



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: 359-365 Broadway
Case: HPC 2017.001

Historic Name: Langmaid Terrace
Single Building Local Historic District
NRIND; NRMRA

Applicant Name: John Holmes
Owner Name: John Holmes
Owner Address: 110 School Street, Everett, MA

Date of Application: January 24, 2017
Legal Notice: *Alter egress; add decks; alter windows of ell & add AC*
Staff Recommendation: *Conditional Certificate of Appropriateness*
Date of Public Hearing: February 21, 2017

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:
See attached Form B.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:
See attached Form B.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. *Alter egress;*
2. *Add decks;*
3. *Alter windows of ell*
4. *Add AC.*

See the final pages for details and photos.



359-365 Broadway, 2009 photo

II. FINDINGS

1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

C/A	John Murray for John Holmes	2015.043	<p>1 – Applicant shall obtain appropriate building permits for the following retroactively. Applicant is subject to any fines or other methods of remuneration as determined by the Inspectional Services Division (ISD):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Construction of roof decks b. <i>Removal of vinyl siding</i> c. <i>Removal of clapboard siding</i> d. Enlargement of window openings e. Creation of wall opening for a/c units <p>2 – Applicant shall obtain appropriate building permits for the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Remove cement board siding and replace with wood clapboarding b. Remove composite trim and replace with wood trim <p>3 – Applicant shall use wood clapboarding that is similar to late 19th century wood siding in reveal (exposure), thickness and contour. Pine will not be considered an acceptable siding material.</p> <p>4 – Applicant shall use wood trim that is similar to late 19th century wood trim in terms of thickness and contour. Pine will not be considered an acceptable trim material.</p> <p>5 – Should there be any delay between the removal of the cement board and composite trim and the installation of the wood trim and clapboarding, the applicant shall ensure that the structure is properly protected from any adverse impact from the elements.</p> <p>6 – Applicant shall contact HPC Staff upon completion of the work for sign-off that the work was done in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and approved plans.</p>
C/NA	John Murray for John Holmes	2015.044	<p>1. The interior rehabilitation and renovation of the kitchen and bathroom shall not involve any alteration to exterior features such as walls, windows or doors.</p>
C/A	John Holmes	2017.001	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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. Cement board siding shall be removed and replaced with wood clapboarding. 4. Composite trim shall be removed and replaced with wood trim. 5. Applicant shall use wood clapboard that is similar to late 19th century wood siding in reveal (exposure), thickness and contour. Pine will not be considered an acceptable siding material. 6. Applicant shall use wood trim that is similar to late 19th century wood trim in terms of thickness and contour. Pine will not be considered an acceptable trim material. 7. Applicant shall ensure that the structure is properly protected from any adverse impact from the elements if there be any delay between the removal of the cement board and composite trim and the installation of the

wood trim and clapboarding.

8. Applicant shall contact HPC Staff upon completion of the work for sign-off that the work was executed in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness (C/A).

1. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
- *Alter egress;*

Exterior egress stairs are rare in Local Historic Districts, the few there are pre-date the building's designations. The Commission granted Certificates of Appropriateness for new egress stairs at 419 Broadway (2005); 198 Central Street (2015) 55 Columbus Avenue (2005); 27-29 Meacham Road (2016) and 46 Mount Vernon Street (2003 & 2014).

- *Add decks;*

There is little precedence for decks. The last to be granted Certificates of Appropriateness by the Commission were for 50 Bow Street (2005), 55 Columbus Avenue (2005) and 46 Mount Vernon Street (2003). These were all visible on the rear or roof of the property at a distance.

- *Alter windows of ells and add an opening for an air conditioner*

There are very few picture windows on historic properties. Typically these are, as in this case, located on the rear of the building, where the least formal portions of the building change to reflect changing life styles. Usually this is minimally visible although the backs of Veazie Row, 139-145 Central Street and most of the designated houses on Columbus Avenue are visible from public rights of way and have sustained major alterations over time.

2. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The project is visible from Fenwick Street, Jaques Street and Winter Hill Circle.

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

The Applicant resided the building with textured cementitious siding and installed roof decks over two years ago with no building permits in hand. Last month the Commission granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for the removal of the cementitious siding and its replacement by with wood clapboard.

