



CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

DETERMINATION OF PREFERABLY PRESERVED STAFF REPORT

Site: 26 Warwick Street
Case: HPC 2012.108
Applicant Name: Daniel Silva

Date of Application: September 28, 2012
Date of Significance: November 20, 2012

Recommendation: Preferably Preserved

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



I. Meeting Summary: Determination of Significance

On Tuesday, November 20, 2012, the Historic Preservation Commission, in accordance with the Demolition Review Ordinance (2003-05), Section 2.17.B, made a determination that 26 Warwick Street is 'Significant.' This decision is determined by 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. 1871-1874. Warwick Street is not listed in the directory of 1871-72 but is identified on the 1874 Hopkins Atlas (Plate G).

In accordance with *Criteria (i)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings that due to the association of this structure with the Boston Brick Company, whose location and employment prompted the development of this small neighborhood of working class housing, 26 Warwick Street is importantly associated with the broad architectural, cultural, economic and social history of the City.



In accordance with *Criteria (ii)*, listed above, the Commission agreed with Staff findings that due to the ability of the parcel to convey significance of location, design, and material, within the context of a group of buildings or structures, 26 Warwick Street is historically and architecturally significant.

II. Additional Information

Additional Research:

- Clyde, Murdock and Warwick streets, known as the Patch neighborhood, developed as a small neighborhood of working class housing beginning in the mid nineteenth century. Asa Murdock, a Cambridge brickyard owner and real estate speculator, owned tracts of land in this neighborhood. Architecturally, several of the simple houses in this neighborhood are distinctive due to their high brick foundations and uniform three-bay façades, such as 13 and 25 Clyde Street. These are similar to the 1820-1850 brick workers houses of Northwest Cambridge.

The 1852 Draper map shows one house located along Clyde Street and the 1859 Walling map of Boston and Vicinity illustrates eight houses along the south side of Clyde Street. Clyde Street developed as early as 1852, while Murdock and Warwick were not developed for approximately another twenty years (1871-72).

- Census data explains that there were no Kilmartins in Somerville in 1870. The 1880 census explains that Michael Kilmartin (42) from Ireland is married to Ann (39) and their children are William (4) and Margaret (2). Thomas Kilmartin (27) is also located on Warwick Street at the time of the 1880 census. He is married to Bridget (29) and has one child, Kate (1).
- Building permit files from the Department of Inspectional Services do not provide relevant information.

Site Visit:

Another site visit, conducted December 4, 2012, indicates that the Warwick streetscape is the only streetscape in the Patch neighborhood that remains almost fully intact. Maxwell's Green creates a streetwall at the east end of the street and industrial buildings encroach on the corner of Cedar Street; however, Warwick Street still retains the original development pattern and variety of building types. Clyde Street has seen some infill and several building alterations, but remains moderately intact while Murdock Street is predominantly composed of infill buildings.



Warwick Streetscape, north side

Comparable Structures:

Three story gable-end dwellings with three bays are not as common as the typical two story gable-end dwellings with three bays. Comparable structures are located at 252 Cedar Street and 21 Thurston Street; however, differences between the subject structure and the comparable dwellings are the level of detail and alteration. The architectural detail of 21 Thurston Street explains that this structure was not constructed as a dwelling for the working class. 252 Cedar Street has undergone several alterations to the pattern of fenestration, but was likely constructed to house the working class.



Left Top: 26 Warwick Street
Left Bottom: 26 Warwick Street
Middle: 252 Cedar Street
Right: 21 Thurston 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 form and massing of this multi-family dwelling represent one type of working class housing in the City. However, three stories is typical for the triple decker, but a three story gable-end dwelling is not a typical working class house type in the City. Furthermore, few structures of this height exist in the Patch neighborhood and those that do are either a triple decker, which do not have a gable, or a new structure altogether. There is also a row of triple deckers located along Cedar Street.

The original fenestration pattern of the front and left side façades remains largely in tact. The spatial relationship of the subject dwelling on the lot, located along the right side lot line, is typical for the Patch neighborhood. A majority of the structures located on Clyde, Murdock, and Warwick streets were constructed along one of their side lot lines.

The neighborhood precedent to build along a side lot line also impacts the spatial relationship these structures have to each other. This precedent creates inconsistent spacing in the streetscape, which creates an inconsistent pattern throughout the neighborhood; however, many of the structures are located within a close proximity to the street and sidewalk.

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

The Commission found that integrity of this multi-family dwelling is retained within the location, design, and materials of the structure, within the context of a group of buildings or structures. The structure retains integrity of location through spatial relationships to other buildings along Warwick Street as well as the streetscape itself which remains substantially intact. Both Clyde and Murdock streets have recently experienced a number of changes to their streetscapes due to new development and alterations. Integrity of design is understood by the original form, massing, fenestration pattern of the front and left side façades, and side hall entry plan. Material integrity is retained within the overall wood frame, which constitutes the massing and form of the structure, as well as architectural components such as the door hood and potential window and door casings.

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

The Commission determined that this structure is Significant due to a historical association with the Boston Brick Company, whose location and employment prompted the development of this small neighborhood of working class housing, and due to the historical and architectural significance with regard to integrity of location, design, and materials, within the context of a group of structures.

Working class housing during the industrial period represents an aspect of state and local 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 multi-family dwelling at 26 Warwick Street is highly visible along Warwick Street and is an important component of the Warwick streetscape. Although Warwick Street is currently only accessible from Cedar Street, the completion of Maxwell's Green will enable better access, and therefore, more visibility.

26 Warwick Street is the tallest building along this block, with the exception of Maxwell's Green at the east end of Warwick Street. This structure serves as a focal point in the streetscape and helps to anchor the buildings on either side as the development pattern along Warwick street is inconsistent.

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

Three story multi-family dwellings with a gable end are not common within the City. While other examples of this type of working class housing do exist, such as 252 Cedar Street, a large majority of three story working class house types are triple deckers. Other, more high end three story gable-end dwellings also exist throughout the City, such as 21 Thurston Street; however, these were generally not constructed to house the working class.

Upon a consideration of the above criteria (a-e), is the 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 an association of the dwelling with the Boston Brick Company and the ability of the parcel to convey significance regarding location, design, and materials, within the context of a group of buildings. The additional information provided and consideration criteria (a-e) listed above convey that this type of working class housing is not common within the City, that Warwick Street has the most intact streetscape within the Patch neighborhood, and that the subject parcel is a comprehensive component of the Warwick streetscape which has a unique, yet inconsistent, development pattern that is characteristic of the Patch neighborhood. A component of the heritage of the City would be lost by the demolition of 26 Warwick Street; therefore, Staff find the potential demolition of 26 Warwick 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 scarcity of this working class house type, the historic integrity of the most intact streetscape in the Patch neighborhood, and the subject dwelling is an important component of the Warwick streetscape as this structure is the tallest and is a central anchor to the other buildings along the street; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission find 26 Warwick 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).

26 Warwick Street, aerial view

