



**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:	92-96 Prospect Street
Case:	HPC 2013.016
Applicant Name:	Two Squares, LLC
Date of Application:	April 23, 2013
Date of Significance:	May 21, 2013
Recommendation:	Preferably Preserved
Hearing Date:	Tuesday, June 18, 2013



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

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

On Tuesday, May 21, 2013, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), made a determination that 92-96 Prospect 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 directory research identify the structure as c. 1917 private garage. 92-96 Prospect Street is not illustrated on the 1900 Sanborn Map (Sheet 76) but is illustrated on the 1933 Sanborn Map (Vol. 1, Sheet 19).

In accordance with *Criteria (i) and (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings, that the structure is importantly associated with people, events or history as well as both historically and



architecturally significant 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, which were common throughout the City.

## II. Additional Information

### *National Register eligibility:*

This c. 1917 private garage is a National Register eligible masonry structure in the Art Deco style. The structure is eligible under Criteria A, for association with the development of automobile services, and under Criteria C, as a large, well-executed and preserved example of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century private garage, which were common throughout the City.

### *Associated structure, 62 Webster Avenue:*

The historic name of the associated structure at 62 Webster Avenue is the J.P. O'Neill Coal Company. The survey Form B states that the building was used as a truck garage for the delivery of coal products, but is not listed in directories between 1924 and 1933. The main portion of the company was located on the north side of Columbia Street and consisted of several coal pockets and a small office. While the owner of this structure and the subject garage are the same, there does not seem to be an immediate relationship between the two buildings, other than the same owner.



### *Comparable Structures:*

Commercial garages of a similar type and style were once common throughout the City. While several private garages still exist within the City, few (if any) present a similar scale or level of design as the subject structure. In addition, the type of use that is commonly associated with buildings similar to the subject structure often encourages alterations that affect the architectural integrity of the building.

Comparable structures within the City include:

- 297 Medford Street
- 6-8 Beacon Street (determined NOT Significant in 2010)
- 11-15 Alpine Street
- 161 Broadway
- 143 Jaques Street

Predominant differences between the comparable and subject structures are the size of the massing, remaining architectural integrity due to the degree of alteration, and the level of design (with the possible exception of 297 Medford Street).



*Above: 297 Medford Street*



*Left: 6-8 Beacon Street*



*Right: 11-15 Alpine Street*



*Left: 161 Broadway*



*Right: 143 Jaques Street*

### **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?*

The style, level of architectural detail, and large massing of this structure are uncommon for this type of garage structure within the City. There are a number of architectural features that contribute significantly to the heritage of the City. These features include arched entries with granite curb stones and flanking beveled granite piers, rounded arch parapet with granite coping and center cornerstone noting the 1917 construction date.

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

This National Register eligible structure continues to represent a well-executed example of a c. 1917 Art Deco garage. Although several windows and doors have been removed and/or replaced, the original intent of design, for both façades, is still evident. In addition, the use for this property has remained consistent since the time of construction.

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

The Commission determined that this structure is ‘Significant’ due to an historical 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.

The construction of private garages during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century illustrates the growing importance of the automobile, which represents an aspect of national history.

- 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 both Prospect and Tremont streets and is a large parcel that extends through the block. The side façades are less visible, but still prominently visible in certain areas, such as by the Tremont Street parking lot.

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

Large private garages that illustrate the same or a similar level of detail as the subject structure, and which remain relatively intact, are rare within the City and are likely rare within the larger Boston area. While several private garages still exist within the City, few (if any) present a similar scale or level of architectural detail as the subject structure.

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

The Commission found the subject parcel ‘Significant’ due to a historical 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.

The consideration criteria (a-e) listed above conveys that structures, such as the subject building, are not common within the City and are likely not common within the larger Boston area, due to the size and level of detail that remains. Although several windows and doors have been removed and/or replaced, the original intent of design, for both façades, is still clear. Therefore, Staff finds the potential demolition of 92-96 Prospect 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 detrimental to the heritage of the City, and consequently in the best interest of the public to preserve or rehabilitate. Therefore, due to the National Register eligibility of this structure, under Criteria A and C, as well as the large massing and rarity of this type of structure to have retained the level of detail still present, **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission find 92-96 Prospect 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).*

92-96 Prospect Street, aerial view

