



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	191 Beacon Street/ 81 Park Street – Dodakin's
Case:	HPC 2015.070
Applicant Name:	Well Built Construction Company, Inc
Date of Application:	October 22, 2015
Recommendation:	Not Significant
Hearing Date:	November 17, 2015

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**I. Historical Association Taken from the 1990 Form B**

**Historical Context:** Ward II is located in the southeastern section of the City, bounded roughly by Somerville Avenue and Medford Street on the north and east and the boundary with Cambridge on the south and west. The area is a very densely settled section of the City bisected by the Fitchburg line of the B&M railroad (1836), and residential dwellings coexist with large industrial complexes along both sides of the right-of-way. Ward II, which abuts Union Square, also has some localized commercial development along its three important roads - Washington Street, Somerville Avenue, and Beacon Street.

Between World War I and the Depression, the use of the automobile grew quickly, significantly changing land use patterns. Previously vacant and under-utilized land was developed with driveways, garages, gas stations and service stations. Yards were covered over by garages and driveways, sidewalks were interrupted by curb cuts. The increasing use of the automobile in everyday life for the average Somerville resident during the 1920s is evident in the large number of garages and service stations built during this period. They were usually constructed with concrete block, often molded into the shape of rusticated granite blocks, although other shapes and materials, such as brick and tile, were often included. The design of some gas and service station references the architecture of churches and public buildings, while other designs reflected a purely utilitarian aesthetic.

**Evolution of Site:** *The area, which initially developed in the early nineteenth century, is, along with Industrial Park, the oldest industrial area in the city with the most well-preserved examples of Somerville's industrial past. No. 191 Beacon Street was built around 1925 which housed Roberts Manufacturing Company, a castings and metal manufacturing company which made slot machines. By 1933 the building was vacant. Sometime during the 1930s or 1940s the building was used as garage and a portion of the front of the building was removed to create the present canopy configuration. During this time a separate store was located on Park Street. According to the 1930 and 1940 Census, Italian-born Leo Funai owned a convenience or variety store. He received a building permit in 1933 to partition 191 Beacon Street and a license for the storage of explosives from the 1935 Board of Aldermen.*

**Architectural Description:** *No. 189-191 Beacon Street is a one-story, painted brick commercial building with a large drive-through portico with brick piers. The last three bays of the building on the Park Street side have a concrete cornice and brick piers; the last bay is unpainted.*

**Storefronts:**

*Two of the garage bays beneath the portico have retained their ca. 1935 wood paneled doors with glass windows and transoms; the third bay has a ca. 1960 garage door. The Park Street facade has a largely intact store in the last bay which has a recessed entrance and original store windows and base; a large projecting sign obscures the store cornice.*

**Summary:**

Originally constructed as a factory, the utilitarian structure has been altered for use as a service station, and as a used car dealer ship.

**Findings on Historical Association**

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) **importantly associated with people, events or history** or (b) historically or architecturally significant (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (b) are at the end of the next section.*

**(a)** In accordance with the historic information obtained from *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlas, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff **do not** find 191 Beacon Street/91 Park Street to be 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.

The subject building is not found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City despite its association with automotive uses due to lack of information regarding the owners or the businesses located at 191 Beacon Street or 91 Park Street.

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## II. Historical and Architectural Significance

*The findings for historical and/or architectural significance of a historic property address the period, style, method of building construction and association with a reputed architect or builder of the subject property, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B).*

The period of significance for 191 Beacon Street/ 91 Park Street begins with its construction c. 1928 and its conversion to automotive uses in the 1930s. These uses have not changed in recent years.

### ***Integrity***

*The National Park Service identifies historic integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance. A property should possess sufficient integrity to convey, represent or contain the values and qualities for which it is judged significant; therefore, the following is an identification and evaluation of these qualities and alterations as they affect the ability of the subject property to convey significance.*

- a. **Location:** The building has not been moved. It is located on a major local artery at the edge of a residential district on the Somerville Cambridge line.
- b. **Design:** The building is an altered factory building with simple painted brick and pilasters. The design is relatively unadorned as is appropriate for a utilitarian structure.
- c. **Materials:** The building is brick and concrete.
- d. **Alterations:** The bays facing the corner of Beacon Street and Park Street have been opened to form a large canopy. Repair bays and other divisions have been added to the original structure.

*Evaluation of Integrity:* The factory building is a simple brick and concrete construction with alterations made for automotive uses.

*Does the subject parcel represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?*

While the building has been adapted for use as an automotive service station and dealership, the architecture is neither distinctive nor distinguished. The large canopy remains of the original factory building and the color scheme do more to indicate its use than any other facet of the structure.

*Does the subject parcel represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or region due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape?*

Because the building is located at a busy intersection, it serves as a landmark. However, as a single story nondescript structure, this is due to color, signage and placement more than its distinctive architecture.

