will be approaching and retreating from the site during the construction phase. Trash/recycling pickup and snow removal vehicles will be present when required.
4. *Change in traffic patterns and access to the site*: There will be no changes to the traffic patterning approaching or leaving the site as a result of this project.
5. *Reduction in on-street parking*: The site currently provides no on-site parking and this will continue to be the case under the proposal. It is certainly possible that some residential units will have one or more cars associated with them and that those residents will have to procure off-site parking arrangements or will be park on nearby public streets.

6. Housing Impact:

Will provide one (1.0) affordable housing unit (along with a fractional payment) and add nine (9) market-rate units to the City's housing stock (11 total units for project).

7. SomerVision Plan:

The proposal significantly rehabilitates property in the heart of Union Square and provides pedestrian-friendly housing and commercial opportunities. The proposal provides for an affordable housing unit and a fractional payment. The landscaped area will be increased from 9% to 22% on a lot that is largely already built-out, and all bituminous material will be removed from the site.

III. RECOMMENDATION

Special Permits under §4.4.1, Article 13, and Article 9, Special Permit with Site Plan Review (SPSR).

Based on the materials submitted by the Applicant, the above findings and subject to the following conditions, the Planning Staff recommends **CONDITIONAL APPROVAL** of the requested **SPECIAL PERMITS** and **SPECIAL PERMIT WITH SITE PLAN REVIEW (SPSR)** after acceptable re-design of the Somerville Avenue building façade.

The recommendation is based upon a technical analysis by Planning Staff of the application material based upon the required findings of the Somerville Zoning Ordinance, and is based only upon information submitted prior to the public hearing. This report may be revised or updated with new recommendations, findings and/or conditions based upon additional information provided to the Planning Staff during the public hearing process.

#	Condition	Timeframe for Compliance	Verified (initial)	Notes								
1	Approval is to renovate the existing building to create 10 residential units (one of which will be affordable) and two commercial units. Increase the GFA by more than 25%. Parking relief for 10 spaces.	BP/CO	ISD/Pln g.									
	<table><tr><th>Date</th><th>Submission</th></tr><tr><td>January 24, 2019</td><td>Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office</td></tr><tr><td>February 7, 2019</td><td>Updated plans received by OSPCD</td></tr><tr><td>February 27, 2019</td><td>Updated plans received by OSPCD</td></tr></table>				Date	Submission	January 24, 2019	Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office	February 7, 2019	Updated plans received by OSPCD	February 27, 2019	Updated plans received by OSPCD
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	January 24, 2019				Initial application submitted to the City Clerk’s Office							
	February 7, 2019				Updated plans received by OSPCD							
February 27, 2019	Updated plans received by OSPCD											
Any changes to the approved elevations that are not <i>de minimis</i> must receive SPGA approval.												
Affordable Housing												
1	Affordable Housing Implementation Plan (AHIP) shall be approved by the OSPCD Housing Division and executed prior to issuance of Building Permit. Affordable units shall be provided on-site.	BP	Housing									
2	Written certification of the creation of affordable housing units, any fractional payment required, or alternative methods of compliance, must be obtained from the OSPCD Housing Division before the issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy (C.O.). No C.O. shall be issued until the OSPCD Housing Division has confirmed that the Affordable Housing Restriction has been approved and recorded and the developer has provided the promised affordable units on-site.	CO	Housing									
3	No Certificate of Occupancy shall be issued until the OSPCD Housing Division has confirmed that: (for Condominium Projects) the Condominium Documents have been approved and the Developer has agreed to a form of Deed Rider for the Affordable Unit(s), or (for Rental Projects) the Developer has agreed to and executed a Memorandum of Understanding for Monitoring of the Affordable Unit(s).	CO	Housing									
4	The OSPCD Housing Division shall determine which unit shall be inclusionary and at what rate.	CO	Housing									
Construction Impacts												
5	The applicant shall post the name and phone number of the general contractor at the site entrance where it is visible to people passing by. This information shall be posted to be easily readable from the public sidewalk along Prospect Street.	During Construction	ISD									

