



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site:	11 Fairview Terrace	
Case:	HPC 2014.086	
Applicant Name:	Wojcieck Szczerba	
Date of Application:	10/1/2014	HPC received: 10/1/2014
Recommendation:	Significant	
Hearing Date:	10/21/2014	

I. Historical Association

Architectural Description: 11 Fairview Terrace is a single-story classic ranch house with a basement. It has a low roof line, large windows, I-shaped floor plan, a wood- shingle and clinker brick exterior and center cross-gabled roof. Trim is minimal. It has a center entry with double doors, a bay with a large window and 2 casement windows in the public rooms and double-hung windows in the bedroom area.

Historical Description: Harold A. Palmer was born in Somerville on October 15, 1906. He went through the Somerville Public School System. He worked as a real estate and insurance broker. He lived at 8 Fairview Terrace, a 3-family house and was a member of numerous organizations such as the Elks, the Lions, the Merchant Marine Post, the Saint Polycarp's Men's Association and the Massachusetts Mayor's Club. He was the Ward 4 Alderman from 1940-43. During 1942-43, he was President of the Board of Aldermen and Acting-Mayor. He was also an Alderman-at-Large in 1945. He also served on the Planning Board and the School Committee. He was also a Representative at the State House from 1947-52 and 1955-58.

A Building Permit was given to H Palmer in November of 1955 for a single frame, 6-room ranch house. He and his wife had moved into 11 Fairview Terrace by January 1, 1957 per City Directories. By 1970, the adults listed are Harold A. Palmer (b. 1906), realtor; Catherine Palmer, (b. 1914), at home; Kevin Palmer (b. 1945), broker; and Joan Palmer (b. 1947), senior clerk.

The Nazzaro Family bought the house between 1970 and 1975. Richard Nazzaro is the owner of the Somerville business, United Mirror and Plate Glass which was started by his father in 1934.

Architect: Unknown

Context/Evolution: The house is located on a cul-de-sac off Sycamore Street near the top of Winter Hill. It abuts the Addis Dempsey House Local Historic District at 143-145 Sycamore Street. 11 Fairview Terrace is one of the few ranch houses to be found in the City. There are few ranch houses constructed in Somerville as the City was already fairly built out by the time they became common elsewhere in the post-World War II years. Due to the hilly nature of Somerville, many have usable basements.

Summary: While common elsewhere in Massachusetts and the rest of the country, there are not many ranch houses in Somerville. None are exemplary examples of the style. This one is associated with a prominent local politician of the time of the 1940s and '50s.

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/atlasses, 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 find 11 Fairview Terrace 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 found importantly associated with Harold A. Palmer, a prominent 1940s and 1950s era Somerville politician but not with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to the fact that Palmer had essentially retired from public life by the time he had the house constructed and that he had no lasting impact upon the City.

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 11 Fairview Terrace begins with its construction between 1955-1957. While common elsewhere in Massachusetts and the rest of the country, ranch houses are rare in Somerville. None are exemplary examples of the style. This one is associated with a prominent local politician of the time of the 1940s and '50s.

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 house has not been moved.
- b. Design: The house is a modified ranch style house typical in the post-World War II period. It is typical of its period in that it is a single story with a shallowly pitched roof, has large glass windows and designed for one floor living. Also typical of New England and Somerville but not typical of ranch style homes, it has a basement.
- c. Materials: Wood shingle and clinker brick siding with a 3-tab asphalt shingle roof.
- d. Alterations: No building permits were found for any alterations.

Evaluation of Integrity: The building does not exhibit all the characteristics of a ranch style house but is immediately recognizable as such. It has no known alterations.

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

The building is atypical of Somerville.

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?

Since it is located on a dead end street, it does not feature in the general perception of the neighborhood of late 19th century homes and it is not considered a landmark.

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 find 11 Fairview Terrace historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to its association Harold A. Palmer, politician; and the lack of ranch style houses, the dominant style of the mid-20th century, within the City of Somerville.

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 1956, 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 find 11 Fairview Terrace 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.**

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 find 11 Fairview Terrace historically and architecturally significant.**





