



**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:	47 Franklin Street	c.1869 Alonso Bowers House
Case:	HPC 2014.035	Flint Street LHD
Applicant Name:	Barry Abramowitz, Owner	
Applicant Address:	47 Franklin Street, Somerville, MA 02145	
Date of Application:	May 26, 2015	
Legal Notice:	<i>Replace chain link fence with metal fence.</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	June 16, 2015	

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**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:** from the Form B

*The suburban house at 47 Franklin Street was built in 1869-1871, likely by Alonzo Bowers as the housewright and original owner. The house follows a standard side hall plan of two stories with a third story mansard roof, set on a brick foundation. The design is Mansard Style as seen in the mansard roof with its original slate scalloped shingles and pedimented dormer windows. Other period features include the original portico with chamfered posts and pendant drop details and the side bay windows. As a local carpenter, Bowers possibly designed other Mansard Style houses in the area, perhaps 46 Pearl Street (SMV.1224), 70 Pearl Street (SMV.1225), and 94 Pearl Street (SMV.1226) of the same period.*



*Although resided, the Bowers house retains its original Mansard features, defining the suburban residential character of East Somerville in the post-Civil War period.*

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

*The suburban house at 47 Franklin Street is dated 1869-1871 by deed and directory research to Alonzo Bowers, as the original owner and likely builder. The suburban lot was purchased by Bowers in 1869 with Bowers listed as a carpenter in the 1871 Directory with a house on Franklin near Pearl, thus confirming construction to 1869-1871.*

*Bowers remains as owner as shown on the 1874, 1884, and 1895 Atlases. By 1905 the house had been divided with listings for Wellington Brazel as driver, Daniel Munroe as teamster, and Mrs. Hannah Wetton- A similar listing is*

*shown for 1925 with George Bowers, a mechanic and possible relation, Edwin Freeman, and Fred Pingree, a railroad engineer. The 1940 Directory also lists Mrs. Blanche Bowers, with John Cameron and Henry Maxwell.*

*The Bowers house is of note as a suburban residence of the post-Civil War period, designed by a local carpenter in East Somerville, and retained in the family through World War II.*

## **II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### *1. Proposal of Alteration:*

1. Remove chain link fence; and
2. Install a metal picket fence.

The building retains only a small portion of its original lot. The front yard is fenced with chain link. The new owner would like to remove the existing fence which contains the little landscaping there is. He would like to install a metal picket fence. He has submitted 3 related styles.

See the final pages for details and photos.

## **III. FINDINGS**

### *1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:*

No prior Certificates have been issued for this property which was designated as part of the Flint Street Local Historic District in 2011.

### *1. Precedence:*

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
  1. *Remove chain link fence on either side of the walkway.*

The Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness for the removal of chain link fencing to numerous properties: 26 Bow Street (2003), 56 Bow Street, (2012), 24 Chester Street (2009), 58 Columbus Avenue (2014), 57 Meacham Road (2002); 140 Morrison Avenue (2003), 144 Morrison Avenue (2008), 74 Mount Vernon Street (2010), 28 Warren Avenue (2003), 6 Westwood Road (2008) and 9 Westwood Road (2011).

### *2. Install a metal picket fence.*

The Commission has granted a number of Certificates of Appropriateness for historically inspired metal fences and the relocation and installation of salvaged fences. These were 25 Atherton (2014), 27 Chester Street (2011), 58 Columbus Avenue (2014), 8 Mount Vernon Street (2010), 1 Summer Street (2005), 45 Walnut Street (2013), 28 Warren Avenue (2003), and 3 Westwood Road (2005).

### *3. Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The proposed fence and gate would be visible from Franklin Street.

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

47 Franklin Street is located in a 19<sup>th</sup> century suburban lot which has been further subdivided in dense residential district of East Somerville. The small front yard is enclosed by chain link. See photos at the end of the document.

- *How does the proposal relate to historic conditions of the building/ parcel?*

Chain link fence is not an appropriate material for a 19<sup>th</sup> century residence. The proposed fences are similar in feeling to one that might have been erected at this time.

## **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.*

1. *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 described in the Study Committee report must be preserved.** In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*
  - B. *Changes and additions to the property and its environment that have taken place over the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected (LATER IMPORTANT FEATURES will be the term used hereafter to convey this concept).*
  - 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.*

No alterations to character-defining features mentioned on the Form B are anticipated. There will be no changes to any later important features. There will be no replacement of architectural features. The proposed fence will be composed of traditional materials and constructed in a style that would not be mistaken for historic but would complement the historic building. The metal fence would have vertical pickets. The new material is an upgrade from the existing chain link fence. This feature is highly visible.