6	All construction materials and equipment must be stored onsite. If occupancy of the street layout is required, such occupancy must be in conformance with the requirements of the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices and the prior approval of the Traffic and Parking Department must be obtained.	During Construction	T&P	
7	<u>Construction shall occur from 7:30am – 5:00pm Monday-Friday ONLY. There shall be no construction or construction-related work allowed on the weekends or holidays or after hours. This includes deliveries.</u>	During Construction	ISD	
8	A construction traffic management plan shall be submitted to Traffic and Parking for their review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	T&P	
Design				
9	Applicant shall provide final material samples for siding, trim, windows, and doors to Planning Staff for review and approval prior to the issuance of a building permit.	BP	Plng./ISD	
Site				
10	The property shall be re-landscaped. All landscaping materials including those used for plantings, hardscape and fencing shall first be submitted to and approved by Planning Staff prior to ordering or installation.	Prior to ordering/installation / CO	Plng./ISD	
11	All bituminous material and/or cement shall be removed from the site and be replaced with pervious pavers, pea stone or similar. All materials to be used shall be submitted to Planning Staff for their review and approval prior to ordering/installation.	Prior to ordering/installation / CO	Plng./ISD	
12	The location of transformers and any mechanicals shall be included on an updated landscaping plan that shall be submitted with the building permit application. Location of all mechanicals and transformers shall be reviewed and approved by Planning Staff.	BP	Plng./ISD	
13	Garbage and recycling locations shall be clearly indicated on site plans. Storage areas shall be inside of the structure or shall be fully screened from view from both the public way and abutters by an appropriate material reviewed and approved by staff. The location shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress.	BP	Plng.	
Engineering				
14	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to obtain street addresses prior to a building permit being issued.	BP	Eng	
15	The proposed basement finished floor elevation shall not be less than is 1 foot above the Seasonal High Ground Water elevation. The seasonal high ground water elevation shall be determined by a Massachusetts certified soil evaluator and stated on a signed soil test pit log.	BP	Eng.	
16	The Applicant shall complete the Site Plan Review Checklist and supply the information to the Engineering Office. The plans must comply with the City's Stormwater Management Policy.	BP	Eng.	

17	The applicant must comply with the: "Policy for new connections to and modifications to existing connections to the municipal sewer and drainage system stormwater management and infiltration/inflow mitigation." The Applicant shall work with Engineering to meet this condition and provide the required fees/mitigation.	CO	Eng.	
18	The Applicant shall submit a proposed drainage report, stamped by a registered PE in Massachusetts that demonstrates compliance with the City's stormwater policy.	BP	Eng.	
19	The Applicant must contact the Engineering Department to coordinate the timeline for cutting or opening the street and/or sidewalk for utility connections or other construction. There is a moratorium on opening streets from November 1st to April 1st and there is a list of streets that have additional opening restrictions.	BP	Eng	
Miscellaneous				
20	Granting of the applied for use or alteration does <u>not</u> include the provision for short term rental uses, such as AirBnB, VRBO, or the like. Separate approvals are needed for the aforementioned uses.	Perpetual	ISD / Plng.	
21	Trash and recycling shall be stored in the building until trash/recycling night.	Perpetual	ISD	
22	Trash shall be picked up by a private contractor.	Perpetual	ISD	
23	Snow removal shall be undertaken by a private contractor and all shoveled/plowed snow shall be removed from the site.	Perpetual	ISD	
24	The Applicant shall develop a demolition plan in consultation with the City of Somerville Inspectional Services Division. Full compliance with proper demolition procedures shall be required, including timely advance notification to abutters of demolition date and timing, good rodent control measures (i.e. rodent baiting), minimization of dust, noise, odor, and debris outfall, and sensitivity to existing landscaping on adjacent sites.	Demolition Permitting	ISD	
25	Gas and electric meters shall not be on the front of the structure. Gas and electric meters may be located on the side of the structure but shall be screened from the street by a hardy, staff approved evergreen planting. Utilities shall not be located adjacent to windows and shall not impact any parking, landscaping, or egress. The provisions of this condition may be waived by staff if the applicant submits a letter from the utility, signed by a utility representative, on utility letterhead, indicating that there is no feasible alternative to placing meters in violation of this condition.	CO	ISD	
26	Electrical conduits on the exterior facades of buildings shall be painted to match the wall material to which they are attached. Conduits are not allowed on the front of any structure.	CO	Plng.	

