



**CITY OF SOMERVILLE, MASSACHUSETTS**  
**OFFICE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**  
**JOSEPH A. CURTATONE**  
**MAYOR**

*HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION*

---

**ALTERATION TO A HISTORIC PROPERTY STAFF REPORT**

---

Site: 18 Westwood Road c.1900 Charles E. Parks House  
Case: HPC 2013.075 Westwood Road Local Historic District

Applicant Name: James Veneziano, Owner  
Applicant Address: 18 Westwood Road, Somerville, MA 02143

Date of Application: October 1, 2013  
Legal Notice: *Remove brick steps and replace with granite*  
Staff Recommendation: Certificate of Appropriateness  
Date of Public Hearing: November 17, 2013

---

**I. BUILDING DESCRIPTION**

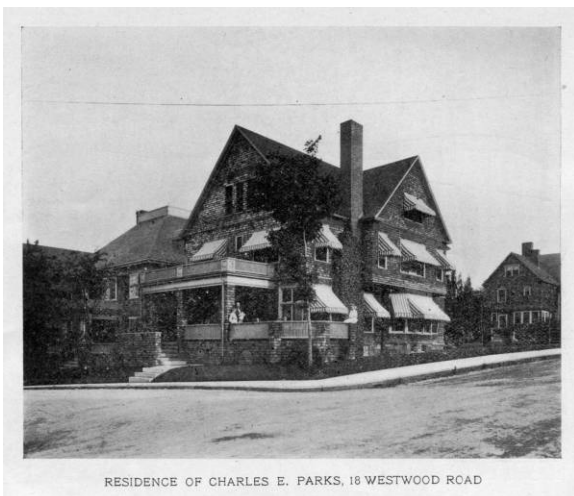
**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:**

This 2 ½ story shingle house is located at one end of Westwood Road. It is unusual in that the main door is around the corner to the east from the street entry. Originally the colonnaded porch stretched beyond the Westwood Road façade into the side yard on Benton Road. The gable is penetrated by 3 small windows. The second floor has paired and single double-hung windows.

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT/EVOLUTION OF STRUCTURE OR PARCEL:**



18 Westwood Road 2013



RESIDENCE OF CHARLES E. PARKS, 18 WESTWOOD ROAD

The property is one of several examples of Shingle style homes on Westwood and Benton Roads. Westwood Road was originally platted on the Shute estate and Benton farm in 1874, but was not developed until 1894, when hardware dealer Charles Bradshaw replatted the entire subdivision. To landscape the street, Bradshaw moved mature elms and maples from elsewhere on the estate to the street line and retained the estate's granite posts as the entrance to the road. Eight Shingle Style houses designed by Somerville architect J. St. Clair Harrold, were initially built by Bradshaw, and by 1905, a total of 17 houses had been constructed. The first owners on Westwood Road held a cross-section of Somerville business and professional interests at the turn of the century. Divided between

Boston and local concerns, the owners included lawyers, pharmacists, shoe, jewelry and desk manufacturers, and dairy and produce dealers. Westwood Road is Somerville's closest representation of a picturesquely-planned nineteenth century subdivision and remains one of the City's finest collections of Shingle and Colonial Revival style residences.

## II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

### 1. Proposal of Alteration:

1. Replace failing brick steps with granite steps and new iron handrails.

See the final pages for details and photos.

## II. FINDINGS

### 1. Prior Certificates Issued/Proposed:

2006.019	18	Westwood Road	C/NA	1. Strip and reroof with 3-tab asphalt shingles in-kind.
2008.078	18	Westwood Road	C/A	1. Relocate bathroom window on 1st floor rear approximately 2' to the east; and 2. Replace 2nd floor rear kitchen casement window with 2/2 double hung wood window to match other existing windows.
2004.038	16-18	Westwood Road	C/A, C/NA	1. Install a no higher than 6' fence with lattice top and gates between the garage and house on the Benton Road side of the house at 18 Westwood Road; 2. Install a 6' fence with lattice top and gates between 16 and 18 Westwood Road approximately 6' in front of the bay at 16 Westwood Road; and 3. Install a 6' lattice top gate at the rear corner of 16 Westwood Road on the east side. 4. Install a fence between 14 and 16 Westwood Road which is not visible from the public-right-of way.

### 1. Precedence:

- *Are there similar properties / proposals?*
  - *Remove brick steps and replace with granite steps.* No cases of the replacement of brick with granite were found, although two cases were found for the replacement of concrete steps with granite: 74 Mount Vernon Street (2010), and 27 Warren Avenue (2013).

