



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:	56 Meacham Road	c.1874 Mansard Cottage
Case:	HPC 2014.002	Meacham Rd/Campbell Pk Local Historic District
Applicant Name:	Sun Sasongko, Owner	
Applicant Address:	56 Meacham Road, Somerville, MA 02144	
Date of Application:	July 20, 2014	
Legal Notice:	<i>Alter driveway and deck</i>	
Staff Recommendation:	<i>Conditional</i> Certificate of Appropriateness	
Date of Public Hearing:	August 19, 2014	

I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION

Architectural Description: This side entry mansard cottage is located near the Davis Square end of the street, a few doors down from Seven Hills Park, near the corner of a private way (Glover Circle). It retains its original massing and is in fair condition, but lacks many of the architectural details found on similar cottages in Somerville. Vinyl siding has been applied over the original wood in 1976. The roof was originally replaced with 3-tab asphalt shingle in 1947. The windows have been replaced everywhere except the basement at an unknown date. There is only one dormer window in the front over the bay, while both sides of the house have two dormers each. The rear of the building has no dormers but does have a two-story ell toward the south side that takes up most of the side. The placement of the front door suggests a side-hall floor plan. The porch columns are square posts and are clearly replacements as are the stair rails and balusters.



HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:

Much of the present-day Davis Square was a portion of the 10-acre estate of Person Davis for whom the Square was named in 1883. Today, it is one of the largest commercial areas of the City, and is currently the most vibrant. Horse railway up Massachusetts Avenue from Harvard Square began in 1856-1857 to Porter Square and beyond. As a result of the construction of Holland Street completed in 1868, Davis Square came into existence. After the Civil War, several real estate developers were poised to take advantage of the Davis Square area's potential as the major focus for the commercial and residential life of the community. In 1871, the Lexington and Arlington Branch of the Boston and Maine Railroad reached Davis Square, further opening the area up for large scale development. The surrounding area of Davis Square became the homes of railroad and streetcar commuters and is

evidence of the suburban building boom of the late nineteenth century. Fifty-three trains a day and streetcar service from Davis Square provided easy access to employment in Cambridge and Boston.

This Mansard is one of 2 properties on Meacham Road that pre-dates the 1890s development undertaken by Henry R. Glover. The 1874 and all subsequent atlases show the ownership to H.R. Glover for this lot and most of the others on the street. The 1884 City Directory included only 9 families residing on Meacham Road. All of them were blue collar workers. It is unclear exactly which houses were occupied by which tenants, as street numbers were not in common use at that time.

II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Alter driveway and deck.

The Applicant would like to replace the existing gravel and dirt driveway with brick pavers. The pavers would extend to the rear of the property and also be located behind the house to form a patio. He would also like to rebuild the deck located at the end of the driveway with the steps oriented toward the rear yard instead of toward the driveway and the street. The existing deck rails and balusters would be re-used in the new configuration. See the final pages for details and photos.

II. FINDINGS

1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

2001.030	Ben Ascher & Yenna Chan	C/NA, C/A, Denial	1. Repair and replace rotted wood on existing windows in-kind 2. Install a new dormer on the rear of the house to match in style and construction the existing dormers. 3. Install a skylight on the side of a mansard roof:
2002.004	Ben Ascher & Yenna Chan	C/A	Install skylight on upper roof
2006.054	John Nye	C/NA	1. Repoint foundation.
2007.052	John Nye	C/A	1. Install a wood picket fence on both sides of the house with a gate in each side per photo attached.
2009.056	John Nye	C/NA	1. Repair front porch floor boards and stair rails, posts and newel post finial; and 2. Repaint.
2012.013	John Nye	C/NA	1. Install a washer and dryer vent on south side towards the rear along the driveway; and 2. Install a water spigot and hose bib on the garden side of the building.
2012.090	Sun Sasongko	C/NA	1. Install a new furnace to be vented through the north side near the rear; 2. Paint the vent to match trim or body; and 3. Install a pad for HVAC equipment behind the house.
2014.002	Sun Sasongko	C/A	1. The proposed windows along the driveway and side yard shall be set behind mahogany brick mold and on wood sills to match the existing in form, texture and dimensions. 2. The proposed replacement pigmented synthetic simulated divided-light awning windows shall be of a dark color to be approved by Staff.