27	The Applicant, its successors and/or assigns, shall be responsible for maintenance of both the building and all on-site amenities, including landscaping, fencing, lighting, parking areas and storm water systems, ensuring they are clean, well-kept and in good and safe working order.	Perpetual	ISD	
28	Prior to receiving a building permit, the applicant will sign a covenant agreeing to provide \$2.40 per square foot of total development on the site to the City of Somerville as a payment towards the City's contribution to the Green Line Extension. The covenant shall include the following: 1) The applicant shall make payment with a portion to be paid prior to the first unit being occupied and the final payment to be paid prior to the last unit being occupied - the portions shall be delineated in the covenant; 2) The payment shall be equal to \$2.40 per net square foot, exclusive of garage and storage areas, as defined in the zoning ordinance; 3) If, prior to making the payment, the City establishes a formal policy for developer payments to the Green Line Extension, and said policy includes exceptions or reductions in the payments, these exceptions and reductions will apply to this project as well; 4) The funds may only be used to pay for the Green Line Extension project.	BP	Plng.	
Public Safety				
29	The Applicant or Owner shall meet the Fire Prevention Bureau's requirements.	CO	FP	
30	Per Somerville fire safety regulations, grills, barbecues, chimineas and the like are NOT permitted on decks or porches. This shall be written into condo/rental documents. Proof thereof shall be provided to Planning Staff prior to the issuance of a CO.	CO/Perpetual	FP/ISD	
31	To the extent possible, all exterior lighting must be confined to the subject property, cast light downward and must not intrude, interfere or spill onto neighboring properties.	CO	Plng.	
32	Indicators shall be installed alerting pedestrians and occupants of the below-building parking area of vehicles entering and existing the site. The indicators installed shall be reviewed by Planning Staff and Traffic & Parking prior to acquisition and installation.	CO	Plng/ISD/ T&P	
Final Sign-Off				
33	The Applicant shall contact Planning Staff at least five working days in advance of a request for a final inspection by Inspectional Services to ensure the proposal was constructed in accordance with the plans and information submitted and the conditions attached to this approval.	Final sign off	Plng.	

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	SMV.1340
Historic Name:	Saint Thomas Episcopal Church
Common Name:	Walnut Street Center
Address:	300 Somerville Ave
City/Town:	Somerville
Village/Neighborhood:	Prospect Hill; Union Square
Local No:	74-D-3
Year Constructed:	c 1870
Architect(s):	Handcock, Zachariah; Trefren, George W. and Son
Architectural Style(s):	Altered beyond recognition; Gothic Revival
Use(s):	Business Office; Church; Classroom; Other Educational
Significance:	Architecture; Ethnic Heritage; Religion
Area(s):	SMV.G: Union Square Commercial District SMV.X: Somerville Avenue
Designation(s):	
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle; Slate Wall: Brick; Concrete Cinderblock; Copper; Sheet Metal; Vinyl Siding; Wood; Wood Shingle Foundation: Brick



The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has converted this paper record to digital format as part of ongoing projects to scan records of the Inventory of Historic Assets of the Commonwealth and National Register of Historic Places nominations for Massachusetts. Efforts are ongoing and not all inventory or National Register records related to this resource may be available in digital format at this time.

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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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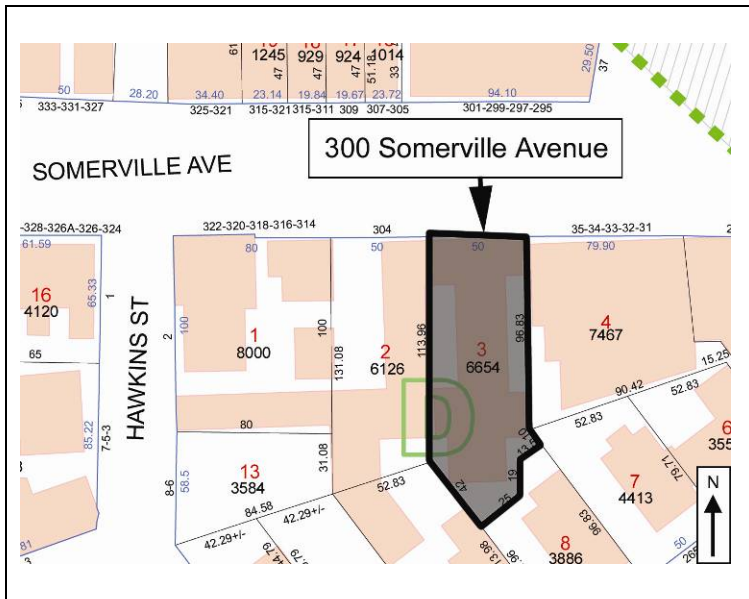
FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Photograph



Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by Laura Kline, Melissa Antonelli, Quinn R. Stuart

Organization: PAL

Date June 2010

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

74-D-3

Boston
North

SMV.G,
SMV.X

SMV.1340

Town Somerville

Place Union Square

Address 300 Somerville Avenue

Historic Name Saint Thomas Episcopal Church

Uses Present: Ecclesiastical

Original: Ecclesiastical

Date of Construction 1870

Source Samuels 1897

Style/Form Altered Gothic Revival Church

Architect/Builder George W. Trefren & Son

Exterior Material

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Vinyl and brick

Roof: Asphalt shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures None

Major Alterations

1907-1913 – additions

Condition Fair

Moved ☒ no ☐ yes Date

Acreage 6,654 S.F.

Setting Center of urban commercial area.

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FEB 07 2014

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

300 Somerville Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G, SMV.X

SMV.1340

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Saint Thomas Episcopal Church at 300 Somerville Avenue is a one-and-one-half-story, end-gable church constructed in the Gothic Revival style ca. 1870. It is set close to the south side of the street, west of the intersection with Hawkins Street. The lot slopes south providing for a full story below the street grade. The close proximity of the surrounding buildings and mature trees block the view of the west, east, and south elevations.

The three-bay, wood-frame, north-facing church has a brick foundation, vinyl siding, and an asphalt-shingle roof. A wide entablature runs along the roof line of the gable. A one-story, wood-frame addition with vestibule is attached to the facade (north) elevation. A two-story, concrete addition on the south (rear) elevation, also designed in the Gothic Revival style, has a one-bay cross gable with parapets and slate shingles with copper on the roof. Asphalt shingles cover the north elevation. A single exterior brick chimney is located on the west elevation of the main block of the church.

The main entrances are now in the east and west sides of the addition vestibule and are set within rectangular, flat wood trim surrounds with modern panel doors. The brick vestibule with a hip roof extends over the entrances on the sides and is supported by square posts. No alternative entrances are visible.

The fenestration in the main block of the church consists of a pair of single-pane, fixed windows in the gable and one-over-one, double-hung, vinyl windows in the vestibule. The south addition contains pairs of narrow, Gothic arch windows. It appears that many of the windows on the addition have been covered with wood shingles, sheet metal, or vinyl siding.

Significant alterations to the church include the removal of the steeple from the northeast corner of the building and the removal of the Gothic arch windows from the facade. Some original details may be preserved underneath the vinyl siding.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

History of Union Square Area (taken from MHC Inventory Form SMV.G)

Union Square is the oldest and largest commercial district in Somerville, and its growth is tied to the residential and commercial growth of the City. Since the 17th century, the district has been the site of commercial establishments serving travellers and tradespeople. Transportation improvements in the early part of the 19th century enabled further development in the area to support the rapidly growing population. Following the Civil War, local entrepreneurs established lucrative businesses in the Square and constructed numerous ambitious buildings. By the early 20th century, Union Square was a critical hub for automobile traffic, and it continued to develop commercially, adding auto-related enterprises to the mix. Today Union Square is one of two major commercial centers in Somerville, along with Davis Square, consisting primarily of locally owned restaurants, shops, and professional offices.

The three main streets that form Union Square—Somerville Avenue, Bow Street, and Washington Street—were originally 17th- and 18th-century trade routes used by farmers in Somerville and the surrounding area to transport products, mostly dairy and produce, to markets in Charlestown and Boston. The sandy soils deposited by the nearby Miller's and Mystic Rivers gave the area its first name, Sandpit Square. Charlestown Lane (later Milk Row and now Somerville Avenue) carried farm products across bridges or to ferries to Boston. Bow Street was originally built around a marsh that was later filled, and Somerville Avenue was extended over the former wetland (Zellie and Stott 1990:122). In addition to farming and dairying, early local industries included brickyards and quarrying sites near the marshes.

Commercial and residential development in and around Union Square grew with the expansion of the railroad service. In 1835, the Boston and Lowell Railroad opened the first passenger railroad station in Somerville on the south side of Washington Street. This station was joined by the Kent Street station of the Fitchburg Railroad in 1842. In 1845 horsecar service was established between Union Square and Harvard Square in Cambridge along Kirkland and Washington Streets. Additions to the streetcar line provided residents of the Union Square area with easy commuting service to Boston.

