



**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 / District(s)      36 Atherton Street  
Case:                      HPC 2014.044  
Applicant Name:        George Saropoulos  
Applicant Address:     30 Cambria Street, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application:    June 24, 2014  
Legal Notice:           *Install a driveway.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness  
Date of Public Hearing: Wednesday, July 15, 2014



**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Description: *From the 1989 MHC survey Form B*

One of Somerville's most unique 19th century buildings, the Round House, is well known as an architectural oddity. Circular in plan, the third story is of smaller diameter than the two below. Enoch Robinson designed circular rooms and a glass dome for the interior. The building retains much of its ornamentation such as cornice brackets, segmental arched window hoods, Ionic columns supporting an Italianate door hood, and the parapet.

Historical Context: *From the 1989 MHC survey Form B*

Enoch Robinson, builder and owner, was an inventor and businessman. Born in Boston, Enoch apprenticed to his gunsmith father in a variety of trades including flasscutting. Robinson moved to East Cambridge in 1825 and entered the New England Glass Company. He developed a patented method of pressing glass furniture knobs in 1826. In 1837, Enoch built a furnace and factory in Boston to manufacture knobs and established a lock business in 1839. Enoch moved to Somerville in 1847 and built this unique house in 1856.

The building is eligible for the National Register under criterion A and C.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### Proposal of Alteration:

The Applicant proposes to stake out the dimensions for a driveway that is proposed to be 45' in length and 16' in width, with a 12' curb cut. The Applicant does not want to install the driveway at this time and has not determined the exact material to compose the driveway, but pavers are likely. The driveway would be located 3' from the north property line.



## III. FINDINGS FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

### Prior Certificates Issued:

In 2007, a Certificate of Appropriateness was issued to 1) Repair and replace rotten and missing wood and metal elements such as clapboards, trim including fascia, soffits, casings, gutters, downspouts, battlements, railings and other decorative elements in-kind to match historic photographs; and 2) Replace roof and skylights that are not visible from public right of way.

### Precedence:

The HPC typically reviews and approves changes to driveway material. Typical materials approved are pavers, brick and concrete. The HPC has approved one new driveway in the past, but this was never constructed as the location was directly in front of the house and the zoning ordinance considers this front yard parking, which is not allowed.

### Considerations:

#### *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The driveway would be largely visible along Atherton Street, but less visible from Beech Street due to the reduced grade.

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

The building and grounds are in need of maintenance. The owner is moving forward in dimensioning the driveway due to the proposal to put a street tree in the location of a curb cut.

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

A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*

The architectural features described in the MHC Form B are not proposed to be altered as part of this proposal.

*Does the proposal coincide with the appropriate Specific Guidelines as set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

Design Guidelines do not address driveway material or location. The installation of a driveway is compatible with the historic district as the parcel evolves to accommodate other modes of transportation; however, the dimensions proposed are at a larger scale than what is historically appropriate or typical of the neighborhood. Staff recommends the driveway not to be more than 10 feet in width.

H. *Landscape Features and Paving*

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

The driveway would be located along the right side property line and would not alter any essential landscape features.

*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 surrounding environment has been significantly developed since construction of the Round House. The addition of a driveway, approximately 10' wide, would be an appropriate transitional component of the landscape.

*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.*

#### IV. 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 34 Day Street Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends the Historic Preservation Commission grant 36 Atherton Street a**

