



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

GEORGE J. PROAKIS
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PLANNING DIVISION
HISTORIC PRESERVATION

STEP 1: DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE
STAFF REPORT

Site: 71-72 Union Square
Case: HPC.DMO 2020-12

Applicant Name: Laxmi N. Pradhan, Trustee of
Everest Realty Trust
Owner Name: same as applicant

Recommendation: See report
Hearing Date: June 23, 2020



I. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

*Note that the information below is taken directly from the Form B on this property (attached)
This Form B is not part of the state MACRIS database.*

*Also, at the time that the Form B was created, the building was occupied by a Subway and has
most recently been occupied by Union Square Beer & Wine.*

Historical Context: 71–72 Union Square first appears on the 1900 Sanborn fire insurance map as a pair of storefronts in a one story building. The building was constructed on the site of a coal yard owned by Eveline C. Stone, the widow of Nathaniel Stone, a farmer who had owned a plot of land between Washington and Warren avenues. In 1901, the building was occupied by Robert Fenelon, an auctioneer, and L.J. Ward, a hairdresser. By 1903, the building was owned by Otis Haskell, a confectioner. In 1915, 71 Union Square was occupied by Martin and Wood, electricians and locksmiths, and 72 Union Square was occupied by John Ribeiro, a hair dresser; Haskell had his shop, the Union Square Candy Company, at 73 Union Square (now part of 76 Union Square) In the middle of the 20th century, the Union Square Quality Market was at 71 Union Square, and the Union Square Bakery was at 72 Union Square. The



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bakery was owned by Turkish immigrants Hercules and Agatha Kerassites, who owned the building from 1944 until 1967. The building has been most recently occupied by Union Square Beer & Wine.

Union Square is the oldest and largest commercial area in Somerville, and its growth is tied to the residential and commercial growth of the City. Since the 17th century, the area has been the site of commercial establishments serving travelers 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.

Architectural Description: 71–72 Union Square is a Colonial Revival-style, southwest-facing, one-story, two-bay, rectangular, brick commercial building, seated on a brick and concrete foundation. The building is topped with a tar and gravel, flat roof with a stone-capped brick parapet. The southwest facade elevation consists of a glass and metal entrance door recessed in the west bay and a ribbon of plate glass windows with metal surrounds arranged in pairs separated by engaged pilasters. Each bay is sheltered by an awning bearing the store name. A horizontal sign board illuminated by three curved lights is centered above the bays. A secondary entrance is in the center of the northwest elevation.

71–72 Union Square is a typical example of a late 19th century, one-story commercial block built in Union Square. It has been somewhat altered in the late 20th century with new brick facing on the facade and replacement storefront windows and doors, but retains many of its original details.

II. FINDINGS

For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (i) importantly associated with people, events or history or (ii) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i-ii).

A. HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

2003-05, Section 2.17.B, i

Importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City or the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

(i) The information on the businesses and occupants of the building that is provided in the Form B shows the broad range of neighborhood-serving, small-scale enterprises that have dotted Union Square through to (locksmiths, electricians, bakers, etc.). When examined collectively, these enterprises and their proprietors reflect a ubiquitous, small-scale entrepreneurial spirit that is common in the development of a municipality and show the investment in Union Square by both immigrant and non-immigrant communities.

B. HISTORICAL & ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE***2003-05, Section 2.17.B, ii***

The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished.

Relevant period

The period of relevance for the property begins in 1895 and ends in 1970 (50 years prior to 2020).

Integrity

The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.

- a. Location: The building is in its original location.
- b. Design: It is difficult to discern the period of the curved and flat forms of the storefront, but it is quite possible that one or both have been changed. Otherwise, the rectangular form of the building and front parapet appear to be original forms of the building. Overall, the building is Colonial Revival in style, single story with two bays. It was constructed as a commercial building. The parapet and pilasters are likely original.
- c. Materials: Brick/brick veneer, glass, metal, concrete, stone (caps on parapet).
- d. Alterations: The storefront surround, windows, doors have been replaced

Evaluation of Integrity: While the building retains some of its original features (pilasters, front parapet, rectangular form), many portions of the front façade (which is the most prominent portion of the building and the façade that speaks to the history of this structure) have been quite altered. The storefront surrounds are new as are the windows and doors. The brick (full or veneer) on the front façade is new from the latter portion of the 20th century.

V. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the assessment provided of criteria A and B of the ordinance, Staff recommend that 71-72 Union Square be determined **HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT** based on Criterion (i) (historical association).

UNION SQUARE
Beer and Wine

 *Craft Beer and Wine* 

Local Brews • Tastings

HAHN
\$12
ON SALE

71-72

OPEN
Fine Wines

Weekly Tastings
Craft





DIXION SQUARE
Local Brews Tastings









UNION SQUARE
Beer and Wine

Craft Beer and Wine

Local Brew

1932

12 Packs Now Available!
LAGUNITA BEER

Fine Wines

Craft Beer

FORM B – BUILDING

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

73-E-26

Boston
North

SMV.G

SMV.1440

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

Town/City: Somerville

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): Union Square

Address: 71–72 Union Square

Historic Name: Otis Haskell Building

Uses: Present: Commercial Block

Original: Commercial Block

Date of Construction: 1895–1900

Source: Bromley 1895, Sanborn Map Co 1900

Style/Form: Colonial Revival

Architect/Builder: Unknown

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Brick and concrete

Wall/Trim: Brick

Roof: Tar and gravel

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Facade altered in late 20th century with replacement windows, doors, and brick veneer.

Condition: Fair

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

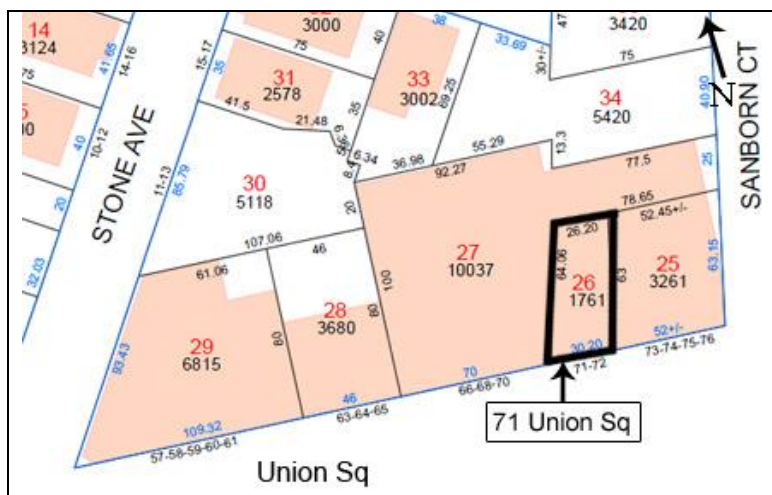
Acreage: 0.04

Setting: This building is on the north side of Union Square, between the former Police Station (70 Union Square) and 76 Union Square. The building is in a densely developed urban neighborhood, surrounded by commercial buildings.

Photograph



Locus Map



Recorded by: V. Adams, G. Pineo, C. Barry, M. Andrade, PAL

Organization: City of Somerville, OSPCD, Planning Division

Date: May 2016

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

71–72 Union Square

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G

SMV.1440

☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

71–72 Union Square occupies a rectangular lot on the north side of Union Square, facing onto a wide brick and concrete plaza on the north side of Somerville Avenue. The 1895–1900 building occupies the entire lot, and is abutted on the north, west, and east sides by the former Somerville Police Station at 70 Union Square (SMV.764), and a commercial block at 76 Union Square (SMV.1441).

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Union Square is the oldest and largest commercial area in Somerville, and its growth is tied to the residential and commercial growth of the City. Since the 17th century, the area has been the site of commercial establishments serving travelers 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.

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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

SOMERVILLE

71–72 Union Square

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

SMV.G

SMV.1440

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