



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

**GEORGE J. PROAKIS**  
**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**PLANNING DIVISION**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION**

SARAH WHITE, MDS-HP  
ZONING PLANNER & PRESERVATION PLANNER

September 15, 2020  
Case: HPC.ALT 2020-23  
Site: 50 Spring Street

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**ALTERATION OF A LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT PROPERTY**  
**STAFF REPORT**

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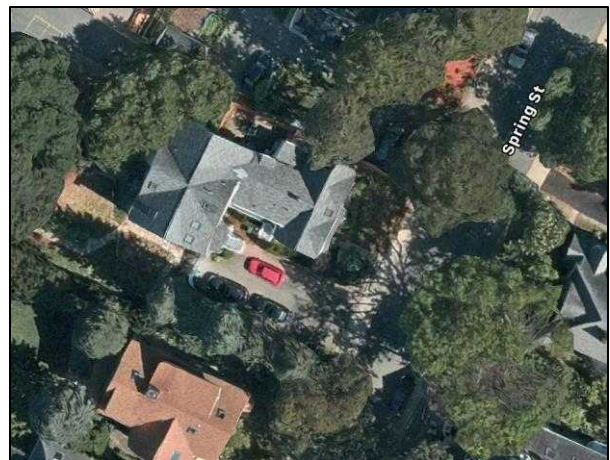
**Site:** 50 Spring Street

**Applicant Name:** Sara O'Neill of Sunbug Solar

**Owner Name:** Jeff & Clair O'Neill

**Petition:** *Install 18 solar panels on roof*

**HPC Hearing Date:** September 15, 2020



## **I. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

- 1. Subject Property:** The subject property is in the Spring Hill Local Historic District (LHD). See the attached Form B for architectural and historical descriptions of the property.

**Proposal:** The structure is a two-unit residence and each of the unit owners is bringing forth a proposal to install solar panels. Each proposal must be presented and deliberated as a separate HPC case. The proposal that is the subject of this report is for what is considered the front unit. The Applicant proposes installing 18 solar panels on an asphalt shingle roof. The areas of the structure on which these panels will be installed are identified in the attached roof plan. The darkened rectangles identify the panels associated with this unit's proposal.

## **II. FINDINGS**

The HPC must make findings based on the Historic District Ordinance (HDO) in compliance with M.G.L. Chapter 40C, and associated Design Guidelines. The portions of the regulations that are applicable to the proposed alterations are discussed below.

### **A. INSTALL 18 SOLAR PANELS ON ROOF**

- M.G.L. Chapter 40C, the State Historic District Ordinance from which our LHDs are derived, states the following in §7 regarding solar energy systems:

*When ruling on applications for certificates of appropriateness for solar energy systems, as defined in section one A of chapter forty A, the commission shall also consider the policy of the commonwealth to encourage the use of solar energy systems and to protect solar access.*

Chapter 40A §1A defines “solar access” and “solar energy system” as follows:

*Solar access, the access of a solar energy system to direct sunlight.*

*Solar energy system, a device or structural design feature, a substantial purpose of which is to provide daylight for interior lighting or provide for the collection, storage and distribution of solar energy for space heating or cooling, electricity generating, or water heating.*

- The applicable portions of the Design Guidelines are **Section B “Roofs”, item 7** and **Section E “New Additions”, item 3**. The text of each of these sections appears below:

