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

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

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Site:	192-194 Central Street	c.1880 Cutler Downer Mansard Rowhouse
Case:	HPC 2016.055	192-200 Central Street Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	RCG Winter Hill LLC, Owner	
Applicant Address:	17 Ivaloo Street, Somerville, MA 20143	
Date of Application:	July 27, 2016	
Legal Notice:	<i>Replace windows with black vinyl</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	<i>Conditional Certificate of Appropriateness</i>	
Date of Public Hearing:	August 16, 2016	

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**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** From the Form B

*192-200 Central Street is a five-unit Second Empire-style brick row. The steep, straight-edged roof line indicates that it was built during the final years of that style's popularity. The overall proportions of the building are tall and narrow. Notable features include the full height, polygonal bays, recessed entrances, and boldly projecting cornices. The building also retains a scallop-shingled slate roof and projecting dormers with bracketed supported broken pediments.*

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:** From the Form B

*192-200 Central Street was built ca. 1880 by local real estate broker and Winter Hill resident Cutler Downer. Brick rowhouses began to be built for middle class residents in prestigious neighborhoods such as Winter Hill in the late 19th century.*



**II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

*1. Proposal of Alteration:* See the final pages for plans and photos.

1. Replace existing wood replacement windows with Harvey ® Classic Fully Welded Double Hung black vinyl replacement windows with 5/8" interior and exterior grids and 3 1/4" jamb depth.

**II. FINDINGS**

1. *Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

192-200	Central Street	C/A	Dean Cassassa	2014.084	1. The head house shall be removed. 2. The skylights shall not be visible from the public right of way.
198	Central Street	C/A	Dean Cassassa	2015.015	(1) The location of windows and doors on the second floor rear elevation of the rear ell may be reversed; and (2) The egress stairs from second floor and first floor may be relocated. (3) If the approval differs from the plans approved on May 19, 2015, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work. (4) Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate and approved plans.
198	Central Street	C/NA	Jim Sleeper, Contractor	2003.013	1. Remove damaged slate shingles and replace with new Pennsylvania Gray (scaloped) slate shingle; 2. Install membrane roof and sealant; 3. Repair and replace missing and rotted wood trim, including window trim, pediments, crown moldings, cases, cheeks, soffits, fascia, gutter, frieze board, dentils, brackets and rope moldings in-kind as needed; and 4. Repaint.

1. *Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
- 2. Replace existing wood replacement windows with Harvey ® Classic Fully Welded Double Hung black vinyl replacement windows with 5/8" interior and exterior grids and 3 1/4" jamb depth.

Black vinyl replacement windows have not been available until recently, therefore there is no exact precedent for the windows proposed. Replacement windows are exactly that. There is some precedent for replacing one type of replacement window with another. There have been 10 cases going mostly from vinyl to metal-clad or wood windows.

2. *Considerations:* See photos at the end of the document

The Applicants as new owners of 192 and 194 Central Street were un-aware of the LHD designation until recently. The Preservation Restrictions on the first 185 properties designated as Local Historic Districts are not findable on the Registry of Deeds website using a property search. They can however be found with a name search of the Owner at the time of designation. They are listed as a "Decree". This a problem the Commission has infrequently encountered. Steps have been taken to remedy the situation at the Registry.

The existing wood replacement windows are reaching the end of their useful life, some of them in worse shape than others. They have ordered the above custom windows which are currently in a warehouse awaiting installation. These are black vinyl, a new product, with a muntin, rail and stile configuration that closely matches the existing fenestration. The sash at 198 Central Street was replaced with white vinyl windows at an unknown date per Staff photo 2004.

a. *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The main façade of the building and one side wall are visible from Central Street.

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

The rowhouses have numerous owners. On the whole, the building is in generally good condition but reflects a diverse ownership of the individual entries over time. As can be seen above, not many of the owners have sought Certificates of Non-Applicability or Appropriateness for work on the building.

c. *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 windows are not discussed in the Form B. No replacement of significant architectural features will be undertaken.

### 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.*
- 3. *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. If aluminum windows must be installed, select a baked finish that matches as closely as possible the color of the existing trim. Investigate weather-stripping and storm windows with a baked enamel finish as an alternative to the replacement of historic sash.*

The opening locations will not change. The window sash will closely resemble the wood replacement sash in the rest of the building with one exception. The window has a putty profile.

### 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 not derogatory to the 192-200 Central Street Cutler Downer Row Houses Local Historic District due to the location and visibility of the proposal; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant RCG Winter Hill LLC, Owner a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the alterations to 192-194 Central Street with the following contingencies.

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work.
2. The existing wood replacement windows shall be replaced with Harvey ® Classic Fully Welded Double Hung black vinyl replacement windows with 5/8" interior and exterior grids and 3 1/4" jamb depth.
3. If the building permit differs from the approved conditions, a new application for the changes shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work.