### **Findings for Historical and Architectural Significance**

*For a Determination of Significance, the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) **historically or architecturally significant** (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 2.17.B). Findings for (a) can be found at the end of the previous section.*

(b) In accordance with the *Finding on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, which assess the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff do not find 191 Beacon Street/ 81 Park Street historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due the number of alterations. The original building had exterior walls removed to form a canopy. A few specific later character-defining features of the automotive uses such as service bays and circa 1930s doors on the bays still remain. The storefront on Park Street has been closed in and modernized.

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### III. 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 meeting for a Determination of Significance. 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.*

*For a Determination of Significance, the structure must be either (A) listed on the National Register or (B) at least 50 years old.*

(A) The structure is NOT listed on or within an area listed on the National Register of Historic Places, nor is the structure the subject of a pending application for listing on the National Register.

**OR**

(B) The structure, circa 1920s, is at least 50 years old.

**AND**

*For a Determination of Significance under (B), the subject building must be found either (a) importantly associated with people, events or history or (b) historically or architecturally significant.*

(a) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical Association*, which utilizes historic maps/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do NOT find 191 Beacon Street/ 81 Park Street 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.**

The subject building is not found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City despite its association with automotive uses due to lack of information regarding the owners or the businesses located at 191 Beacon Street or 91 Park Street.

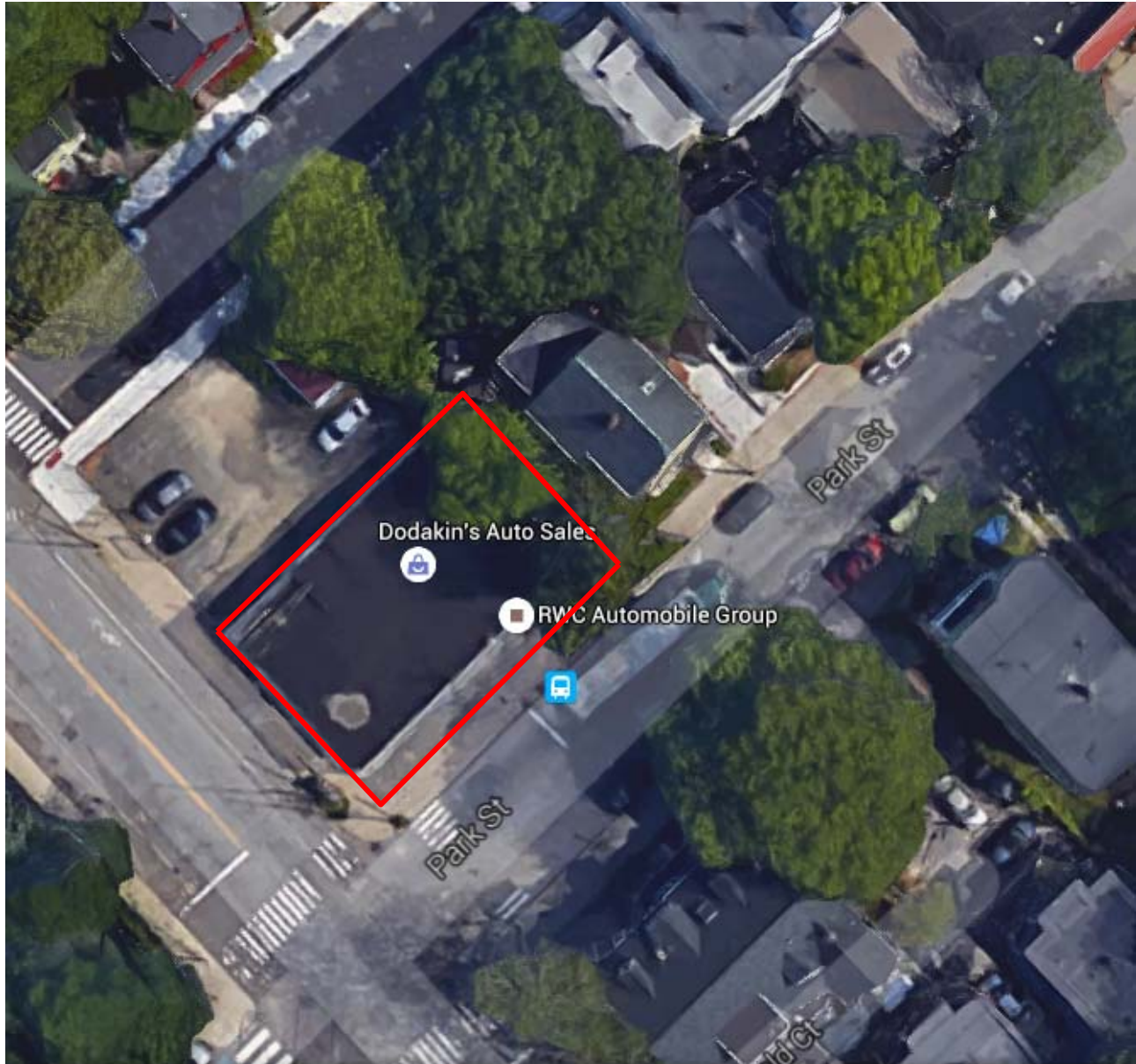
**OR**

(b) In accordance with the *Findings on Historical and Architectural Significance*, which addresses period, style, method of building construction, and association with a reputed