Continuation sheet 1

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

300 Somerville Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G, SMV.X

SMV.1340

In 1842 Somerville, which was originally included in the 1630 Charlestown grant, became an independent town and its population began to increase steadily. Between 1842 and 1850, the population tripled to reach a total of 3,540 people. Growth continued throughout the 1850s and 1860s as the area's job opportunities attracted many immigrants from Ireland, Italy, Portugal, and Canada. Small factories and meat packing plants built alongside the railroads created new development centers. As the population increased and industrial production grew, developers gradually filled in the Miller's River and covered it with vast railroad yards, roads, residential development, and industrial space. Manufacturing grew rapidly, with such enterprises as the American Tube Works Company, established in 1851 on Somerville Avenue west of Union Square (American Tube Works Company Complex), and the Union Glass Company, founded in 1854 between Webster and Prospect streets just south of the Square (not extant). Later nearby industries included wood-working shops, ice businesses, and carriage factories.

Union Square developed as a center of commerce for the numerous industries and residences surrounding the junction of the area's three major thoroughfares. The Robert A. Vinal House at 15 Union Square (SMV.690) is the sole survivor of the earliest residential-scale development in Union Square. Vinal, a grain dealer operating in the Square, built the ca. 1845 house that was later converted to commercial use. The building adjacent to it, constructed ca. 1850 (not extant), was known as The Oasis and served as a grocery store and local meeting place.

Vinal eventually became a leading figure in Somerville politics and owned and sold off for development many acres of land in the Prospect Hill neighborhood north of Union Square. In 1852, he built the first large multi-purpose building in the Square, Franklin Hall (not extant). The building stood on the current site of 92 Union Square and housed a post office, grain and grocery store, and meeting and entertainment hall. Somerville firemen erected a flagpole in the Square the following year, and subsequently the area was known as Liberty Pole Square. During the Civil War, the Square served as a recruitment center, thus acquiring its current name.

Following the Civil War, both Union and Davis Squares evolved into larger commercial centers of a rapidly growing community. In 1872, Somerville incorporated as a city, and between 1870 and 1915, its population increased six-fold. Several local entrepreneurs capitalized on the growing markets and established themselves in Union Square. In 1869, shoe dealer Phillip Eberle and three other local businessmen built the Masonic Block (later called Somerville Union Hall, not extant) at the prominent corner of Somerville Avenue and Washington Street. Like most of the subsequent blocks constructed nearby, the Masonic Block housed commercial space on the ground floor (in this case, an apothecary and Eberle's shoe shop) and a variety of professional offices, as well as meeting rooms for fraternal organizations on the upper floors. Eberle's success led to other development ventures in the Square, including the ambitious Eberle Building at 31-34 Union Square (SMV.762) (1884).

Local realtor Ira Hill financed the construction of several commercial structures in Union Square, including the Pythian Block and Hotel Warren (both built 1872 on the north side of the Square, not extant), the Hill Building at 38 Union Square (SMV.773) (1874), the Colson Block (1890, not extant), and the Stone Building at 61 Union Square (SMV.763) (1888). Hill also platted Summit Avenue on Prospect Hill into large lots intended for spacious homes. He often collaborated with builder-designer Thomas B. Blaikie from Nova Scotia. The construction of these buildings created a cohesive commercial district of high-style architecture incorporating red brick with granite sills and trim, dark bands of contrasting brick, and patterned slate roofs trimmed with ornamental iron work (Zellie and Stott 1990:121-122).

Many businesses that later branched out to other locations in the City, particularly local financial and institutional entities, initially located their primary offices in Union Square. The Somerville Co-operative Bank, chartered in 1880, the Somerville Savings Bank, incorporated in 1885, and the Somerville National Bank, established in 1892, all had central offices in the Stone Building at the end of the 19th century (Samuels 1897:446-451). Frederic W. Stone, the son of the carriage maker after whom the building was named, was a clerk and treasurer for the savings bank for 43 years, as well as a director of the national bank.

