



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:	17-19R Aldersey Street	c. 1869 Adoniram Taylor House and Stable
Case:	HPC 2014.053	Aldersey Summit Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	RCG Aldersey LLC, Owner	
Applicant Address:	17 Ivaloo Street, Suite 100, Somerville, MA 02143	
Date of Application:	July 29, 2014	
Legal Notice:	<i>Demolish garage, install new fencing and bike racks</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	August 19, 2014	

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Built on one of the larger residential lots in the Prospect Hill area, this house is a fine example of a three story, Second Empire home. Although there is a center entrance with a projecting central pavilion the plan is asymmetrical with a side ell that is incorporated into the straight edged mansard roof. Intact architectural detail includes the paired cornice brackets, segmental arched dormers, patterned slate roof, wood block quoins, and cut glass panels on the paired entrance doors. There is a full length, wrap porch with a decorated balustrade and lattice screening on the side section. In all likelihood, this was added in the early 20th century. Similar detail is found on the mansard cottage at the rear of the property which is a converted stable.



There is a low four bay garage at the rear of the property constructed in 1927 in the most basic auto shed style of cement blocks in the shape of rusticated granite and a stepped pediment. It is located as far from the house as possible on the lot. The doors are not original to the garage.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

The property is one of the best examples of a well conserved Second Empire house on a large double lot in the residential district of Prospect Hill. Aldersey Street is part of a plan of building lots drawn up for Quincy A. Vinal in 1868. [Plan Book 15, Plan 63/64]. Most of the land in this section of Prospect Hill was owned by the Vinals. This was part of a larger parcel conveyed to Ira Hill and Edwin M. Bacon, real estate investors in 1869. Within two months Hill and Bacon had this house built and sold to Adoniram J. Taylor, carpenter and house builder. It is possible that he may have built this house and subsequently purchased it. It is thought that Taylor was the carpenter who built the Enoch Robinson House at 36 Atherton Street. The "Round House" is noted for its unusual round shape and is the only such design in Somerville.

The garage was constructed more than 50 years after the house when modes of transportation had drastically changed from horses and streetcars to personal automobiles.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Demolish 1927 garage to grade, retaining the portions of the garage that act as a retaining wall;
2. Install a 4' solid wood fence along driveway entry and a 6' wood and vertical lattice fence along the parking area and the rear wall of the property;
3. Install trellises in a planting area along the rear portion of the fence to encourage climbing vines;
4. Add bike racks; and
5. Landscape.

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

2012.098	C/A, C/H, C/NA	Peter Kaplan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Remove and salvage existing carriage house (19R Aldersey Street) roof slates for repairs on main building (C/A); <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Any slates left over from repairs on the main house at 17-19 Aldersey Street should be used first on the front of the carriage house and then on the west side facing Vinal Avenue (C/A); 2. Replace slate and asphalt shingles on the remainder of the carriage house mansard with Slateline® architectural shingles (C/A) and 3. Remove existing picket fence (C/A). 4. Replace existing wood gutters of house and carriage house with aluminum gutters but not on the carriage house porch (C/H). 5. Replace slate shingles with asphalt shingles on upper roof of carriage house (not visible) (C/NA).
2012.099	C/NA	Peter Kaplan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Repair and replace siding and trim in-kind as needed; 2. Recaulk or replace lights on all windows in-kind as needed; 3. Replace storm windows; 4. Repoint masonry including chimneys with mortar consistent to the existing in color, texture, tooling, and vapor permeability; 5. Install new flashing in-kind where needed; 6. Replace asphalt roofs and install flashing in-kind;

			7. Repair and replace lower mansard on main house with slate shingles in kind as needed using salvaged slate shingles from the carriage house roof that are not visible from the public right of way; 8. Replace asphalt shingle on carriage house, porches and the upper roof of both buildings with asphalt shingles in-kind 9. Replace aluminum gutters in-kind; and 10. Paint
2013.020	C/NA	Peter Kaplan	Alterations to the east side of the carriage house not visible from public rights-of-way.
2013.034	C/A	Peter Kaplan	1. The installation of the board and lattice fence on the rear property line shall be 6' high with lattice installed in the vertical as opposed to the diagonal direction. 2. The installation of the 8'x8' trash enclosure will match the lattice fence in height and style and will be located next to the garage behind the house. 3. The installation of a new walkway will consist of 18"x18" granite block and located in front of the porch running from the driveway to the front steps.
2013.046	C/NA	Peter Kaplan	Not visible from public right of way
2013.092	C/NA	Peter Kaplan	1. All elements such as windows, trim, porch elements or siding may be removed for de-leading and shall be returned to their original locations after they have been stripped and repaired as needed. 2. There shall be no change in material or design.

