



**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 SIGNIFICANCE STAFF REPORT**

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Site: 97 Prospect Street  
Case: HPC 2013.036  
Applicant Name: Art of Building, LLC  
  
Date of Application: June 26, 2013  
Recommendation: Not Significant  
Hearing Date: July 16, 2013

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**I. Historical Association**

*Architectural Description:*

The subject structure was constructed c.1923 for use as a store, according to a 1923 building permit granted to H. Rosen at a cost of \$3,000. The structure is a single-story building with a small center parapet on the primary façade composed of brick and concrete block, according to the Sanborn map. The front, right and left side façades are all composed of brick; however the rear façade may be composed of concrete block. The center doorway is flanked with window openings infilled with glass block. The right side façade has four replacement windows in possibly an original fenestration pattern while the rear has two windows and a door, which are possibly also original locations. According to the 1925 City directory, this was originally a grocery store known as the Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, or A&P.



*97 Prospect Street, photos 2013*



*Historical Description:*

The subject structure is first illustrated on the 1923 Sanborn map on a parcel with three additional two-story dwellings. City directories reference several locations of A&P markets throughout the City and research explains there were many such markets in the surrounding area. The 1925 City directory states that Francis McGurty is a clerk at this store who also has a house located on the same lot. McGurty is still a clerk at the A & P in 1930, but by 1940, this becomes Mike's Variety Store and is under the ownership of Michael Talmoch. George Pike is listed as a store owner at this address in 1945. A building permit from 1954, granted to Walsh Bakery Company, is to rebuild a new brick front, which illuminates that the existing storefront is not the original façade. A 1972 building permit for vinyl siding is likely not for the subject structure, but another permit issued in 1974 to Walsh Body and Trailer Corporation (located across the street at 92-96 Prospect) grants reroofing with double cover paper.

The Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company, or A&P, is a supermarket and liquor chain store that began in 1859 as a small chain of retail tea and coffee stores in NYC and a mail order business. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, A&P became the first grocery chain in the U.S. The company grew dramatically after introducing the economy store concept in 1912 and in 1936 adopted the self-serve supermarket concept and opened larger stores. A&P began to decline in the 1950s, failing to keep pace with other chains that opened larger and more modern supermarkets. By 1970, A&P stores were out of date and in 2010, filed for bankruptcy.

*Context/Evolution:*

The subject structure served as the local supermarket for a predominantly residential neighborhood that currently consists of a mix of single, two- and three-family dwellings.

*Summary:*

This c.1923 structure was constructed to be a small grocery store during a high point within the A&P company history. There were several A&P markets located within Somerville and throughout the area at one point. This building is utilitarian in design; however, the existing storefront is not original. Employees at one point were associated with other dwellings on the lot, all of which are no longer in existence.

**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/atlasses, City reports and directories, and building permit research, and through an examination of resources that document the history of the City, such as *Somerville Past and Present*, Staff do not find 97 Prospect 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.

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## 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 97 Prospect Street begins with the date of construction, c.1923, and continues through at least 1950, as the structure continues to be a neighborhood grocery store.

### ***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 very close to the front and left side lot line along Prospect Street. The remainder of the parcel is large, approximately 9600 square feet. The location of the structure appears original and has not been altered.
- b. **Design:** The original design of this structure is unclear as the storefront has been replaced. While the current storefront has been altered, the design appears utilitarian. The right side façade illustrates four window bays, which could be the original fenestration pattern while the rear illustrates two windows and a door; however, there is no design intent understood from these façades.
- c. **Materials:** Predominantly composed of brick, the Sanborn maps explain this to be a brick and concrete block structure. The primary façade is brick with infilled glass block windows and a replacement door. The right side façade illustrates replacement windows.
- d. **Alterations:** This structure has undergone a façade replacement and the removal of original windows and doors.

### ***Evaluation of Integrity:***

The primary façade was replaced more than 50 years ago and the replacement storefront illustrates a utilitarian design; however, due to the replacement of the storefront, the removal of original windows and doors, and an unclear intent of design, the structure does not retain much integrity.

## **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 assesses the ability of the property to convey significance, Staff do not find 97 Prospect Street historically or architecturally significant.

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### 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. However, the structure is eligible to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is significant under Criteria A and C.

**OR**

(B) The structure, c.1923, 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/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 recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 97 Prospect 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.**

**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 do not recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 97 Prospect Street historically or architecturally significant.**

97 Prospect Street