The Square's commercial buildings also housed meeting halls on the upper floors for the numerous social and fraternal organizations that flourished in the latter part of the 19th century. The influx of immigrants to the neighborhood increased the popularity of such groups, a tradition brought over from Europe. Organizations like the Masons and the Independent Order of

Continuation sheet 2

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

300 Somerville Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G, SMV.X

SMV.1340

the Odd Fellows (IOOF) constructed buildings and elaborate halls in many cities, and a single organization often had multiple chapters, or lodges, meeting in different parts of a city. The first Masonic lodge formed in Somerville met in various buildings in Union Square from about 1857 to 1888, including the Masonic Block (Samuels 1897:378-383). Several IOOF lodges met in the Odd Fellows Hall over the Hotel Warren and later in the Stone Building (Samuels 1897:385-393).

The Square's concentration of commercial enterprises served the employees and residents of the factories and industries that developed along the rail lines and rivers east of the Square. At the turn of the 20th century, the Union Square area was also a central point for streetcar and rail transport serving the many people living in Somerville and commuting to jobs in Boston (Zellie and Stott 1990:122). Somerville began a period of great expansion around 1900, in both population and construction activities. The town's population grew from 40,152 in 1890 to 77,236 in 1910. Almost half of Somerville's residential construction occurred between 1890 and 1900. The building trades flourished, as evidenced by the large numbers of such industries listed in the City directories: building tradesmen, lumberyards, woodworking shops (coffins, picture frames, tables, museum cases, furniture), brass foundries, makers of architectural hardware, window shades, and tinware. Several Somerville investors built multi-unit rowhouses and apartment hotels in Union Square to accommodate the influx of residents. Generally these buildings included storefronts on the ground floor to produce additional income, like the Patrick Rafferty Block and Rowhouse at 318-322 and 318R Somerville Avenue (SMV.1341 and SMV.399), both built ca. 1880; the Hannah J. Allen Building at 210 Washington Street (SMV.1361), built 1890; and the Edward J. Llewellyn Building at 216 Somerville Avenue (SMV.1360), built 1896.

Religious buildings serving the area around Union Square are primarily located outside the Commercial District on the periphery of the Square. However, in 1875, an Episcopal congregation raised money to construct Saint Thomas Episcopal Church at 300 Somerville Avenue (SMV.1340), only a few buildings away from the Square intersection. The Gothic Revival building has been greatly altered at the street level, but it has recently returned to its original use as a church, serving both the Hispanic and Haitian communities.

Beginning with the first Police Headquarters constructed in 1874 at 50 Bow Street (in the adjacent Bow Street Historic District), municipal activities in Somerville concentrated in and around the densely developed Union Square. Three major public buildings are located within the Union Square Commercial District: the Fire Station at 92 Union Square (SMV.67) (1903), the second Somerville Police Headquarters at 66-70 Union Square (SMV.764) (1932), and the Somerville Main Branch of the U.S. Post Office at 237 Washington Street (SMV.10) (NR listed, 1935-36).

The early 20th century introduced automobile traffic to Union Square, and vehicular circulation has significantly influenced the subsequent development of the area. The construction of Route 28 at the east end of the district linked the area to Cambridge and Medford. The Commercial District has several significant auto-related buildings, including an early gas station constructed in Somerville, the Cities Service Refining Co. Fuel Station at 69 Bow Street (SMV.776) (ca. 1925). Auto repair shops appeared as early as 1914 (the Union Square Garage at 267-271 Somerville Avenue, SMV.772) and continued to be built into the 1930s (Barnes & Walsh Co. at 224 Somerville Avenue, SMV.776). The 1927 Northern Artery Filling Station at 181 Somerville Avenue (SMV.771) marks the beginning of a proliferation in the establishment of independent gas stations, separate from private garage facilities, throughout the country and signifies how entrenched automobile use had become.

After the 1920s, building construction in Somerville slowed dramatically, the result of a general decrease in fortunes that preceded the Depression years. Business owners in the Union Square area began building smaller brick stores like the J. A. Bremner and Co. Building at 344-346 Somerville Avenue (SMV.769) (1910). Fires destroyed some of the earlier wood-frame buildings in the area, but newer development replaced most of the 19th-century buildings that are no longer extant. More modern lower structures replaced several prominent historic buildings in the Square, such as the Hurley Building at 20-29 Union Square (SMV.761) built in 1932 on the site of the Masonic Block. The Union Building at 16 Union Square (SMV.760), built in 1922, replaced a group of older domestic structures on the prime site with a small-scale commercial block. Development also extended down the main artery of Somerville Avenue, where the three-story commercial and apartment block at 218-222 Somerville Avenue (SMV.765) was constructed ca. 1926. The scarcities of the 1930s also prompted many owners of real estate

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

300 Somerville Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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in the Square to “lop off” the upper stories of taller buildings to reduce their property taxes, as occurred at the Hill Building (Rezoning Union Square 2009).

