



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT

Site: 311-315 Highland Avenue
Case: HPC 2014.037
Applicant Name: Lavrentzi Brabo
Date of Application: June 11, 2014
Hearing Date: July 15, 2014
Recommendation: Not Significant



311-315 Highland Avenue, photo 2014

I. Historical Association

Context:

The Powderhouse section of the City is located in the northwestern section of Somerville, bound by the Boston & Lowell railroad and Broadway on the north end; College Avenue on the western end; Powderhouse Square to the northwest; and Highland Avenue at the south end. Initial subdivision of farmlands occurred partly in response to rail expansion associated with the extensive Tufts Brick Manufacturing Company yards. In the 1880s, when the brick yard closed, this valuable residential land was subdivided.

Historical Description:

Building permit records indicate that an S.Kalick constructed a one story brick building in 1915 for stores and a bowling alley. This building is first illustrated on the 1934 Sanborn map with 7 storefronts and a 13-stall auto garage is located along the rear of the parcel; the 1950 Sanborn does not illustrate any changes to the parcel. During the 1960s, the fraternal organization, Loyal Order of the Moose, was established at this location and the storefronts were remodeled. In 1975, the 13-stall garage was demolished. This structure has been used as a function hall during the 1990s, according to building permits, and currently has a daycare located on-site.

Architectural Description:

The structure is a simple rectangular building sheathed in rusticated concrete panelling. The

structure fronts Highland Avenue and the Cherry Street extension. The primary facade features several windows, some infilled with decorative tiles, and two entries near each end. The Cherry Street facade also has decorative tile detail and one entrance with a metal clad door. The rear of the building does not have any window or door openings, but a large parking lot is located behind the structure with access from Cherry Street.

Summary:

Highland Avenue was developed in the 1880s when the Tufts brick yard closed. Building permit records indicate a construction date of 1915. The original brick facade has either been removed or is completely sheathed in concrete. There are no architectural merits to the structure.

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/atlas, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, Staff **do not** find 311-315 Highland Avenue 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.

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 311-315 Highland Avenue begins with the c.1915 date of construction as a single-story commercial masonry structure and ends with the removal or covering of historic fabric, as the building is so changed from the original conditions.

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 subject structure is located along Highland Avenue, at the corner of Cherry Street, just west of Cedar Street. The location has not been altered and the structure is sited at the front of the lot.
- b. Design: The original form and massing appears to remain, but the fenestration and any architectural detail are lost.
- c. Materials: The materials that compose this structure are masonry and concrete, with replacement doors and windows.

d. Alterations: The building does not appear to have additions.

Evaluation of Integrity:

The subject structure retains a low level of historical and architectural integrity due to the altered exterior sheathing, fenestration pattern, and a lack of remaining architectural detail.

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 do not find 311-315 Highland Avenue historically or architecturally significant.

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, c. 1915, 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 do not find 311-315 Highland Avenue 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 do not find 311-315 Highland Avenue historically or architecturally significant.**