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

#### **Landscape Features and Paving**

1. *The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*
3. *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.*
4. *The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.*

There are no changes to the essential landscape features. No re-grading is necessary for the maintenance of the structure. No changes to the features described in the Form B will be altered. The circulation pattern will not be altered.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

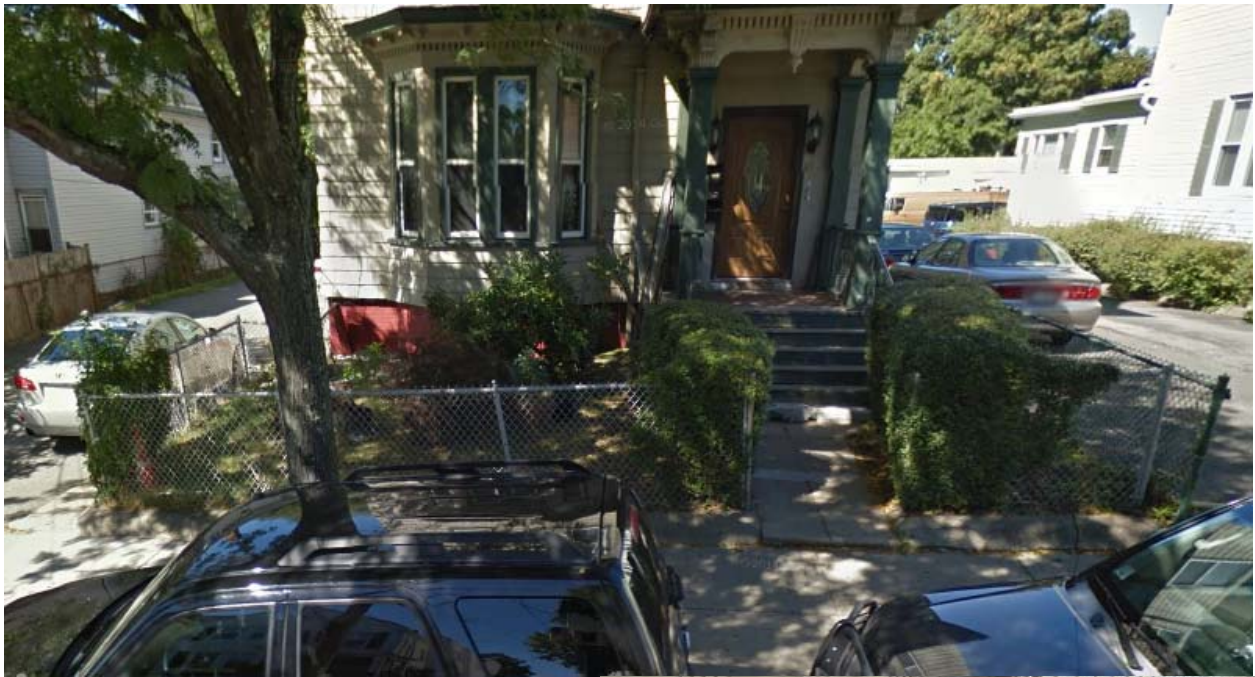
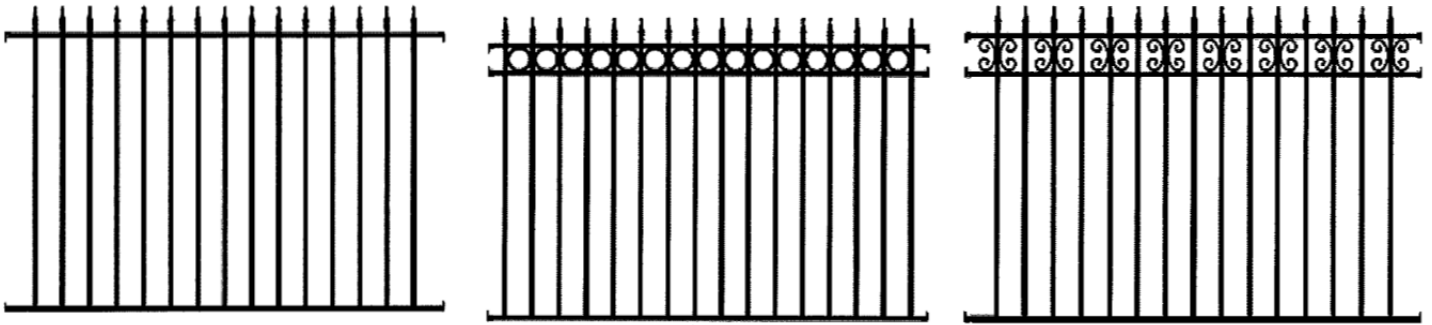
*The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features 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 would not be incongruous to the historic aspects or the architectural characteristics of the surroundings and of the historic district and is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the Columbus Avenue, Warren Avenue Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant Barry Abramowitz, owner a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation of a short fence, and gate at **47 Franklin Street** with the following contingencies.

1. The chain link fence on either side of the walkway shall be removed;
2. A new iron gate and short fence in the design submitted and attached below shall be installed in the existing location of the chain-link fence;
3. The gate and fence shall be of simple metal pickets; and
4. Historic Staff shall issue a sign-off upon completion of the project that this was done in accordance with the Certificate.







*47 Franklin Street, 2015*