The City’s population expanded through 1930, and industrialization continued to increase through that date. Directories from 1930 list 145 manufacturing establishments in Somerville, 75% of which had been in existence in 1900. Meat processing remained the City’s leading industry. The population declined through 1940, but peaked again during World War II, when many employees of the Ford Motors Plant, built in 1926 in what is now Assembly Square, lived in Somerville. Other industries located nearer to Union Square included the A&P Company food distribution complex on Fitchburg Street, the Fresh Pond Ice Company on Washington Street, and the James A. Kiley Wagon Shop at Linwood and Fitchburg Streets (all outside the district). The Ford plant closed in 1958, along with many of the larger meat packing businesses, and the City’s population declined in the following years through 2000. At the end of the 20th century, telecommunications and high-tech industries appeared, bringing new job opportunities and a related influx of new residents. More recent changes within Union Square include the creation in the 1980s of a pedestrian plaza across the portion of Washington Street between the 1932 Police Headquarters and the 1903 Fire Station. In addition, the police and fire activities were relocated in the mid-1980s to a new public safety complex housed in a rehabilitated MBTA Bus Garage at 208-220 Washington Street (SMV.676) (1926).

History of 300 Somerville Avenue

The Reverend George W. Durell supervised the construction of Saint Thomas Episcopal Church at 300 Somerville Avenue in 1870 by builders George W. Trefren & Son for his relatively young parish community (SPL Vertical Files). Seven years earlier, two pastors from Saint John’s Church in Charlestown began holding Episcopal services in East Somerville at a rented chapel on the corner of Washington and Tufts streets. After the first rector was called to Wrentham in 1865, the position remained vacant for the better part of the next four years, until Durell took over in July of 1869. He led services at a hall on Hawkins Street until the new church building could be used (Samuels 1897:314).

The original church consisted of a 25 feet wide by 70 feet long rectangular hall with a steeply pitched gable roof and board and batten siding (SPL Vertical Files). By 1897 a vestibule and spired tower adorned the northwest corner (Samuels 1897:330). Capable of accommodating 300 persons, the hall had 48 pews on either side of a broad aisle, with seats for the choir at one end. The organ was positioned on the right side and the prayer desk on the left, with the chancel, communion table, lectern, and font placed at the center. Zachariah Handcock, a Boston church decorator, frescoed the interior walls. The Lord Bishop of Fredericton, New Brunswick, sent illuminated panels that were installed in the window openings. A Sunday School room, vestry, and choir rooms were located in the basement. Although services took place in the church in the early 1870s, Durell consecrated the building only after the construction costs were fully paid in 1875. Records from 1877 show an average attendance of 136 communicants (SPL Vertical Files).

Durell remained at the Somerville church until his death in 1895, when Reverend Andrew Gray succeeded him. In 1897, Saint Thomas was one of three Episcopal churches located in the City (Samuels 1897:314). Between 1907 and 1913, the side aisles and chancel originally planned for the building were added to the south end, possibly indicating a growth in church membership and/or income. The tower no longer appears on the 1933-34 Sanborn insurance map, and the vestibule appears to extend across the entire north elevation as it does currently. William H. Davies is listed as the pastor of Saint Thomas in the 1940 City Directory. Sometime after 1960, the congregation dissolved and the building was sold. Joseph J. Vaccaro, Jr., owned it in August 1968, when a building permit was issued for alterations for use as a nursery school. Ten years later, the Walnut Street Center, a nonprofit social services agency that occupied the building for about 20 years, made additional minor alterations. The building is currently used again as a church by Haitian and Hispanic religious communities.

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

300 Somerville Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G, SMV.X

SMV.1340

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INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

300 Somerville Avenue

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G, SMV.X

SMV.1340

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1.
View of north elevation looking south from north side of Somerville Avenue. East side elevation is slightly visible at left.



Photograph 2.
Detail of north elevation looking southeast from the south side of Somerville Avenue.

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Photograph 3.

View of crossing on east elevation looking northwest from the north side of Washington Street.



Photograph 4.

View of south and east elevations looking northwest from the driveway of 269 Washington Street.