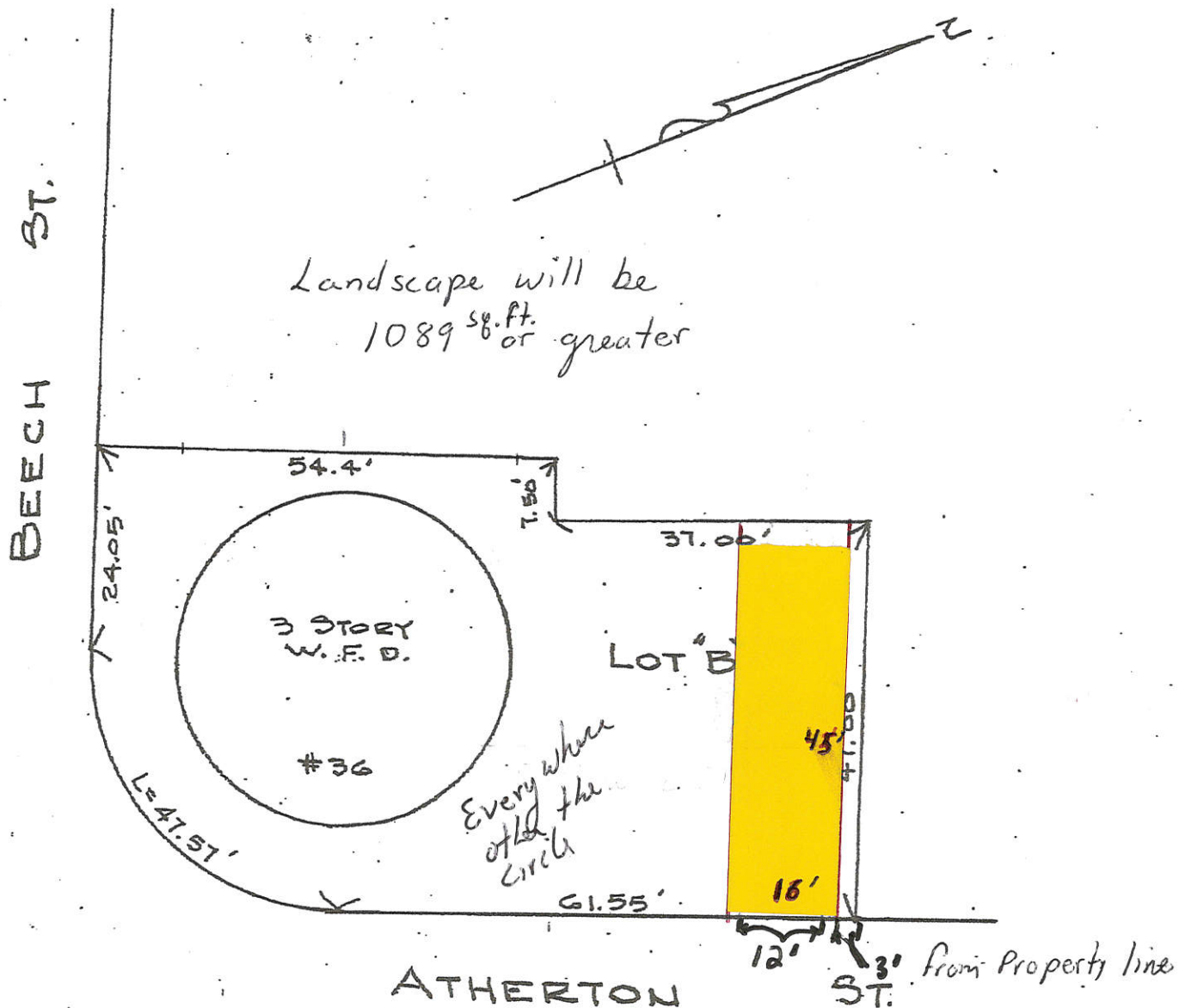
**Certificate of Appropriateness to install a driveway at the north end of the site, condition upon reducing the width to no more than 10 feet.**

*36 Atherton Street*



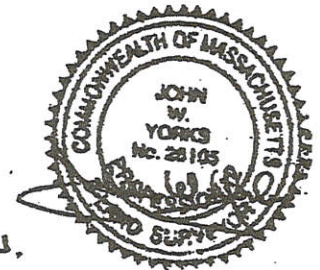
## MORTGAGE INSPECTION PLAN

for mortgage purposes only



NO DETERMINATION IS MADE AS TO THE LOCATION OF ANY RETAINING WALLS OR FENCES IN RELATION TO THE PROPERTY LINES.

LOCUS NOT ACCESSIBLE AT THE TIME OF INSPECTION.



\*Certification is hereby made to

THE LAW OFFICE OF GEORGE C. MALONIS  
that the existing structures shown on this plan are  
situated on the lot designated in compliance with the

CITY OR TOWN SOMERVILLE MA

DATE OF INSPECTION: 11/16/06

SCALE: 1 inch = 20 feet