1. Precedence:

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*

Only one proposal for the demolition of a 1920s concrete block garage has been reviewed in the last 10 years for an historic property was at 57 Columbus Avenue (2012). While typical of the 1920s when hundreds if not thousands of such buildings were constructed for Model Ts and other popularly available cars, the concrete block garage is not within the period of significance for Prospect Hill and the Warren/Columbus Avenue Historic District.

The type of fence proposed has been approved on a regular basis by the Commission. It is a popular style of privacy fence that blends well with historic architecture but is clearly not of an historic period. This fence has been used at 26 Bow Street, 57 Columbus Avenue, 58 Columbus Avenue, 61 Columbus Avenue, 63 Columbus Avenue, 45 Vinal Avenue, 9 Westwood Road and 16-18 Westwood Road. The proposed wood slat and lattice fence is a modern style compatible with older properties. It has already been approved and used for the trash enclosure and rear property line.

Bicycle racks have only rarely been added to historic properties, usually on public property such as in front of the City Hall and the Central and West Branch Libraries. The condominiums at 50 Bow Street also have racks installed where they can be seen next to the front entry.

3. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The existing garage is visible at the rear of the property on the east side.

The proposed fence would be visible along the east side and at the end of the driveway. It will be low enough to continue the open sight lines of the house from Aldersey Street.

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

The garage is located at the northeast corner of the lot. It is in poor condition but does have its original doors. The garage is typical but less ornamented than many garages of the 1920s. See **Carriage House to Auto House** by Reed and Hardwicke for a typology of popular styles. It is significant as a characteristic structure of the vintage automotive era when the Model T and Model A Fords were the car of choice for many.

The existing fence along the east side is composed of chain link. Several of the tenants chain their bicycles to the fence. It is not known whether the fence belongs to 17-19R Aldersey Street or to the property next door at 9-11 Aldersey.

The driveway widens at the front edge of the house to allow for parking.

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

HPC Specific Guidelines do not explicitly address fences. Municipal preservation guideline research regarding fence location advises that fences are appropriate when placed in a rear yard with minimal visibility, or are considerably set back from the streetscape to allow the property owner privacy, pet control or security. Additionally, the placement of a fence along lot lines confirms historic lot patterns of historic neighborhoods. Zoning requires that a fence be no more than 4' along the front yard setback.

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 affect 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.***

There will be no changes to the historic fabric as described on the Form B.

- B. ***Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place over the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected (LATER IMPORTANT FEATURES will be the term used hereafter to convey this concept).***

The garage does not have any particular significance and is not a distinguishing feature of the Aldersey Summit Local Historic District. The fence proposed is a common style made of traditional materials. The bicycle racks will be obscured by long-term evergreen trees.

- C. ***Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.***

No historic material or features will be altered.

- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*

No historic material or features will be replaced.

- 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.***

No historic material or features will be replaced. Wood will be used for the fence.

- 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 proposed new fences and bicycle racks will be visible from the public right of way. However the racks will be both protected and obscured by the *arbor vitae* planted every eight feet along the east side behind the front yard setback.

Landscape Features and Paving

1. *The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*

There will be no alteration of the landscape. The open streetscape will be preserved.

2. *It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.*

The 1927 garage intrusion will be removed. The fence will be low along the front yard setback, rising to 6' and following the contour of the yard.

3. *The existing landforms of the site should not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the structure or site. Additional landforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the structure.*

There will be no changes to the landform.

4. *The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.*

There will be no changes to the pattern of circulation.

Demolition

1. *Demolition of part or all of a structure is considered to be an alteration to the exterior and is subject to the review of the Commission.*

The demolition of the garage will not significantly alter the building or the district in a negative manner.

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 Aldersey/Summit Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Peter Kaplan, Project Manager a Certificate of Appropriateness for 17-19, and 19R Aldersey Street** for the following.

1. The 1927 garage shall be demolished to grade, retaining the portions of the garage that act as a retaining wall;
2. A 4' solid wood fence along driveway entry shall be installed to the edge of the front yard setback
3. A 6' wood and vertical lattice fence shall be installed along the parking area and the rear wall of the property;
4. Trellises shall be installed in a planting area along the rear portion of the fence to encourage climbing vines;
5. Seven bike racks shall be installed along the east side of the parking area along the 6' lattice fence; and
6. Eight *arbor vitae* or similar shall be planted to obscure and protect the bicycle racks along the east side of the parking area.



