



**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:	5 Smith Avenue
Case:	HPC 2015.083
Applicant Name:	Fred Starikov
Date of Application:	November 29, 2015
Recommendation:	<b>Significant</b>
Hearing Date:	December 15, 2015

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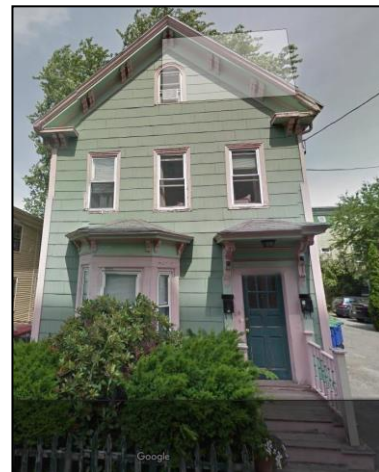
**I. Historical Association**

This 2 ½-story Italianate structure was built c.1871, at the time during which Smith Avenue was laid out and developed for residential use (the Somerville assessor's database has the construction date of this property incorrectly listed as 1900). Much about 5 Smith Avenue can be learned from the abutting property at 9 Smith Avenue which is also its mirror image.

While further investigation is warranted regarding the past residents and uses of 5 Smith Avenue, it is important to note that this structure was one of the first to be built on this Ward 2 street. This ward was sparsely developed until the mid to late 1800s when it became an important transportation and

manufacturing center. The early industries of the Middlesex Dye and Bleachery Company (1801) and the American Tube Works (1852) established the development cycle in the area. By the 1870s, all of the brick yards and farmland had been converted to manufacturing and food processing establishments. This uptick in industrialization and the nature of the industries established created significant health and pollution concerns in the surrounding area. Accompanying the industrial growth was the need for workers' housing.

*5 Smith Avenue, 2014 Google earth image*



*Below, left: 9 Smith Avenue is the mirror image of its abutter, 5 Smith.*



Smith Avenue, a short street near the Cambridge line, and running between Beacon and Line Streets, was laid out between 1869 and 1874. The surrounding land was owned and subsequently developed by Stephen Smith who, from the 1860s, lived on Beacon Street opposite Dimick Street.

### **Architectural Description:**

*Summary:* The dwelling is a gable-ended Italianate home built c.1871 on a brick foundation. The house is clapboard-sided and retains its paired cornice brackets, a door hood over the front entrance, and the one-story bay on the first floor front elevation. Also extant is the original placement of the windows, particularly on the front elevation. Of further note is the arch-topped window located under the front gable peak. A two-story ell on the left of the structure remains and mirrors the original ell of its neighbor, 9 Smith Avenue.

## **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 find 5 Smith 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.

**Findings:** The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with popular architectural trends within the working-middle classes and the early residential development of Smith Avenue.

## **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 5 Smith Avenue begins c.1871 during the 1869-1874 timeframe when this street was laid out for residential purposes.

### ***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 building has not been moved.
- b. Design: The building is an excellent example of an Italianate that retains many of its original features including, but not limited to, window layout, front bay, decorative bracketing, gable ends, 2-story rear ell, front door hood, and arch-topped window under the front gable.
- c. Materials: The dwelling is constructed of wood with clapboard siding and a brick foundation. Two brick chimney stacks remain extant on the left side of the house. The roof has asphalt shingles and three more modern skylights.
- d. Alterations: Many of the windows have been replaced, the original clapboarding has been (either removed or) covered over with what appears to be wide wood clapboard. Three skylights have been added to the right roof elevation. Original roofing material has been changed to asphalt shingles as is typical of most houses of this vintage. The house appears to retain most of its original massing and form.

*Evaluation of Integrity:* Despite the alterations to the building, the retention of form and location give a very good sense of this type of middle-class housing in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

*Does the subject parcel represent a distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction?*

5 Smith Avenue, along with 9 Smith and 102 Beacon (at the corner of Smith and Beacon), all reflect the popular Italianate style of dwelling popular during the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. These types of buildings, along with similar wooden structures in the immediate area, reflect the styles and designs of houses popular with working and middle-class homeowners.

*Does the subject parcel represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or region due to its singular physical characteristics or landscape?*

This structure is similar to two abutting properties built within the same time period – 9 Smith Avenue and 102 Beacon. This building represents one of the first constructed on Smith Avenue when it was first laid out.

## 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 find 5 Smith Avenue historically or architecturally significant.

The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant as an excellently-intact representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century working-to-middle-class housing stock and represents some of the earliest residential development on this street.

### 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, circa 1871, 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 recommend that the Historic Preservation Commission find 5 Smith 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.**

**Findings:** The subject building is found importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City due to its association with popular architectural trends within the working-middle classes and the early residential development of Smith Avenue.

**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 find 5 Smith Avenue historically and architecturally significant.**

**Findings:** The subject building is found historically and architecturally significant as an excellently-intact representative of 19<sup>th</sup> century working-to-middle-class housing stock and represents some of the earliest residential development on this street.