1. Precedence:

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*

Replace the existing gravel and dirt driveway with Redland Brick co. Brick type "KF" pavers The Commission has occasionally reviewed and approved alterations to driveway materials. The Commission has granted Certificates of Appropriateness to replace existing paving materials with various types of pavers at 53 Atherton Street (2013), 27 Columbus Avenue (2002), 11 Linden Avenue (2013), 53 Moore Street (2014), 25 Russell Street (2003), 45 Vinal Avenue (2007). 30 Bow Street (2001) was granted Certificate for an apron of granite pavers with a gravel driveway.

Create a brick patio. This is not visible from the public right of way. Brick and other pavers have been granted Certificates of Appropriateness for patios at 47 Columbus Avenue (2012), 55 Columbus Avenue (2012), 58 Columbus Avenue (2012) and 11 Linden Avenue (2013).

Alter the deck. Decks are frequently repaired and replaced in kind. Since they steps on rear decks are usually not visible, there is little precedent. However, Certificates of Appropriateness were issued for 25 Russell Street (2003) to add a second set of steps off the front porch.

3. *Considerations:*

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The driveway and deck are visible from Meacham Road. Staff has determined on behalf of the Commission that the proposed patio is not visible because it is located behind the building and is level with the ground.

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

The existing driveway is mostly dirt. Gravel had been used but this material is mostly gone.

The deck was constructed at an unknown date prior to 2007. It has a modern rail construction rather than traditional. The stairs face the street and are located behind a fence at the end of the driveway.

The patio is located behind the building and not visible.

See photos at the end of the document.

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

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.

- 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.*

The driveway and deck were not discussed in the Form B.

- C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*

No historical architectural materials or features will be altered.

- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*

No replacement of historic fabric is planned.

- 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.*

The new materials proposed are traditional.

- 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.*

The driveway and deck are visible from Meacham Road.

D. Porches, steps, trim and other exterior architectural elements

1. *Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later important features, including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ornamental ironwork and other important decorative items. If new pieces are needed, they should match as closely as possible the style, shape, scale and materials of the old. Avoid replacing wood posts and railings with metal ones, or wood porch decks with concrete.*

The deck is not original to the building and currently has modern style railings and balusters that cannot be not mistaken for historic fabric. The intention is to relocate the stairs so that they will not be visible from the street and to continue the railings across. The existing railings will be reused and not altered.

H. 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.*

None of the existing essential landscape features will be altered beyond the driveway material.

2. *It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the structure and its newer surroundings.*

The driveway material will not change the essential character of the historic district in terms of scale and street pattern.

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.*

No landforms will be altered.

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.*
5. There will be no change to the circulation pattern.

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 is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the Meacham Road/ Campbell Park Local Historic District; because no historic fabric will be altered and the proposed driveway material and alteration to the deck meet the Guidelines as discussed above. Therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant 56 Meacham Road a Certificate of Appropriateness** as follows:

1. The existing gravel and dirt driveway shall be replaced with Redland Brick Co. Brick type "KF" pavers.
2. The deck stairs shall be relocated to face the rear of the property.
3. The new deck railings will be located at the currently existing location of the stairs and shall match the existing railings.

A **Certificate of Non-Applicability** will be issued for the patio which is not visible from the public right of way.

