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

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

June 21, 2012

Cindy He
12 Thorndike Street
Somerville, MA 02144

Re: HPC 12.056 – 336 Summer Street, Somerville, MA

Dear Ms. He,

As you recall the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission voted **unanimously (7-0)** at its May 15, 2012 public meeting, to make the initial determination that the two-family residence at 336 Summer Street is **“significant”** as set forth in City of Somerville Ordinance Chapter 7 Article II Section 7-28 b (2). This was because the building was “at least 50 years old, and was determined by the Commission to be either:

- i. *“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 of Massachusetts, or*
- ii. *“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, and therefore it is in the public interest to be preserved or rehabilitated rather than to be demolished.”*

Specifically, the building is significant as a good example of a gable-front end house that retains its basic form, its bays, and its cornice returns. Most of its window openings are intact on the main portion of the house. The building is one of the oldest houses in this section of Summer Street, and its location on the corner of Summer St. and St. James Ave. makes it particularly prominent and integral to the integrity of the overall streetscape.

Following the presentation by you and your contractor at the public hearing on Tuesday, June 19, 2012, the Commission voted **unanimously (7-0)** that the house is a



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“preferably preserved” building per the *City of Somerville Ordinance Article 7 section 7.28(d)(2)d*. Based upon this determination, the Commission hopes that you will reconsider your preliminary development plan to demolish the house at 336 Summer Street, and instead consider ways to integrate it into the overall redevelopment of the site.

The Commission noted that the siting of the house on the lot and its consistency with the character of the area makes it a strong candidate for rehabilitation rather than total demolition. They also echoed what the attending neighbors stated and that was the number of successful restoration efforts that have already taken place in the surrounding area by other homeowners. Preservation of the older architectural character is what appeals to many people, both existing homeowners and prospective ones. This trend makes a compelling case for why the house is not beyond repair, and may be well-suited to rehabilitation. It was also noted that dirt basements are common throughout the City and can be remedied without removing the whole structure. The Commission recommends a fuller investigation of what lies beneath the vinyl siding on all sides, as some architectural detail may still be evident and restorable.

According to the Ordinance, “During the nine (9) month delay, the applicant, the owner (if different from applicant), and the Commission are required to actively pursue alternatives to demolition of the preferably preserved building or structure, including but not limited to, finding a buyer for the building or structure that is willing to rehabilitate the property, rather than demolish it. As noted at the meeting, the Commission and its Staff are eager to work with you to accomplish this. Please let us know if you have any further questions or needs regarding this letter via kchase@somervillema.gov or (617) 625-6600 x 2525.

Sincerely,



Kristi Chase
Preservation Planner

Cc: Ed Nuzzo, Superintendent, Inspectional Services Division
Paul Nonni, Sr. Building Inspector, Inspectional Services Division.
John Long, City Clerk
George Proakis, Director of Planning
Dick Bauer, Chairman, SHPC
J. Brandon Wilson, Executive Director, SHPC