**Section B “Roofs”, item 7 which states:**

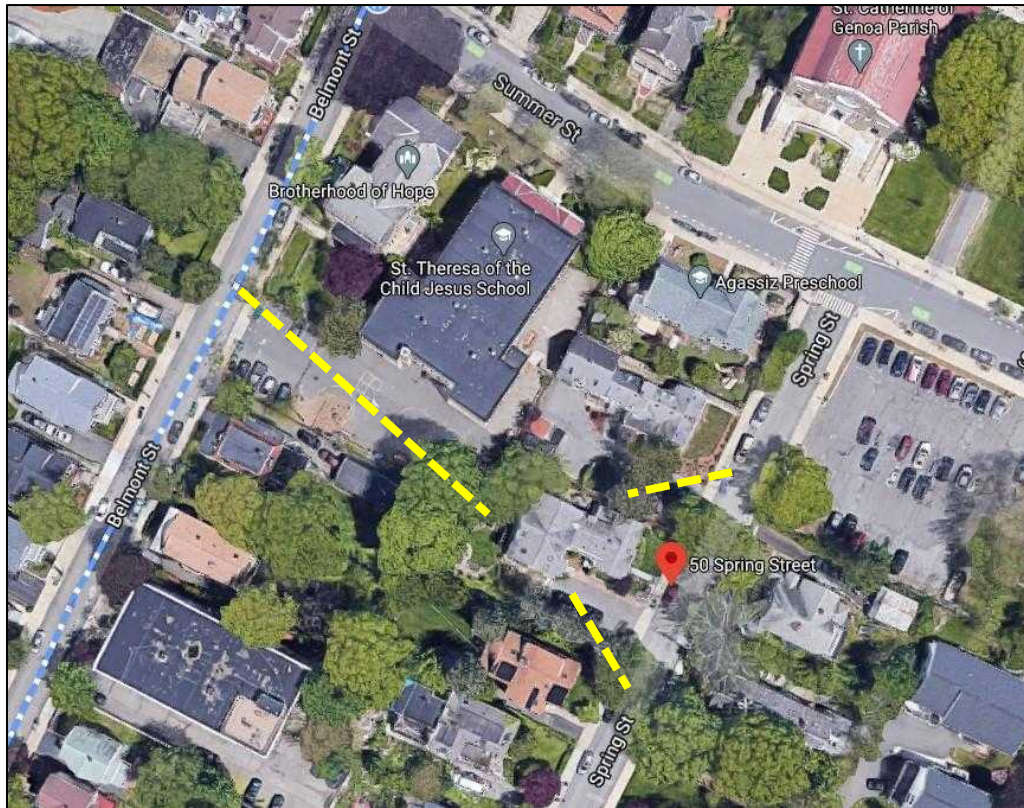
*Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.*

**Section E “New Additions”, item 3**

*New additions or alterations should be done in a way that, if they were to be removed in the future, the basic form and integrity of the historic property would remain intact.*

**Preservation Planning Assessment**

The proposed installation areas are visible from the public ways of Spring Street and Belmont Street. The view corridors are indicated in the image below.



Preservation Planning's position is that the application of *Section B "Roofs", item 3* requiring solar collectors to be relegated to the rear of a property or a portion of a roof that is not visible from the public way would be inconsistent with state and local energy goals and policies regarding sustainability/renewable energy.

The installation locations for solar panels are based largely on where they will function most effectively along with the ability of the roof structure to support the necessary equipment. Such a location is not always the rear of a property – whether ground-mounted or roof-mounted – nor portions of a roof not visible from the public way. In the case of 50 Spring Street, the ideal locations for these panels have been identified by the solar installer for their efficacy. All installation locations are visible from public ways.

Regarding *Section E "New Additions", item 3*, solar panels on the roof are considered an alteration to the property. The roof pitch and shape will not be altered due to the installation of the panels (Preservation Planning has included a recommended condition to ensure this as well) and the form and integrity of the historic structure overall will be unaltered and clearly identifiable post-installation. Whatever visual effect the solar panels may have on the structure are completely reversible upon their removal.

Preservation Planning has proposed conditions for the HPC to consider should it decide to grant a Certificate of Appropriateness (CA) for this project.

**HPC Determination:**

- The HPC must determine if, the proposed project satisfies the applicable regulations.
- The HPC must structure their motion to include their own specific findings on the proposed project.