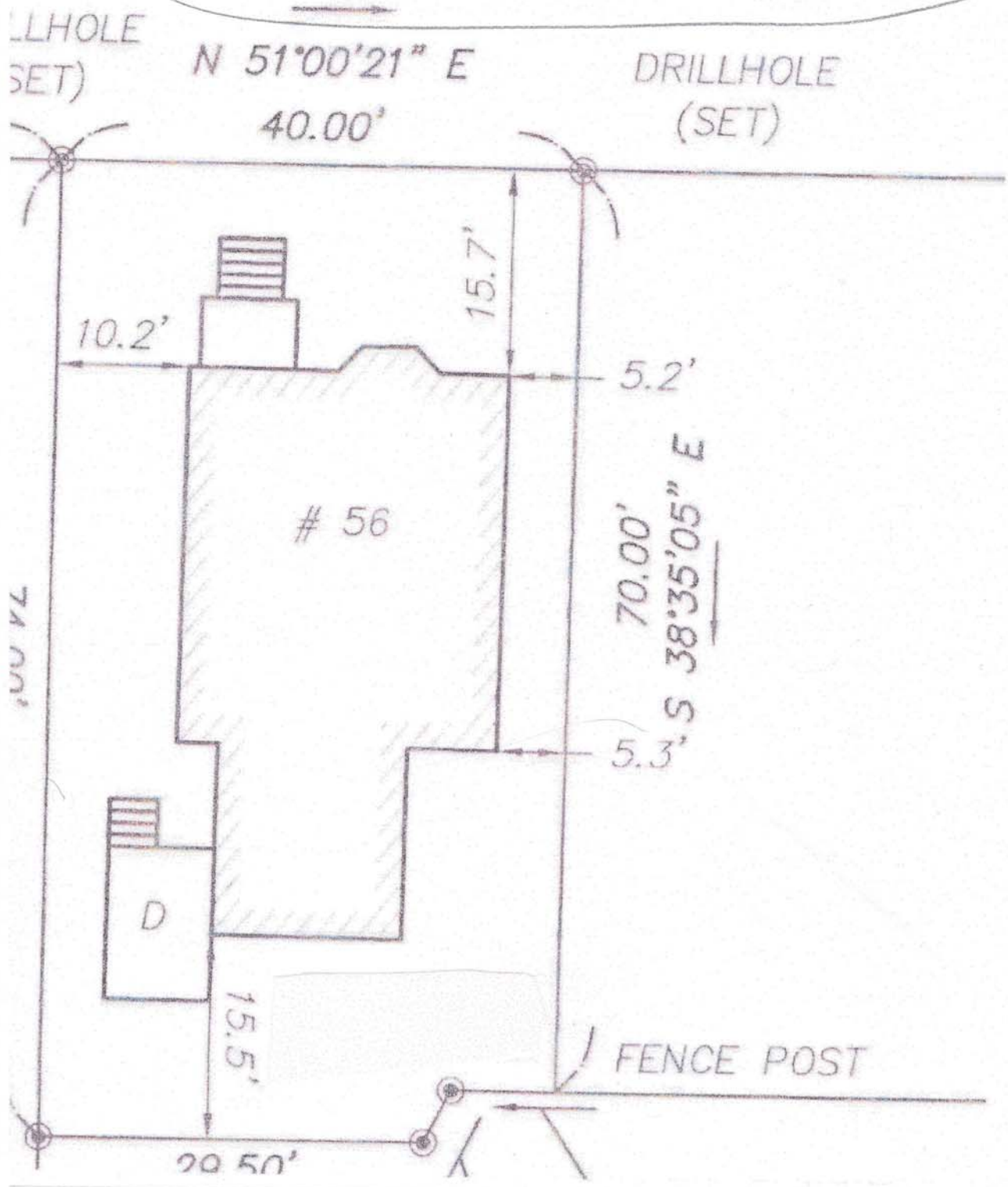




56 Meacham Road, 2014

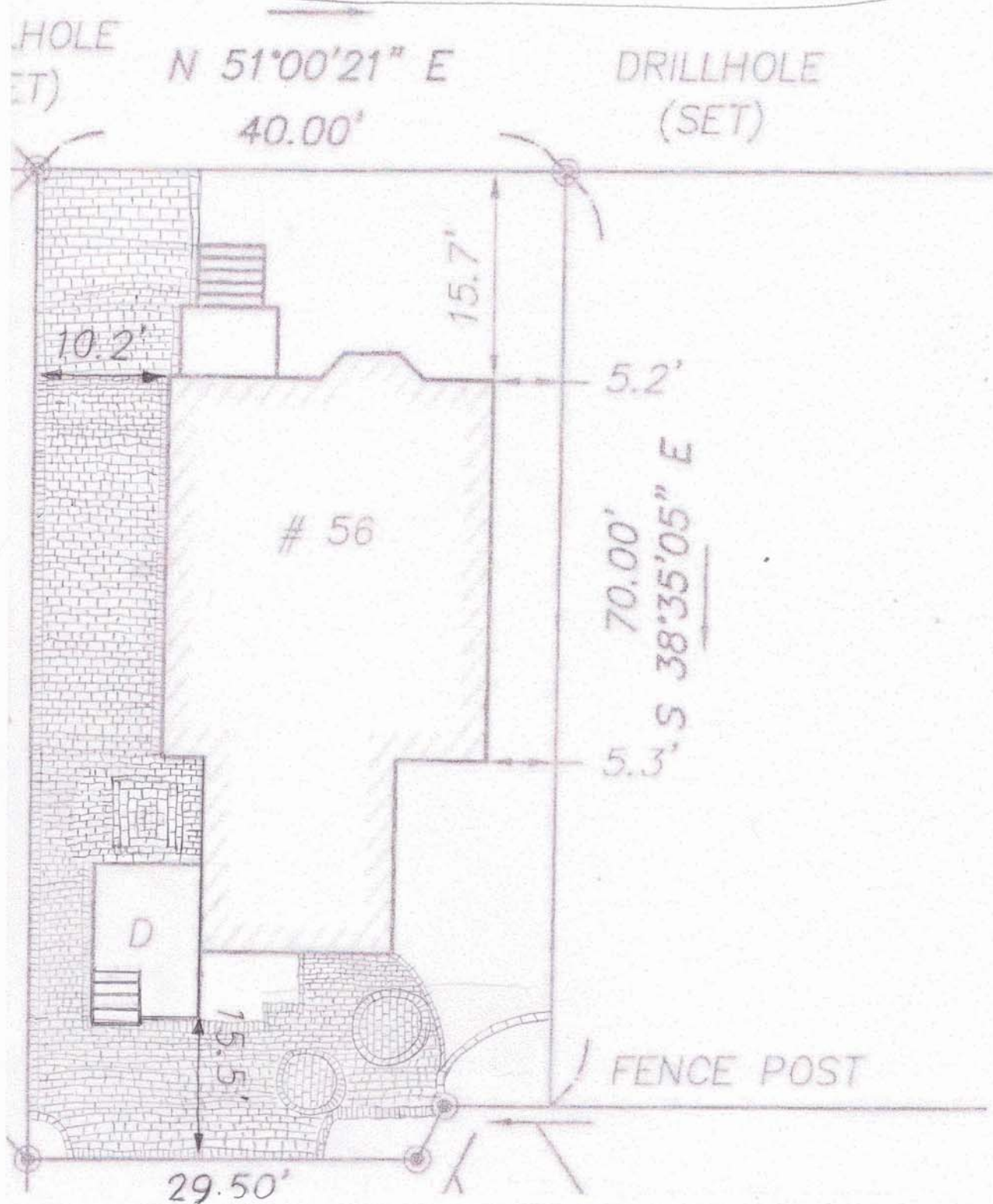
MEACHAM ROAD

