



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site: 56 Line Street
Case: HPC 2014.088
Applicant Name: Cambport Group LLC
Date of Application: October 17, 2014

Date of Significance: November 18, 2014
Recommendation: Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date: December 16, 2014



**A determination of Preferably Preserved begins a nine month Demolition Delay.*

I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, November 18, 2014, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 56 Line Street is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:

Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;

and is both

- (i) The structure is 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;*
- and**
- (ii) The structure is historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.*

According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and directory research identifies the structure as likely c.1852, due to the location of dwellings at 56 Line Street that are present on the 1852 Draper Map of Somerville.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings due to the association with laborers and the early development of the area near Inman Square as a working class neighborhood as well as the early development of this area as workers housing.



In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, as a representative of mid to late 19th century working class housing stock due to the remaining integrity of the structure with regard to original form, massing, and siting; and the location of the structure within a collection of structures that represent the same cultural context, a mid to late 19th century working-class neighborhood.

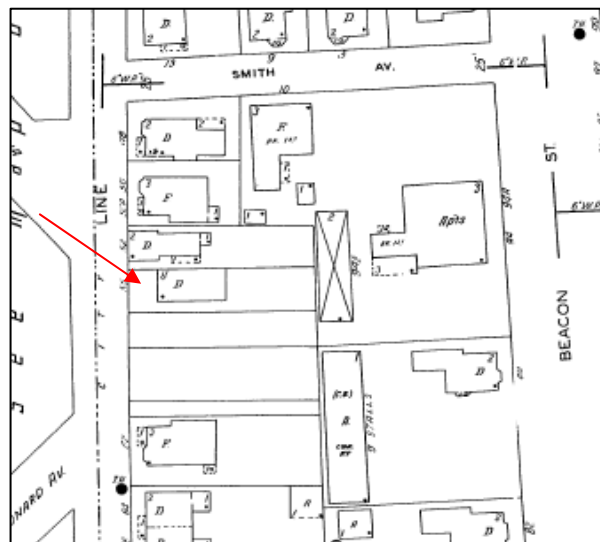
II. Additional Information

Map Research:

This research indicates that there were three buildings at this approximate location in 1852. By 1895, a majority of the surrounding buildings are in existence and these three noted buildings seem more clearly identified. By 1950, the adjacent gable-end dwelling has the existing front addition, and the right side lot has been razed of three buildings.



Left: 1895 Bromley Atlas



Right: 1950 Sanborn map

Census Research:

A Thomas McDermott (age 22) is noted once in the 1870 Census as being located in Lowell. This name is identified 10 times in the 1880 Census. There is one Thomas McDermott (age 50, Irishman) located in Somerville. This person is understood to be widowed or divorced and has two boarders, Michael Fallen and Michael McGuire, also both Irishmen.

Site Visit:

Site visits illustrate that the subject structure is located within a context of working-class housing; however, of the original three buildings at this approximate location on the 1852 Draper map, #56 is the only one existent with original massing and form.

Comparable Structures:

There are few structures that are appropriate to compare with the subject dwelling due to the combination of the potential age of the structure, the modest 1½ story massing, and siting with regard to the side-gable. There are multiple buildings still existent from the mid-nineteenth century, though their massing is often larger. There are also a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City; however, these cottages are often more ornate in design and do not have a side-gable nor face the side lot line. The adjacent gable-end dwelling, according to maps, may have originally been similar to the subject building.

Unfortunately, due to the front addition, this is no longer appropriate for comparison. Comparable structures within the City include:

- 22 Belmont Terrace
- 439-441R Somerville Avenue
- 23 Fiske Avenue
- 37 Fiske Avenue



Left: 22 Belmont Terrace (c.1850)



Right: 439-441R Somerville Avenue (c.1840) LHD



Left: 23 Fiske Avenue (1870)



Right: 37 Fiske Avenue (1866)

III. Preferably Preserved

If the Commission determines that the demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City, such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure. (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 4.2.d)

A determination regarding if the demolition of the subject building is detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City should consider the following:

- a) *How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

The subject structure, potentially c.1850, is a 1½ story side-gable dwelling in an unknown style. The original form, massing, and some of the window locations remain intact. There are also several material intrusions, such as siding, windows and doors; however, these do not detract from recognizing the original form and massing. Architectural details are not currently present due to the existing siding while obscured views beneath this siding illustrate the original clapboard is no longer existent.