### **III. RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS**

Should the HPC decide to issue a Certificate of Appropriateness (CA), Preservation Planning suggests the following conditions to add to any approvals:

1. All relevant permits shall be obtained from the Inspectional Services Department (ISD) prior to the start of work.
2. The applicant shall upload their Certificate of Appropriateness (CA) to ISD's permitting system.
3. Any changes made to this project shall be submitted in the form of a new application to Preservation Planning for review and approval by the HPC.
4. All pipes, wires, and conduits shall be hidden from view.
5. Panels shall be of a color that matches the roof color of the structure as closely as possible.
6. The pitch/shape/form of the roof shall not be altered.
7. Work shall commence within one year of the date of approval for this Certificate. If work does not commence within one year, this Certificate shall expire. The applicant must then submit an application to the HPC requesting the re-issuance of the Certificate.
8. The Applicant shall contact Preservation Planning at [historic@somervillema.gov](mailto:historic@somervillema.gov) a minimum of 15 business days prior to final ISD sign-off so that Preservation Planning or their designee can confirm that the project was completed according to HPC approvals.





# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	SMV.1075
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Freeman, Moses H. - Daniels, Edward S. House
<b>Common Name:</b>	Erlandson, Carl A. House
<b>Address:</b>	50 Spring St
<b>City/Town:</b>	Somerville
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	Spring Hill
<b>Local No:</b>	44-A-4
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	C 1850
<b>Architect(s):</b>	
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	Italianate
<b>Use(s):</b>	Multiple Family Dwelling House; Single Family Dwelling House
<b>Significance:</b>	Archaeology, Historic; Architecture
<b>Area(s):</b>	SMV.AQ: Spring Hill Historic District smv.bl: Central - Atherton - Spring - Summer Streets SMV.AY: Somerville Multiple Resource Area
<b>Designation(s):</b>	Local Historic District (1/28/2010); Nat'l Register District (9/18/1989); Nat'l Register MRA (9/18/1989)



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.

The MACRIS database and scanned files are highly dynamic; new information is added daily and both database records and related scanned files may be updated as new information is incorporated into MHC files. Users should note that there may be a considerable lag time between the receipt of new or updated records by MHC and the appearance of related information in MACRIS. Users should also note that not all source materials for the MACRIS database are made available as scanned images. Users may consult the records, files and maps available in MHC's public research area at its offices at the State Archives Building, 220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, open M-F, 9-5.

Users of this digital material acknowledge that they have read and understood the MACRIS Information and Disclaimer (<http://mhc-macris.net/macrisdisclaimer.htm>)

Data available via the MACRIS web interface, and associated scanned files are for information purposes only. THE ACT OF CHECKING THIS DATABASE AND ASSOCIATED SCANNED FILES DOES NOT SUBSTITUTE FOR COMPLIANCE WITH APPLICABLE LOCAL, STATE OR FEDERAL LAWS AND REGULATIONS. IF YOU ARE REPRESENTING A DEVELOPER AND/OR A PROPOSED PROJECT THAT WILL REQUIRE A PERMIT, LICENSE OR FUNDING FROM ANY STATE OR FEDERAL AGENCY YOU MUST SUBMIT A PROJECT NOTIFICATION FORM TO MHC FOR MHC'S REVIEW AND COMMENT. You can obtain a copy of a PNF through the MHC web site ([www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)) under the subject heading "MHC Forms."

Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

This file was accessed on:

Monday, June 24, 2013 at 9:16: AM

# FORM B - BUILDING

Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard  
Boston, Massachusetts 02125

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

44/ A/ 4

Boston-North

AQ

SMV.1075

Town Somerville

Place (neighborhood or village) Spring Hill

Address 50 Spring Street

Historic Name Freeman-Daniels House

Use: Present Two-family residence

Original Single-family residence

Date of Construction c. 1850

Source Middlesex County Deeds

Style/Form Mid-19th century frame vernacular / L-shaped

Architect/Builder Undetermined

## Exterior Material

Foundation Stucco-covered brick

Wall Wood shingles

Roof Asphalt shingles

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures All that remains of the original stable is a stone foundation.

Major Alterations (with dates) Wood shingles replaced original clapboards around the turn-of-the-century. Also dating from around 1900 is the door at the southern end of the street elevation--originally the location of a window.

Condition Good

Moved ☐ yes ☒ no

Acreage 7,687 Square feet

Setting Overlooks narrow front yard. A line of mature fir trees borders the south side of the driveway. Playground of the St. Catherine of Siena School located at rear of house. A house of similar vintage and form is located next door, to the north at 54 Spring Street.