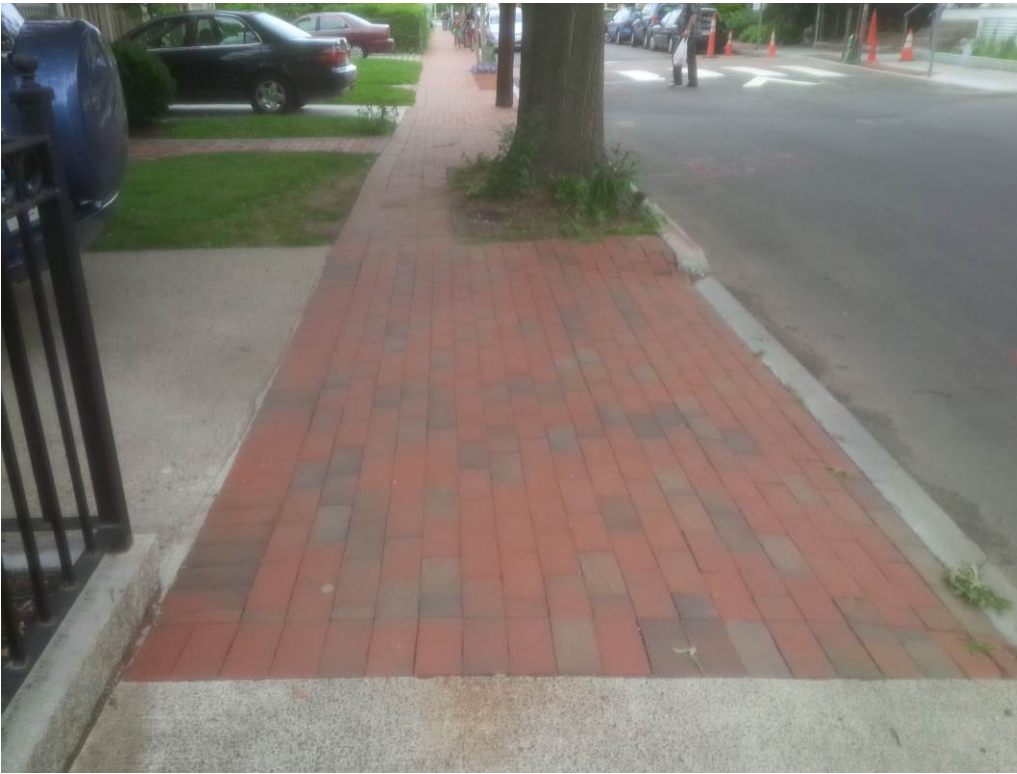
56 MEACHAM ROAD CURRENT PLOT PLAN



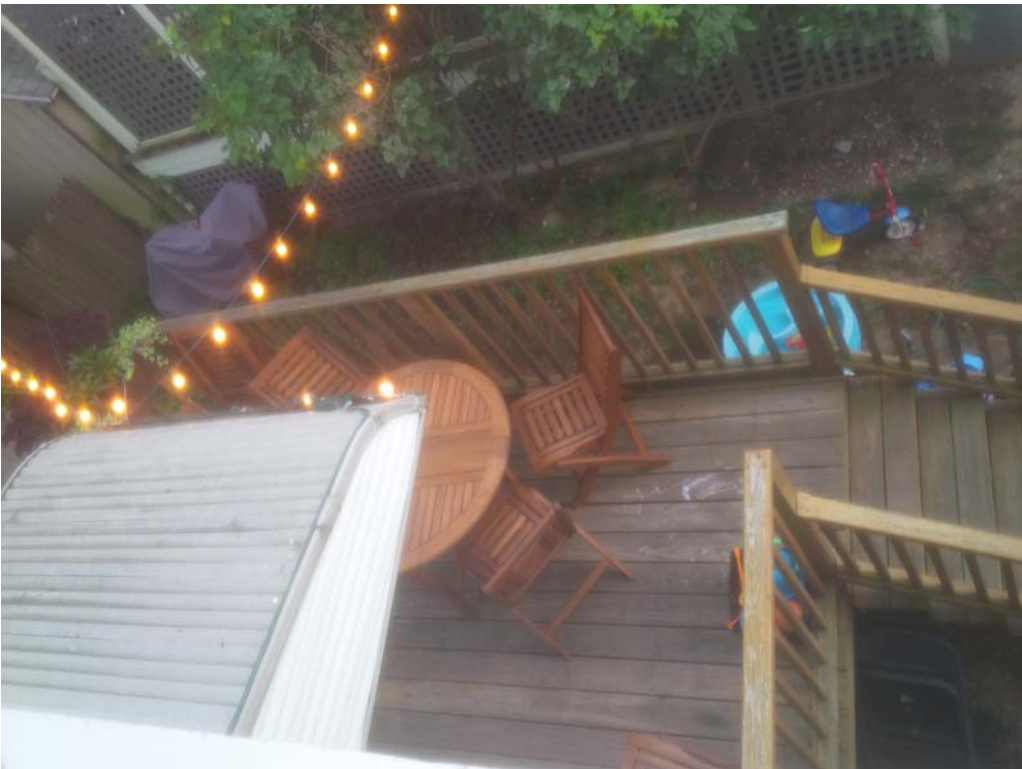
MEACHAM ROAD

56 MEACHAM RD PROPOSED PLAN





example of proposed driveway material used as sidewalk.



56 Meacham Road, 2014 stairs lead to driveway.