



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

MICHAEL F. GLAVIN  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

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**DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT**

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Site: 161 Linwood Street  
Case: HPC 2015.014  
Applicant Name: Herb Chambers Somerville Corp.  
Date of Application: April 17, 2015  
Date of Significance: May 19, 2015  
Recommendation: Not Preferably Preserved  
Hearing Date: June 16, 2015



*\*A determination of Preferably Preserved begins a nine month Demolition Delay.*

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**I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance**

On Tuesday, June 16, 2015, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 161 Linwood Street is Significant. Per Section 2.17.B, this decision is found on the following criteria:

*Section 2.17.B - The structure is at least 50 years old;*

**and**

- (i) *The structure is 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;*

**and / or**

- (ii) *The structure is historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of building construction, or association with a reputed architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of buildings or structures.*

According to *Criteria 2.17.B*, listed above, historic map and building permit research identifies the structure as c. 1924.

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to the association of this structure with the development of automobile commercial services, and as a large, well-executed, and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage, which were common throughout the City. The



building represents twentieth century infill development within what was a residential neighborhood at the time of construction.

The building retains its original form and massing, and continues to represent a typical example of a c.1924 storage garage. Although several windows and doors have been removed and/or replaced, the original intent of design is still evident. In addition, the use for this property has remained consistent since the time of construction.

(a) In accordance with the *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 recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 161 Linwood Street 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.**

In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, due to the ability of the subject parcel to convey significance regarding location and form as well as, to a moderate degree, integrity of design. with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to an association with the development of automobile commercial services and as a large, well-executed, and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage, a type which was common throughout the City.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant due to an association with the development of automobile commercial services and as a large, characteristic and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage, which were once common throughout the City.

## II. Additional Information

### *Additional Research:*

- According to City Annual Reports, C. Bowen worked as a teamster since at least 1911 and was paid for moving voting machines and safes in that year.
- C. Bowen Trucking is listed in the City Directories from 1925-1933. By 1940, the building was used by the Consolidated Motor Lines Inc., trucking and teaming. The company was managed by Roy E. Prowse who resided in Woburn.
- In 1925, there were 20 trucking companies, but upon investigation, most of these appear to have been conducted out of people's houses. Several homes had concrete block garages that may have housed 2-4 trucks. The only other remaining building of similar size used by a trucking company was the Thomas Walsh & Sons Trucking Co. at 260 Beacon Street which was determined not significant in November 2014.

### *Comparable Structures:*

According to the 2002 publication "Carriage House to Auto House" by Roger Reed and Greer Hardwicke, multi-car garages of this type were constructed throughout the region to centrally house the vehicles that could not fit into densely packed neighborhoods. According to the City's Assessor's records, only twenty-two of the fifty-nine listed in the 1924 City Directory the storage garages are still extant, eight of which have been surveyed. Of these eight, only two have statements of National Register Eligibility. The eligible properties are 92-96 Prospect Street and 295 Medford Street. These two buildings are more interesting architecturally than 161 Linwood Street, which has nice but simple brickwork. Concrete block garages with or without parking are more numerous.

Predominant differences between the comparable garages and the subject garage are materials, scale, massing and form.

## III. Preferably Preserved

*If the Commission determines that the demolition of the significant building or structure would be detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City, such building or structure shall be considered a preferably preserved building or structure. (Ordinance 2003-05, Section 4.2.d)*

*A determination regarding if the demolition of the subject building is detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City should consider the following:*

- a) *How does this building or structure compose or reflect features which contribute to the heritage of the City?*

Automobiles and other related vehicles became dominated over horse-drawn vehicles by the mid-1920s. Cars were still relegated to the outskirts of neighborhoods or consolidated into storage garages where possible. 161 Linwood was constricted to house 100 cars but quickly became used by the C Bowen Trucking Company within a year of its construction. The building continued to be used by a trucking and teaming company until at least 1940 per City Directories. The building has a simple form with large openings for vehicles which speaks to its automotive.