### 3. Considerations:

- *What is the visibility of the proposal?*

The new steps and walkway with handrails are visible.

- *What are the Existing Conditions of the building / parcel?*

The steps and walkway with handrails have already been replaced. A granite post has been installed at the base of the stairs. The lowest steps were already granite. The brick steps, landings were in poor to fair condition. See photos at the end of the document.

- *Does the proposal coincide with the General Approach set forth in the Design Guidelines?*

### **GENERAL APPROACH**

*The primary purpose of Somerville's Preservation Ordinance is to encourage preservation and high design standards in Somerville's Historic Districts, in order to safeguard the City's architectural heritage. The following guidelines ensure that rehabilitation efforts, alterations, and new construction all respect the design fabric of the districts and do not adversely effect their present architectural integrity.*

- A. *The design approach to each property should begin with the premise that the features of historic and architectural significance described in the Study Committee report must be preserved. In general, this tends to minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.*

The stairs, pathway and handrails were not discussed in the Form B.

- C. *Whenever possible, deteriorated material or architectural features should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.*

The deteriorated brick was replaced with a more durable material that is similar in appearance to what can be seen in an historic photo which appears to have light colored steps and pathway. The material could have been concrete or granite although the exact material is unknown. The handrails are different stylistically. Both styles are modern in effect.

- D. *When replacement of architectural features is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of the original or later important features.*

The color is similar to what can be seen in the historic photo.

- E. *Whenever possible, new materials should match the material being replaced with respect to their physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is discouraged.*

The original material is unknown. There were no handrails in the historic photo.

- F. *The Commission will give design review priority to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or those portions which it can be reasonably inferred may be visible in the future.*

The stairs and pathway are visible from the public right of way.

### **Landscape Features and Paving**

1. *The general intent of this section is to preserve the existing or later essential landscape features that enhance the property.*

There are no alterations to the essential landscape features.

4. *The original layout and materials of the walks, steps and paved areas should be maintained if significant grade changes constitute an important feature of the structure or site. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that improved site*

*circulation is necessary and that the alterations will accomplish this without altering the integrity of the structure.*

There are no changes to the layout of the steps and pathway. The new granite stairs, pathway and railings will not alter the essential integrity of the house or the district.

### III. RECOMMENDATIONS

*The Staff recommendation is based on a complete application and supporting materials, as submitted by the Applicant, and an analysis of the historic and architectural value and significance of the site, building or structure, the general design, arrangement, texture, material and color of the features involved, and the relation of such features of buildings and structures in the area, in accordance with the required findings that are considered by the Somerville Historic District Ordinance for a Historic District Certificate. This report may be revised or updated with new a recommendation or findings based upon additional information provided to Staff or through more in depth research conducted during the public hearing process.*

Staff determines that the alteration for which an application for a Historic Certificate has been filed is appropriate for and compatible with the preservation and protection of the Westwood Road Local Historic District; therefore **Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Commission grant 118 Westwood Road a Certificate of Appropriateness** for the installation granite steps and pathway.



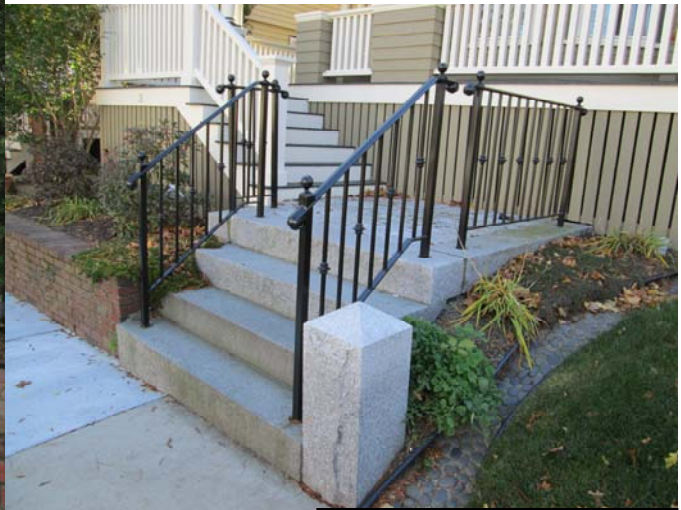




*18 Westwood Road. 2011*



*18 Westwood Road. 2011*



*18 Westwood Road. 2013*