



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

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT

Site: 141 Central Street c.1889 William Veazie Row Houses
Case: HPC 2016.077 Single Building Local Historic District

Applicant Name: Susan Rabinowitz, Owner
Applicant Address: 141 Central Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application: September 29, 2016
Legal Notice: *Alter/repair front porch (posts and corbels will be milled as-needed). Replace bottom step with granite or concrete step.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Non- Applicability; Certificate of Appropriateness

Date of Public Hearing: November 15, 2016

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Architectural Description:

This is one end of a set of 5 wood Italianate rowhouses with bracketed eaves. They are all side-hall plan with a small pedimented porch. Simple window hoods cap the casing. The brick foundation of #145 has been painted. The rear entries have all been altered in various ways. #145 has an enclosed porch and small kitchen window overlooking the yard and Medford Street.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

Located at the corner of Central and Medford Streets, this late 19th century row housed a number of mid-level tradesmen and their families. The closeness of the new Somerville Junction station contributed to the popularity of this section of Winter Hill along with increased rail service and new industries in the southern section of Somerville. These wood-frame rowhouses on Central Street were in response to the changing needs and were predecessors of the larger apartment blocks developed in other parts of Somerville.



II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION See the final pages for details and photos.

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Alter/repair front porch (posts and corbels will be milled as-needed).

2. Replace bottom step with granite or concrete step.

II. FINDINGS

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

C/A, C/NA	Susan Rabinowitz	2002.042	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Replace vinyl gutters on porch with wood ones; 2. Add newels to stair railing to match neighboring newels; and 3. Replace plastic pane with glass in front door. 4. Repair and replace flashing and wood gutters in-kind; 5. Install gutter screens; 6. Repair and replace porch roof and posts in-kind; 7. Repair and replace sliding glass door in rear of house; 8. Repair and replace clapboards in-kind as necessary; and 9. Repaint and stain house.
C/NA	Susan Rabinowitz	2005.054	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repair light on back porch; 2. Install a lattice entryway to crawl space under front porch.
C/A	Susan Rabinowitz	2009.050	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Raise the sill of the windows approximately 15" while retaining the central casing and lintel to permit the installation of counters on the rear of building, visible from the public right of way; and 2. Install 2 casement windows.
C/NA	Susan Rabinowitz	2010.068	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove/strip approx. 500 sf of rubber roofing; 2. Install new ½" poly-iso to deck; and 3. Install new fully adhered rubber membrane to deck.

1. Precedence:

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
 1. Alter/repair front porch (posts and corbels will be milled as-needed).

This is a repair and replacement in-kind. Most of the cases submitted to the HPC Staff fall into this category and are exempt from Commission Review.

2. Replace bottom step with granite or concrete step.

There have been a no instances where a single bottom step has been replaced by stone or concrete. It should be noted that all the other entries in the rowhouse have a concrete bottom step.

2. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The steps and front porch are fully visible from Central Street.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

141 Central Street has a full set of wood steps. The porch and steps need to be repaired and are in fair to poor condition. The bottom riser is rotting. The other rowhouses have a concrete bottom step.

- *Is the proposal more appropriate than the existing conditions?*

The porch entries and steps of the row would become more consistent with each other.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

GENERAL APPROACH

The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.

- A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance described in the Study Committee report must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*
- C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*
- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*
- E. *Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.*
- F. *The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future.*

The stairs, porch and handrails visible from the public right of way were not discussed in the Form B. The deteriorated steps would be replaced to match the others in the row. Porch columns and other damaged and rotting details would be replicated to match the existing.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the Veazie Row Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Susan Rabinowitz at 141 Central Street a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of a concrete or granite steps with the following conditions.

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. If changes are necessary to the proposed design for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.
3. The bottom step shall be replaced with either granite or concrete to match the other bottom steps in the row.
4. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that it was executed in accordance with this Certificate and approved plans.

A Certificate of Non-Applicability is in accordance with the Somerville Historic District Ordinance Section 10, Limited Coverage, which states, "Nothing in this ordinance shall be construed to prevent the ordinary maintenance, repair, or replacement of any exterior architectural feature within a historic district which does not involve a change in design, material, color or the outward appearance thereof ..." Further, the Ordinance states that Section 2.f, Definitions, which states, "Exterior architectural feature means such portion of the exterior of a building or structure as open to view from a public street, public way, public park or public body of water..." Therefore a **Certificate of Non-Applicability shall be issued** for repairs and maintenance in kind for the porch columns with the following contingency.

1. The wood replacement porch columns shall match the existing in form, shape, and size.





18 Westwood Road. 2011