Egress from the second and third floors of the main block have been altered slightly to meet new safety code requirements. In conjunction with this, rear decks were added, recognizing the unsafe and unpermitted uses that the tenants made of the flat roof of the rear ell. See the sequenced photos below.

The windows had been altered on the rear ells on both floors and relocated. In this case, the already altered ground floor picture windows were replaced by paired double hung windows in the street façade for which Commission approval is needed. Numerous other window alterations were undertaken at an unknown date prior to 2007 and perhaps prior to designation in 1985. An opening has been inserted for the permanent installation of an air conditioner.

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

Yes. This is change of windows to double-hung is more appropriate than casement or picture windows. No, the installation of a window air conditioner is a wall is not more appropriate. Decks are not part of the Victorian era vocabulary although wide open piazzas were. These were generally not on the roofs of buildings. It was considered extremely unusual when a roof garden was placed on top of the Cumberland, an apartment building at 40-42 Highland Avenue in 1890. This had an elaborate railing system according to Beyond the Neck.

- *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 rear ells were not discussed in the Form B as was typical in the pre-1990 surveys. The windows and decks are visible from Fenwick Street, Jaques Street and Winter Hill Circle. The Applicant has repaired and updated the rear egress from the second and third floors, making the space more usable.

B. Roofs

- 7. *Utility equipment, such as television antennae, air conditioners, solar collectors and other mechanical units should be restricted to the rear of the property or on portions of the roof that are not visible from a public way. If no other placement is possible, air conditioning and other cooling units on street facades should be of the slim-line type or set flush with the surface of the building and painted the same color as the window trim.*

Among the considerations the Commission takes concerning utility equipment:

- 1. *Utility equipment should be unobtrusively located and installed, so that it causes the least amount of alteration to the exterior facades and materials of the historic building and to the features of its surrounding site.*
- 2. *Equipment such as heating and air conditioning units, and trash storage and service areas, should typically be screened from the street using materials compatible with the historic use of the building.*
- 3. *To the greatest extent possible, mechanical and/or electrical equipment should be of a color that either compliments the historic roof material or obscures the equipment altogether.*

A new opening was made to install the air conditioner. The air conditioner has been set in the wall next to the rear door and protrudes the depth of the unit. The placement and size of the air conditioner do not meet the guidelines or considerations of the Commission. Typically, the Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness for screened HVAC equipment located in areas where they are minimally visible.

C. Windows and Doors

1. *Retain original and later important door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.*
2. *Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later important window elements such as sash, lintels, sill, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorative elements and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence. ...*

In this case, none of the windows are original, the current alterations do not affect any of the historic fabric. The replacement of a tri-partite picture window with paired double-hung sash is more in-keeping with the original windows that would have been located on the rear ell. See section above for discussion of the air conditioner placement.

D. Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements

2. *Fire escapes are very conspicuous features and, as a rule, should only be placed on the rear of the building, or where they are least visible from a public way. If installation on the street or side façade cannot be avoided, fire escapes should be designed and constructed with the same attention demanded by other major alterations and repairs, and are subject to the review and approval of the Commission.*

The fire escapes have been located where they are the least visible, descending to the courtyard between the two ells of the building and meets the above requirements.

Among the considerations the Commission takes concerning roof decks:

1. *New roof decks and enclosures should not be visible from a public right-of-way and should be unobtrusive. Roof decks should be located toward the rear of the building.*
2. *When visible and if historically appropriate, railings should be ornamental iron.*
3. *Permanent opaque elevations, such as lattice or planters should be lower than the railing height.*