The historical context of this working class neighborhood is consistent into the later 19th century, which is primarily understood by the construction of triple-deckers. The original buildings that appear to be located on the 1852 Draper Map, which are more closely associated to the historic context of the subject structure, have been either razed or largely modified.

- b) *What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*

The subject structure retains a moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to the retention of form, massing and siting on the lot. Although the immediate historical context has changed, this building continues to fit within the broader working class historical context of the neighborhood.

- c) *What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*

Working class housing constructed in response to mid-nineteenth century industry is of local significance. Dependent upon the actual age of the structure as well as construction methods, this building could represent more than local history.

- d) *What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*

The subject parcel is highly visible along Line Street. Since the building is largely set back from the street and due to the small massing, visibility is often overlooked.

- e) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*

Dwellings from this time period are not predominant, but the City does retain several from the mid-nineteenth century. Often their massing is larger. There are also a number of single-family dwellings with a modest 1½ story massing located throughout the City; however, these cottages are often more ornate in design, of a later development period, and do not have a side-gable nor face the side lot line.

Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?

The subject structure retains a moderate level of historical and architectural integrity due to the retention of form, massing and siting on the lot, specifically in reference to the potential date of construction. Although the immediate historical context has changed, this building continues to fit within the broader working class historical context of the neighborhood and represents local significance. Dwellings from this time period are not predominant, but the City does retain several from the mid-nineteenth century, though often their massing is larger. Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 56 Line Street detrimental to the heritage of the City.

IV. Recommendation

Recommendations are based upon an analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the permit application and the required findings for the Demolition Review Ordinance, which requires archival and historical research, and an assessment of historical and architectural significance, conducted prior to the public hearing for a Determination of Preferably Preserved. This report may be revised or updated with a new recommendation and/or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through further research.

In accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 4.D, Staff find the potential demolition of the subject structure detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the level of integrity, potential mid-nineteenth century construction date, and associated working class historic context and collection of buildings, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 56 Line Street Preferably Preserved.**

If the Historic Preservation Commission determines the structure is Preferably Preserved, the Building Inspector may issue a demolition permit at anytime, upon receipt of written advice from the Commission that there is no reasonable likelihood that either the owner or some other person or group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the subject building or structure (Ord. 2003-05, Section 4.5).



56 Line Street



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11-14-14

Messrs Craig Halajian & John Reilly,
Campport Group LLC,
3 Ashwood Road,
Acton, MA. 01720.

Re: No 56 Line Street, Somerville, Massachusetts.

Dear Messrs Halajian & Reilly,

On Wednesday, November 12, 2014 I inspected No. 56 Line Street
in Somerville, Massachusetts.

No 56 Line Street is a tiny small two story building on two
large lots in Somerville, Massachusetts. The building measured
approximately seventeen feet wide by forty three feet three inches
long. The first floor is divided into five spans from five feet
six inches to ten feet six inches each. Each span is supported by
timber beams spanning between the masonry walls on each side of the
building. The timber beams are supported one or two three inch
diameter steel columns. The steel columns do not have adequate cap
plates nor steel base plates. They are supported on one foot square
concrete footings which rest on the basement slab. This is incorrect
construction. The first floor is not supported by floor joists. Two
one inch thick timber planks are used to support the first floor. This
is not enough to support the live and dead load required by the
Massachusetts Building Code.

The second floor has a deflection in the center of the span.
This tends to cause a bow in the exterior walls on both sides of the
building. The roof appears to be dipping in the center and the
chimney is tipping to one side. All these inaccuracies must be
corrected according to Code.

The bottom three feet of the foundation wall is built with rubble
stones and mortar. The mortar has dried and is falling off. Above
the rubble wall a brick wall with mortar joints. The mortar has dried
and should be repointed. There is no footing under the masonry wall
in the basement. The entire foundation wall has to be underpinned
with a new concrete footing.

The ceiling height in the basement is six feet two inches. The
ceiling on the first floor is below the required height by Code.

There are so many mistakes in the existing building that it
should be taken down and rebuilt to comply with the Eighth Edition
of the MASSACHUSETTS BUILDING CODE.

Very truly yours,
Arthur Choo Associates Inc.,
Arthur Choo PE# 13566 (Struct.)

