



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: 20 George Street c.1880, Lattimore-Pratt House
Case: HPC 2016-029 Single building Local Historic District

Applicant Name: Ari Goldschneider
Applicant Address: 1287 Bay Road, Sharon, MA 02067
Owner Name: Goldschneider Property LLC

Date of Application: April 26, 2016

Legal Notice: *Enlarge basement windows; Add/replace windows; Remove chimneys; Relocate utilities; Remove fence; and Add landscaping.*

Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness with Conditions



Date of Public Hearing: May 31, 2016

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Built in an architectural style that was common to late 19th century Somerville, this Mansard-roofed house is unusual in its use of the corner lot. There are two main facades, one facing George St., and the other facing Lincoln Street. Both are three bays with a center entrance. Each entrance is flanked by one-story projecting polygonal bays that are topped with modillion-topped polygonal dormers. The George Street side yard of the house contains one bay on the first level and two broken pediment-topped dormers in the Mansard roofline. The first and second stories of the property are delineated by a strong string course/fascia board.

As seen in the black and white photo, a decorated door hood over (originally) a double-door entry existed on the George Street façade. The same decorated hood and double doors originally existed on the Lincoln Street façade. Today, replacement fiberglass/vinyl-looking doors have replaced the original double doors.

The house was likely originally built as a two-family.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

East Somerville was one of the most densely settled parts of Somerville by the mid-to-late-1800s in part due to its topography: fine soil for drainage and clay for brick and pottery making.

Broadway and Washington Streets were main thoroughfares from the 18th century connecting Charlestown with Medford and Cambridge. Several farms cropped up in the East Somerville area and by the mid-1800s there were shops, taverns and industries with brickyards and pottery enterprises. In the mid-1800s, most residents were Boston businessmen and from the 1870s, many multi-family buildings were built to accommodate the increasing number of workers in the area due to the expanding brickyards, spike factories, and potteries.

Although George Street was not platted on the 1852 Draper Map there was one house set in from Broadway that, at the time the 1980 and 1989 architectural surveys were conducted in this area, was still standing, although it had been altered. George Street is first found on the 1874 map and is well-developed with several dwellings on each side. This section of Somerville was suburbanized by the 1870s. 20 George Street was built after 1874 on the corner lot. This large lot with one house was owned by the Pratt family who, in all likelihood, subdivided their property to build this two-family Mansard structure. Peter Lattimore, a stevedore (probably for a local shipping company in Charlestown) lived in the part nearest the corner, while members of the Pratt family lived in the other section.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Proposed Alterations

- (1) Remove vinyl siding and the asbestos siding it covers in order to expose the wood clapboards. The clapboards will be repaired, retained or replaced in-kind with the appropriate reveal.
- (2) Replace George Street front door with period-appropriate double-door.
- (3) Replace Lincoln Ave. front door (the door with the decorative hood) with period-appropriate double-doors.
- (4) Replace Lincoln Ave. secondary door with a period-appropriate door to be salvaged from 23 Cleveland Street (door is c.1870s/1880s and is appropriate for use as a secondary entrance door).
- (5) Repair roof shingles in-kind where needed
- (6) Replace vinyl replacement windows with wood or aluminum –clad two-over-two (or two-over-one) windows.
- (7) Missing door hoods will not be replaced at this time.
- (8) Remove concrete and asphalt from George Street and Lincoln Street elevations **except** for an 8-foot wide strip off of Lincoln Ave to be used as a short driveway.
- (9) Replace chain-link fence with 3.5-foot tall wood picket or wood slat fence on both George and Lincoln Avenue elevations.
- 10 Add windows and window wells to Lincoln Ave. elevation.
- 11 Replace George Street paved side yard with pea stone and plantings to be determined by Planning/Preservation Staff
- 12 Landscape Lincoln Avenue elevation and George Street front yard with period-appropriate plants and materials as determined by Planning Staff/Preservation Staff to allow for yard space for tenants.
- 13 Remove chimney on right George Street elevation. Remaining three chimneys will be retained and repaired.

See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

A. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

- (1) In 1996, a hardship exemption was granted by the HPC on this property for the then-owner to install vinyl siding and to replace the slate roofing material with asphalt shingling. Staff opinion is that these were unfortunate decisions at the time that have negatively impacted the historic integrity of the property. Both the new owner and the HPC now have the opportunity to revive the historic integrity of this property.

B. Considerations:

- ***What is the visibility of the proposal?***

Work on all sides of the house will be visible from public ways

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

The house has been under-maintained for the last 20+ years. The vinyl siding, removal of slate roofing, replacement of period doors, removal of decorative door hood on George Street, installation of inappropriate replacement windows, and the paving over of the entire yard have all detracted from the historic integrity of the property.