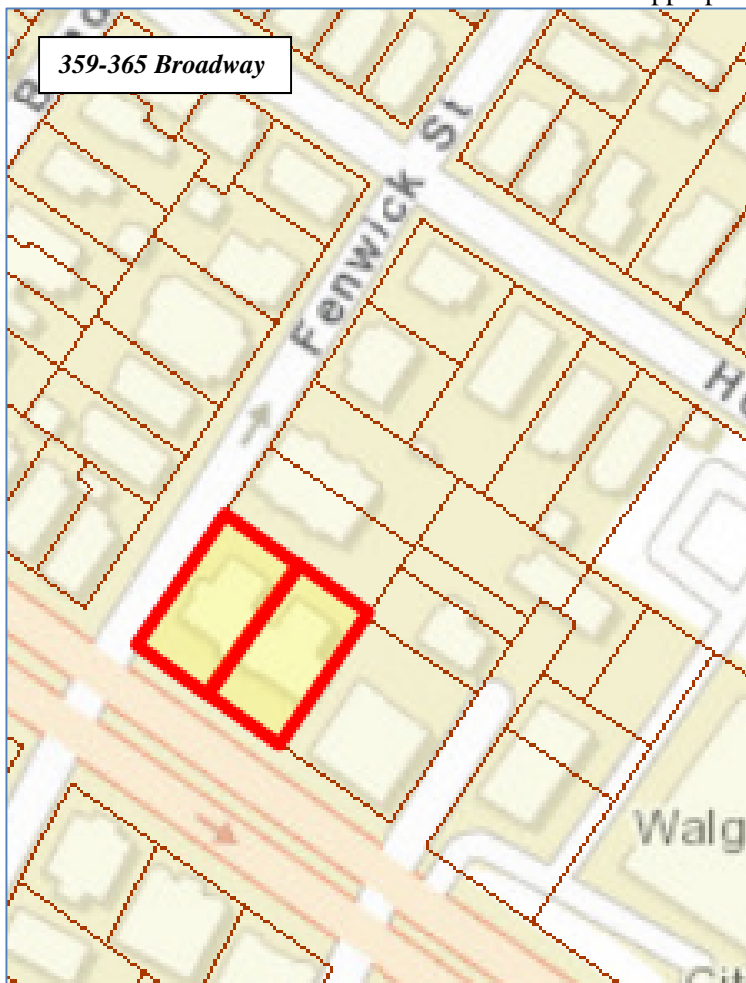
The new roof decks are visible from the public rights of way and are located on the rear of the building. However the rear of the building is extremely visible as are the decks. Metal railings might be less visible but any furniture or plants would stand out. The existing railing system is modern in effect and has no pretensions of being original to the design of the building.

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 Langmaid Building Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant John Holmes, Owner a Certificate of Appropriateness** for 359-365 Broadway with the following contingencies.

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. Alter egress to include enlarged landings and decks.
3. The railings shall be of a generic style indicative of new construction and composed of wood.
4. The top of the porch railings shall meet building code.
5. The replacement balusters shall be simple square balusters.
6. The replacement posts shall be finished with a simple pyramidal cap.
7. The ground floor windows of ell shall be paired double-hung windows.
8. Any air condition units shall be unobtrusively located and installed, so that it causes the least amount of alteration to the exterior facades and materials of the historic building and to the features of its surrounding site.
9. Air conditioning units shall be screened from the street using materials compatible with the historic use of the building.
10. To the greatest extent possible, mechanical and/or electrical equipment should be of a color that either compliments the historic roof material or obscures the equipment altogether.
11. If changes are necessary to the proposed work for which this Certificate of Appropriateness was issued, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.
12. Applicant shall contact HPC Staff upon completion of the work for sign-off that the work was done in accordance with the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) and approved .



Date: March 21, 2017
Case #: HPC 2017.007
Site: 359-365 Broadway



2007 photo



2011 photo



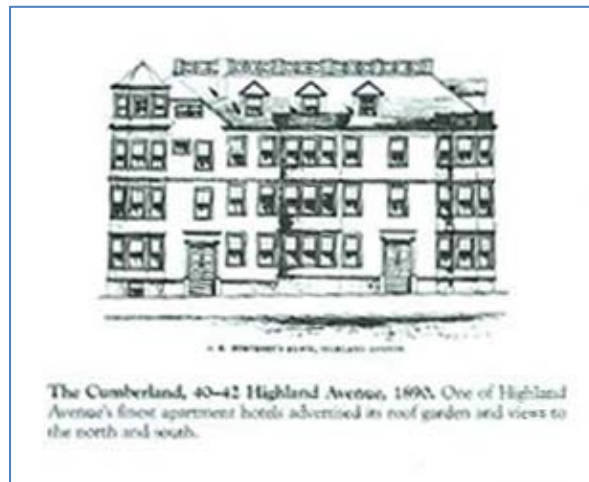
2014



2015



2015



50 Bow Street Deck



46 Mount Vernon Street