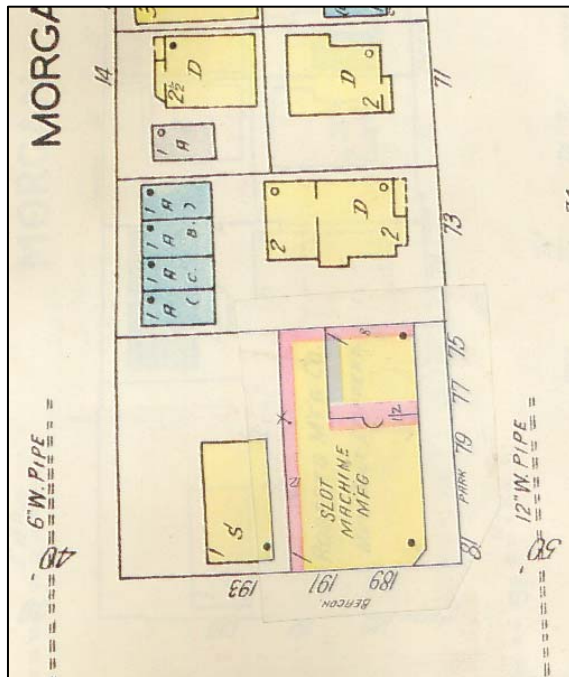
architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures, as well as integrity, the ability to convey significance, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do NOT find 191 Beacon Street/ 81 Park Street historically and architecturally significant.**

The subject building is not found historically and architecturally significant due the number of alterations. The original building had exterior walls removed to form a canopy. A few specific later character-defining features of the automotive uses such as service bays and circa 1930s doors on the bays still remain. The storefront on Park Street has been closed in and modernized.

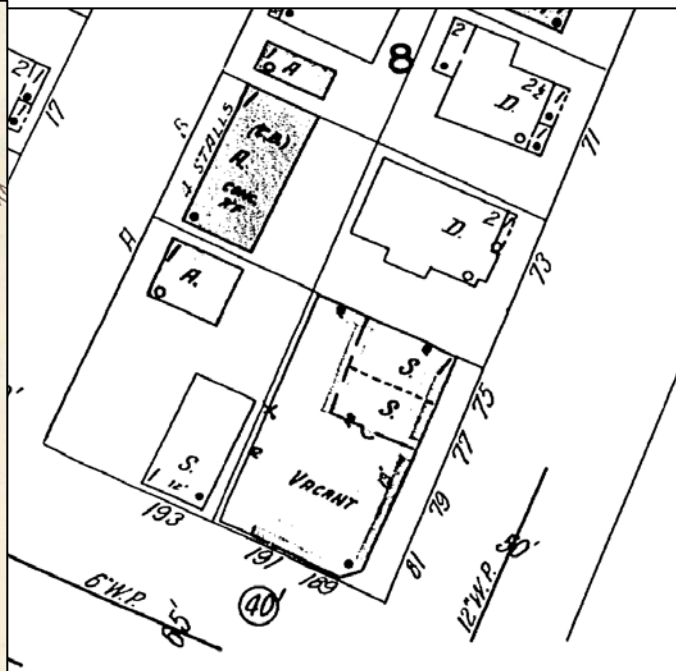
***191 Beacon Street/ 81 Park Street***



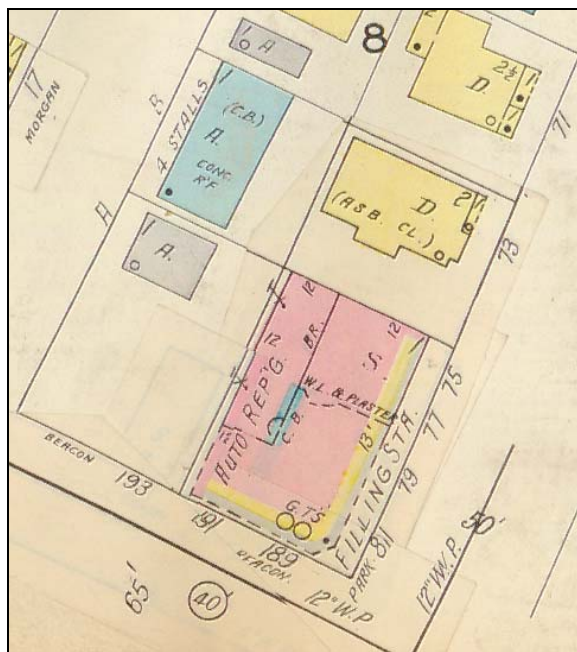




1925 Sanborn Plate 39



1934 Sanborn Plate 265



1959 Sanborn Plate 265