- ***Is the proposal more appropriate than the existing conditions? Is the proposal more in-keeping with the age, purpose, style and construction of the building?***

Removing the vinyl siding, replacing the windows with period-appropriate installations, landscaping the parcel and installing period-appropriate doors will all help to restore the historic integrity of the property.

- ***Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?***

Yes, the proposal coincides with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines as they appear below.

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 affect 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.***
- B. Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.***
- C. When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.***

- D. *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.***
- E. *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 materials to be used for this project will be as traditional in nature as possible including wood siding, wood doors (at least one of them re-purposed from an existing historic structure that is to be demolished imminently).

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 alterations for which an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness has been filed are appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the 20 George Street. **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant** Ari Goldschneider, Owner, **a Certificate of Appropriateness** to alter 20 George Street with the following conditions:

1. All appropriate building permits shall be obtained prior to the start of any work;
2. If the approval differs from the plans, new plans shall be submitted to Historic Staff prior to commencing the work;
3. The entire structure, including bays and dormers, shall be stripped of all vinyl siding and, then, or all asbestos or similar siding;
4. Underlying wood siding shall be repaired in-place or replaced in-kind with a reveal appropriate to the Second Empire period;
5. A door shall be salvaged from an existing property of the same period and shall be revitalized to be used as a secondary entrance on the Lincoln Avenue side of the property;
6. Wood double-doors that are period-appropriate shall be installed on both the Lincoln Avenue and George Street elevations. Applicant shall work with Preservation Staff to determine appropriate doors;
7. Wood or aluminum-clad (interior wood) windows shall be installed. Applicant shall work with Preservation Staff who will determine the appropriate window. Muntins shall **not** be installed between the glass of the replacement windows, only on the exterior of the glass on the outside and inside of the house. Windows shall be two-over-two and dark spacers shall be used between the glass. Window openings shall not change in size from what currently exists;
8. Only one of the four chimneys shall be removed – that which is located on the front right of the George Street elevation. All other chimneys shall be repaired in-place with the proper materials (to be approved by Preservation Staff);
9. The Applicant shall implement a landscaping plan developed by Planning/Preservation staff that allows for low-maintenance, period-appropriate plantings and access to the side yards by property residents;

10. No grills or cooking equipment shall ever be placed in the Lincoln Avenue yard nor in the front yard of the George Street elevation;
11. A 3.5-foot wood picket or wood slat fence with or without a cap) shall surround the property on the Lincoln and George Street elevations, replacing the existing chain link fence currently extant;
12. All asphalt and concrete shall be removed from the property save for an 8-foot wide strip on the Lincoln Avenue elevation which shall be used as a driveway;
13. Pea stone and appropriate plantings shall be installed in the right side yard of the George Street elevation once the asphalt/concrete has been removed;
14. Satellite dishes shall be removed from the roof and side of building;
15. New utility wires shall be strung such that they do not run across the George Street or Lincoln Avenue facades of the house;
16. The Applicant shall consider, **in the future**, replicating the Lincoln Avenue door hood for the George Street façade;
17. The Applicant shall consider, **in the future**, replacing the non-permitted brick entry steps on the George and Lincoln elevations with period-appropriate wood steps and metal or wood railings;
18. Door hoods shall be installed on either the George or Lincoln locations only if they are period-appropriate and have been pre-approved by Preservation Staff prior to installation;
19. Roof shingles shall be replaced in-kind with one of the HPC pre-approved shingle styles, colors and brands;
20. Windows and window wells (for egress) shall be installed in order to allow for activation of the basement level for additional living space. Material used for window wells shall be approved by Preservation Staff prior to purchase and installation by Applicant;
21. The Applicant/Owner shall work with Preservation Staff to provide to the City, at no cost to the City, items for architectural salvage that the City shall use for an historic property architectural exchange program that is underway or that the City shall use for educational purposes;
22. The skirts on all bays shall be of wood and shall be of the same size and shape as those shown in the MACRIS photo used on the Form B inventory form;
23. The Applicant shall work directly with Planning/Preservation staff on all elements of this project and receive their approval prior to any *de minimis* changes from the submitted plan and prior to the purchase and installation of doors, windows, siding and the like.

ADDENDUM

The door below shall be removed from 23 Cleveland Street (to be demolished) and repurposed for re-use on the secondary entrance on the Lincoln Avenue elevation of the 20 George Street property.





The photos below represent the current conditions at 20 George Street:

Below: George Street facade

Below: George street right side yard



Below: Lincoln (left) & George second story



Below: Lincoln façade. Not original door hood to right.