- b) *What is the remaining integrity of the structure? The National Park Service defines integrity as the ability of a property to convey significance.*

The building retains its original form and massing, and continues to represent a typical example of a c.1924 storage garage. Although several windows and doors have been removed and/or replaced, the original intent of design is still evident. In addition, the use for this property has remained consistent since the time of construction. Its location proximate to a major arterial has allowed its continued use to remain close to the original intention of the building while the neighborhood around it has altered to become less residential in nature.

- c) *What is the level (local, state, national) of significance?*

The Commission found the subject building found historically and architecturally significant due to an association with the development of automobile commercial services and as a large, characteristic and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage, which were once common throughout the City.

Storage, trucking and other automotive services grew throughout the 1920s resulting in a wide range of building types characteristic of needs of the general public and the times in which they were constructed.

- d) *What is the visibility of the structure with regard to public interest (Section 2.17.B.ii) if demolition were to occur?*

The subject parcel is highly visible along Linwood Street and from McGrath Highway next to an automotive supply store and a U Haul storage facility. However, this area is home to both modern and older style industrial buildings located nearby and a large number of parking lots for cars and trucks. Many of the businesses are still automotive in nature. These include several buildings owned by the Applicant; parking lots for school buses and other vehicles; small repair and detailing shops; a ca. 1896 truck factory; a former bakery; and a former grocery distribution warehouse complex. With the opening of the Green Line stop around the corner on Washington Street in approximately 3 years, the area is likely to undergo further change.

- e) *What is the scarcity or frequency of this type of resource in the City?*

According to the City's Assessor's records, only twenty-two of the fifty-nine storage garages listed in the 1924 City Directory the storage garages are still extant, eight of which have been surveyed. Of these eight, only two have statements of National Register Eligibility. The eligible properties are 92-96 Prospect Street and 295 Medford Street. These two buildings are more interesting architecturally than 161 Linwood Street, which has nice but simple brickwork. 161 Broadway which exhibits a similar form and massing, was constructed at an even earlier date, and is located prominently on Broadway.

***Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the demolition of the subject building detrimental to the architectural, cultural, political, economic, or social heritage of the City?***

The Commission found 161 Linwood Street importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to an association with the development of automobile commercial services and as a large, well-executed, and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage, a type which was common throughout the City.

The subject building was found historically and architecturally significant due to its association with the development of automobile commercial services which were once common throughout the City and as a large, characteristic and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage.

The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above conveys that this type of garage was common in many neighborhoods throughout the City. The structure is by no means unique. The building is located in an industrial neighborhood in transition where the potential loss of this particular building would not result in a change of character of the area. Therefore, Staff does not find the potential demolition of 161 Linwood Street detrimental to the heritage of the City.

