



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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STAFF PRESENT
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MEMBERS PRESENT
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Public Meeting for Preferably Preserved Structures
Recommendations and Minutes

The Somerville Historic Preservation Commission held a public meeting on **Thursday, February 7, 2012, at 6:30 p.m.** in City Hall, 3rd Floor Conference Room, 93 Highland Avenue, Somerville, MA.

The purpose of the meeting was to seek alternatives to demolition for structures determined by the Historic Preservation Commission to be Preferably Preserved and to make recommendations to the Historic Preservation Commission at a future Commission meeting on the following Preferably Preserved structure(s):

82 Dover Street	Case # HPC 2012.126
Delay Period Ends:	10/15/2013
Building Description:	c. 1874 two-family, 2½ story gable-end dwelling
Significance:	i. <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...,”</i> and ii. <i>“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...”</i>

This was the first time for this case to come to a Public Meeting for Preferably Preserved Structures; the Applicant met with Staff twice to prepare for this meeting. The Applicant explained that upon purchasing the subject parcel, the intent was to demolish the existing structure. This was due to the lack of architectural detail, which would have rendered the structure architecturally valuable to the Applicant. Also, the existing conditions of the structure made underground parking difficult due to the existing basement ceiling height and, through settlement of the building, the structure is no longer level. Additionally, the existing structure does not allow for individual units to be located on one floor and sized approximately 2400 square feet, which are both important components to the Applicant in developing the property.

The Applicant understood from the public hearing for the Determination of Preferably Preserved on 1/15/13 that the building serves as a bookend to the residential portion of the streetscape and that the gable is an important component to the rhythm of the Dover streetscape. With this in mind the Applicant presented plans that retain the gable; however, these plans illustrate that while the gable is retained, the additional massings spoil the rhythm of the streetscape and reduce the amount of optional open space. Furthermore, this scheme forces the driveway to be located on the right side of the parcel, which interrupts the residential component as well as green space, and creates a tight center courtyard.



The Applicant then presented images of the variety of building types located on Dover Street and plans for a new structure, which take the previous considerations of the Commission into account. The proposed new structure is reminiscent of a Colonial Revival style double triple-decker, a building type that is located directly across the street, and incorporates architectural details and materials found along Dover Street, such as multi-story polygonal bays, covered entry porch, projecting bays, double-hung wood windows, corner boards, and a bracketed frieze. Additionally, this plan better enables underground parking with a driveway located to the left side of the parcel, more open space, and units that are located on one level and sized to the specifications of the Applicant. While the proposed new structure does retain the Dover streetscape, through the building type, detail, and materials, there was concern about the proposed 37' height and large square massing. The height of the existing structure is approximately 35.5 feet. Another design scheme was presented by a member of the public which retains the original gable-end structure; however, due to the amenities the Applicant would like to develop at this site (one level units and sufficient on-site underground parking), the Applicant did not feel that working through this design scheme would change the preference for a new structure. Finally, the Applicant circulated their original design scheme, a modern style structure with a flat roof, to illustrate the intent of the original design. The meeting concluded at 8:15.

Recommendation: The proposed design of the by-right project retains the unique rhythm of the Dover streetscape through the use of an historic building type as well as architectural details and materials consistent with those found along Dover Street. This structure also establishes a strong residential presence at the north end of the street and preserves 50% of the parcel for green space. While the Demolition Delay does not expire until 10/15/13, the decision regarding an acceptable replacement structure is time sensitive for the Applicant and will need to be determined by 2/19/13. Therefore, Staff recommends a Memorandum of Agreement, whereby, in exchange for photo documentation, a walk through prior to demolition to develop a plan to ensure materials of high architectural value will be salvaged, and so long as the design and materials remain consistent with the plans presented on 2/7/13, which is to include the specifications and modifications listed below, the Commission will lift the remaining delay. Staff notes that the proposed modifications address the public concerns for height and massing that were presented at the Public Meeting on 2/7/13. Additionally, throughout the Demolition Review process, the Applicant demonstrated ample support for new development at this site through letters of support and a petition to approve demolition of the existing structure.

Specifications

- *First Story Articulation - corner boards on all corners and bays, flared over built-out frieze, and water table*
- *Front Entry Components - sidelights on both sides of door, and details of the covered entry/porch (fascia, frieze, columns with base and cap, paneled pedestal, platform skirt and vertical lattice) and details of balcony (posts and balusters)*
- *Sheathing – clapboards or shingles, real or simulated materials*
- *Windows – type (two over two, double-hung, wood), casings and sill*
- *Entry door to be composed of a compatible material, such as wood*
- *Fenestration pattern on all elevations (please submit remaining elevations to Staff to ensure consistency of pattern; plans will become part of MOA)*
- *Cornice Dimensions – brackets, upper and lower frieze, and fascia*

Design Modifications

In an effort to mitigate the height and massing, Staff suggests several possible design solutions which may provide a more nuanced solution to the design presented:

- *Add a second and possibly a third story porch above the existing entry porch*
- *Reduce each story by 1-2 feet (Staff determined this suggestion not to be a viable solution since the proposed floor to ceiling height is 9'-9" for a total floor height of 11' due to the use of 12" joists.)*
- *Consider the use of a different roof type instead of a flat roof, such as a low pitch hip roof or Mansard*
- *Provide more depth to the eaves*
- *Consider the use of polygonal bays instead of square bays on each side elevation*