Recorded by Edward W. Gordon

Organization: Som. Historic Preservation Comm.

Date(month/day/year) 3/7/05





ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☒ see continuation sheet

*Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.*

Situated on the upper slopes of Spring Hill, 50 Spring Street, together with the adjacent 54 Spring Street are similarly massed cottages that date from the earliest phase of George O. Brastow's Spring Hill residential development. Together with such landscape features as the mature fir trees, these unpretentious c. 1850 vernacular cottages provide a glimpse of mid-nineteenth century Spring Hill. Difficult to categorize stylistically, the polygonal bay and the pitch of the paired gables at the main elevation nod to the influence of the Italianate and Carpenter Gothic styles, respectively. Nevertheless, to describe 50 Spring street as a mid-nineteenth century early Victorian vernacular cottage may be accurate but not ideal. Served up on a low rise that may have been man-made, the south windows of this wood shingle-clad house overlook an unpaved driveway; a line of mature fir trees border the southern edge of the driveway. These trees, together with others at the rear and north sides of the property, reinforce the illusion that 50 Spring Street is still a rural retreat, rather than part of an urban neighborhood.

50 Spring Street is composed of three one-and-one-half-story structural components, including a main block and two attached ells. The main block measures three-bays-by-two bays. Located near the southern end of the street elevation, a door that reads as "front door" probably represents a later alteration--replacing a window that may have been located here. This door opens onto a small porch with square posts and a modified hip roof that was apparently added at the same time as the street elevation's door. That this door is a later alteration is based, in part, on the undisturbed fenestration of the similar house next door at 54 Spring Street. The sidelight-flanked door on the driveway (south) side of the building is probably the original main entrance.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ see continuation sheet

*Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.*

Built c. 1850, 50 Spring Street provides physical evidence documenting Somerville shortly after its incorporation as a town independent of Charlestown. This house was part of an early Boston area commuter suburb for businessmen with jobs in Boston. Living at such a distance from the Hub was made possible by the introduction of the nearby Fitchburg Railroad in 1841. When 54 Spring Street was built, houses west of School Street were widely scattered and the concept of a rural romantic suburban development was new for both Somerville as well as the entire nation.

The residential development at Spring Hill traces its origins to Alexander Wadsworth's plan of 1843. The surveyor responsible for platting Cambridge/Watertown's Mount Auburn Cemetery in 1831, Wadsworth delineated this subdivision's modified grid at the behest of George O. Brastow. The area is bounded by Milk Row (Somerville Avenue); Belmont Street, Summer Street and Central Street. 50 Spring Street's lot is number 20 on the Wadsworth Plan. Brastow was heavily involved in local politics and real estate dealings from the late 1830s until the 1870s. He served Somerville as a State Senator and was its first Mayor (1872-1873) after its incorporation as a city in 1872. An early resident of Spring Hill, Brastow built a Greek Revival house at 152 Summer Street (demolished) around 1840. According to Henry C. Binford in *The First Suburbs*, Brastow was among a handful of influential developers who, beginning in the 1840s, began to petition local government for amenities such as road improvements and schools that would benefit their fledgling residential enclaves. Binford notes that "Among these

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☐ see continuation sheet

Binford, Henry C., *The First Suburbs: Residential Suburbs on the Boston Periphery, 1815-1860*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985. ; Bromley, George, *Atlases of the City of Somerville*, 1895; 1900.  
Draper, Martin, *Map of Somerville*, 1852; Walling, H. F., *Map of Charlestown, Somerville and Cambr.*, 1857.  
Hopkins, G. M., *Map of the City of Somerville*, 1874; 1884.  
Mc Allester, Virginia & Lee, *Field Guide to American Houses*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984.  
Samuels, Edward A. *Somerville Past & Present*. Boston: Samuels & Kimball Company, 1897.  
*Somerville City Directories*: 1869-70 to 1940.  
Stilgoe, J. R. *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939*. New Haven: Yale U. Press, 1988.  
Zellie, Carole, *Beyond the Neck: The Architecture and Development of Somerville, MA*, 1982, 1990.