#### IV. Recommendation

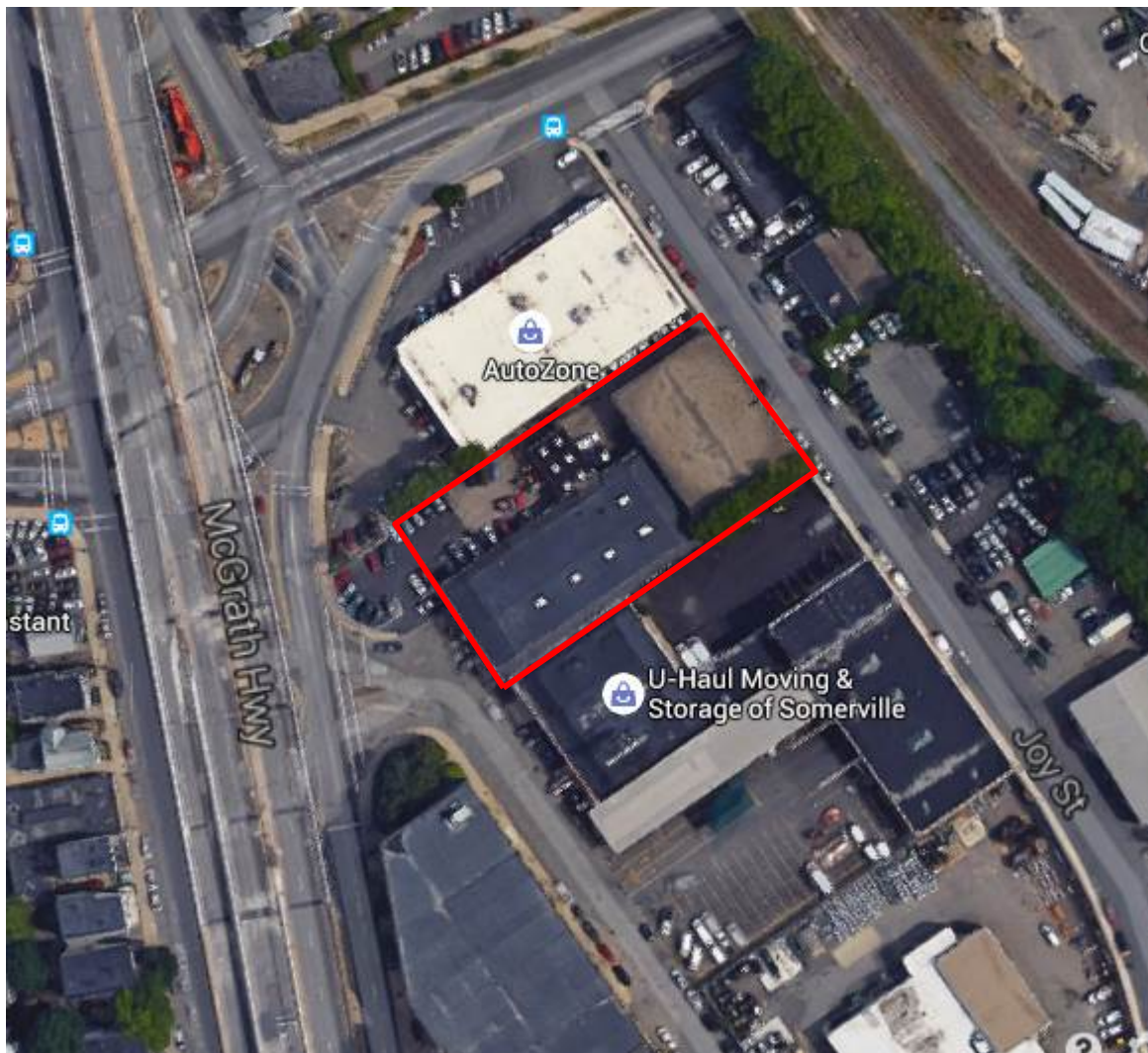
*Recommendations are based upon an analysis by Historic Preservation Staff of the permit application and the required findings for the Demolition Review Ordinance, which requires archival and historical research, and an assessment of historical and architectural significance, conducted prior to the public hearing for a Determination of Preferably Preserved. 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.*

In accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 4.D, Staff find the potential demolition of the subject structure not detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently not in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the frequency of this type of automotive structure and associated streetscape within the City, **Staff recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission do not find 161 Linwood Street Preferably Preserved.**

*If the Historic Preservation Commission determines the structure is Preferably Preserved, the Building Inspector may issue a demolition permit at anytime, upon receipt of written advice from the Commission that there is no reasonable likelihood that either the owner or some other person or group is willing to purchase, preserve, rehabilitate or restore the subject building or structure (Ord. 2003-05, Section 4.5).*



*161 Linwood Street*



*161 Linwood Street, aerial view*



The examples below are from the oldest to the newest comparable structures which include:



55 Vernon Street (1905)



297 Medford Street (1906)



12 Marshall Street (1912)



161 Broadway (1914)



387 Washington Street (1914)



92 Prospect Street (1917)



45 Webster Street (1924)



224 Somerville Avenue (1933)