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.  
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Critical Statement form.



**INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
Office of the Secretary, Boston

Town:  
Somerville, MA

Area (s)  
Spring Hill

Property Address:  
**50 Spring Street**

**Form No:**  
SMV.1075

Indicate each item on inventory form, continued below.

**Architectural Description**

Returning to the street elevation, a polygonal bay and a standard size window are in evidence at the northern two thirds of this elevation. The street elevation culminates in a pair of steeply pitched gables. The gables shelter standard size windows. In general, windows are standard size and contain 1/1 double-hung wood sash that replaced 2/2 double-hung wood sash. The main block's side walls culminate in steeply pitched gables.

Turning to the two-bay-by-two-bay middle ell, this ell's south roof slope shelters an entrance porch that runs between the main block and the rear ell. Slat-work railings are interspersed between a pair of Tuscan columns that rise from the porch floor. Nine concrete steps lead to the middle ell's porch and are aligned with the south entrance. This entrance door is flanked by multi-pane sidelights. Above the south porch is a substantial two-bay dormer that almost certainly represents a twentieth century addition. The concrete materials of the rear ell's foundation indicate that this flat-roofed structural component was never a nineteenth century barn, but was evidently an addition during the mid-twentieth century.

**Historical Narrative**

Summer Street (demolished). The original streets of Brastow's development included present day Spring Street, Harvard Street and several short courts now corresponding to Monmouth Street, Harvard Place, Elm Place, Atherton Street and Beech Street. House construction in the once remote area was made feasible by the introduction of the Fitchburg Railway along the south side of Somerville Avenue in 1841. This railroad's Kent Street Station was within walking distance for Boston-bound businessmen living in the new Spring Hill development.

The first owner/ occupant of 50 Spring Street was Moses H. Freeman, blacksmith, who had this house built around 1850. The house was extant by at least 1851 when Freeman is listed in the Directory of that year as a Boston mechanic with a house on Spring Street. The second owner, Edward S. Daniels started out as a boarder at "Mr. M. H. Freeman's" during the late 1860s. In September of 1876, Mary Daniels, wife of Edward S. Daniels, paid Adeline W. Stearns, widow, of Waltham "one dollar and other good and sufficient considerations" for "two certain lots or parcels of land with the buildings thereon being lots 20 and 21 (on the Wadsworth Plan of 1843)." Mrs. Stearns apparently represented the Freeman estate. Mr. Daniels was apparently well-educated and sophisticated, listing his occupation in late 1860s and 1870s Somerville City Directories as a "teacher of English, Italian and singing." Mr. Daniels also had a business as a piano tuner. By 1892, Edward H. Daniels "clerk, Boston" is listed as a boarder at 50 Spring Street and continued to live here with his parents until as late as the early 1920s.

By the mid-1920s, Amelia and Carl A. Erlandson lived at 50 Spring Street with their stenographer daughter, Gunhild. By 1940, the Erlandsons and extended family are listed at this address, including Betty E. (occupation unlisted), Carl A., Gunhild and Muriel, clerks. Betty lived at the rear of the house and Muriel S. Gunhild was a stenographer at Harvard College.

**Already listed on the N. R. H. P. as part of the Spring Hill Historic District**



City of  
**Somerville**  
Massachusetts



## Assessors Map

- Parcel Boundary
- Block Boundary
- Assessor Map Boundary

- Water Body
- Building
- ▨ Railroad ROW

- Lot Dimensions
- Lot Number
- Square Footage
- Frontage Dimension
- Street Address

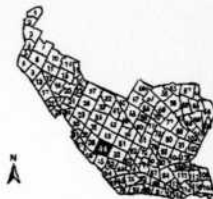


1" = 80'

February 07, 2002

Sources: Rights-of-way and building footprints developed from Boston Edison Company data, 1993. Parcel data developed from assessor maps by Camp Dresser & McKee, 1999.

NOTE: The data represented on this map indicate distances and deeded locations of capital boundaries in the City of Somerville. They are NOT survey data and should not be treated as such.



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