



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

**Office of the Executive Director**

**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Joseph A. Curtatone, Mayor

**FROM:** Philip Ercolini, Acting Executive Director

**DATE:** July 14, 2011

**SUBJECT:** Ordinance amending the Local Historic District Map to create four (4) new districts (Winter Hill, Hinckley-Magoun, College Avenue Corridor of Faith, and Teele Square) and add seventeen (17) properties to these districts, and to add one (1) property to the existing district of East Somerville (Group E).

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The Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development (OSPCD) respectfully requests that you forward to the Board of Aldermen (BOA) eighteen (18) properties recommended for inclusion as Local Historic Districts (LHDs) in conformance with the City's Historic Districts Ordinance of 1985 as amended, for their review and approval. These properties date from 1874-1890 and are being informally called "Group E." The attached ordinance will amend the Historic Districts Map to create four new LHDs (Winter Hill, Hinckley-Magoun, College Avenue Corridor of Faith, and Teele Square) and to expand the existing district of East Somerville. Seventeen (17) of the properties are recommended for addition to the four new districts, and one (1) property is recommended to be added to the existing district of East Somerville. Seventeen of the properties are recommended to be incorporated into multi-building districts and one property will be in a single-building district until additional properties are added through the ongoing LHD expansion process<sup>1</sup>.

The Legislative Matters Committee of the Board of Aldermen held a joint public hearing with the Historic Preservation Commission to consider these map amendments to the ordinance.

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<sup>1</sup> Additional buildings will be added throughout the ongoing expansion process and at a future date, OSPCD staff will submit a separate ordinance that will transfer properties in several of Somerville's existing single building districts into the multi-building districts that are being created throughout this process.



## Introduction

OSPCD submitted a Final Report from the Somerville Historic Preservation Commission (SHPC) incorporating its findings and recommendations to the BOA in June 2007. Since that time, the BOA and members of its Legislative Matters Committee have met with the SHPC and staff of the OSPCD on numerous occasions. Each time the Board has raised a series of questions requiring further research and response from Staff. The most recent request was to ensure that all owners of properties proposed for designation as Local Historic Districts (LHDs) indicate that they have been informed about the designation and understand its provisions.

To efficiently perform the outreach and facilitate the review process, OSPCD has broken down the designation recommendations into smaller groupings of roughly fifteen to twenty properties, based upon their year of construction. Five different time periods, each with two groupings of properties, have been identified, starting with pre-Civil War properties and ending with those built in the mid-twentieth century. Extensive outreach to owners in the third two groupings (Groups E and F: 1874-1890) began in June of 2009. The outreach process and outcome for the fifth grouping, Group E, are summarized in the next section.

## Outreach to Property Owners to Date

Prior to submitting a Final Report with Recommendations to the BOA in June 2007, the SHPC undertook a series of informational activities to inform owners that their properties were proposed for local designation. These activities from June 2006 to February 2007 included:

- a package of materials was sent to owners about the LHD Project, the significance of their specific property, and an invitation to one of a series of scheduled public meetings;
- the City's consultant, Edward Gordon, contacted owners by telephone regarding the package, the upcoming meeting schedule, and any questions;
- ten (10) informational meetings were sponsored in seven (7) different neighborhoods regarding the Project goals and the specific properties, and to answer any questions or concerns;
- a second packet of information was sent to owners seeking their feedback and interest in being designated;
- a public hearing notice and an explanatory letter was sent to all owners by certified mail, return receipt requested; and,
- a public hearing was sponsored at City Hall to solicit testimony from owners and the wider community.

In response to the Board of Aldermen's request that additional confirmation be given so that every owner was fully aware of the designation, OSPCD staff has undertaken another series of outreach activities. This effort encompassed:

- drafting a brief report that highlights the time period in which a particular property was constructed;
- preparing an **Acknowledgement Card** (Card) indicating an owner's receipt of the LHD materials and their understanding of the LHD designation by a certain date;

- updating the mailing list for all of the first group of owners, based upon the most current Assessor Department records; and,
- sending the property owners an information packet. The information packet included the historic period report, the Acknowledgement Card (self-addressed and stamped (SASE) for ease of return), a Frequently Asked Questions hand-out, as well as other explanatory materials.

Any owners who responded on their Acknowledgement Card that they did **not** “fully understand what LHD designation means for my property” were personally contacted by OSPCD staff to remedy this. If an owner did not return a signed Acknowledgement Card, they were sent a **second packet** with an updated cover letter and another copy of the Acknowledgement Card (also in SASE format) to be returned within a one week time frame.

If an owner once again did not respond, a “**Third and Final Notice**” flyer and another Acknowledgement Card with a dated return deadline were directly dropped off during early evening hours to their house if they resided on the property, or elsewhere in Somerville. If the mailing address of the owner was outside the City, the Notice and Card were sent to them.

(See Tab 12 for the Sample Outreach Packet, Acknowledgement Cards, and the Third and Final Notice flyers).

### **Review of Properties Group E: From Building Bust to Building Boom (1874-1890)**

During the period of 1874 to 1890, Somerville fully recovered from the economic crisis known as the Panic of 1873. Housing starts began to experience an encouraging rise by 1880. By 1885, Somerville had a population of almost 30,000, which grew over the next five years to just over 40,000. During these years, a sizeable number of the City’s newcomers hailed from Ireland, Canada, and the northern New England States. Many of these new residents found work in the expanding glass, iron, furniture and food processing businesses of the community.

During the 1870s and 1880s, Somerville witnessed a continuing growth in its transportation network, and a related rise in centralized commercial districts in Union, Davis, and Gilman Squares. Passengers could now wait in comfort and style to board Boston and Maine railroad trains due to the construction of three new passenger stations in Somerville between 1885 and 1895.

The electric trolley was first introduced to the Boston area on Beacon Street in Brookline in 1886. It arrived in Somerville shortly thereafter in 1889, and was located on Broadway, Medford Street, and the Washington Street/Milk Row (Somerville Avenue) corridor. The emergence of a trolley line created strong demand for new housing to accommodate families who could now commute more easily from Somerville to work in Boston, as well as adjacent communities. Housing designed for the trolley-riding families tended to be of the multi-family type. This contrasted with pre-1889 when the most familiar pattern of homebuilding in Somerville was large single-family residences upon large-sized lots. In addition, churches built new facilities to house their growing congregations.

Group E includes eighteen (18) properties built between 1874 and 1890. The properties are located in five separate areas of Somerville and provide direct physical evidence of housing or religious structures that were constructed in the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The primary architectural styles represented in this group are Italianate, Mansard, and Queen Anne, and fine examples of the Romanesque Revival and Stick Styles found within the three churches in this grouping. Several of the districts will be further expanded upon by later groupings, still to be proposed. (see Attachment I for a history of the properties and time period).

In this Group E, the four new districts are proposed to be known as:

- 1) **College Avenue Corridor of Faith LHD** (45 College Avenue);
- 2) **Hinckley-Magoun LHD** (4 Berwick Street, 10 Henderson Street, 13 Henderson Street, 21 Henderson Street, 23 Henderson Street, 16 Hinckley Street, 80 Hinckley Street, 84 Hinckley Street, 282 Lowell Street, 308 Lowell Street);
- 3) **Winter Hill LHD** (55-63 Adams Street, 399 and 399A Medford Street, 29-33 Sargent Avenue); and
- 4) **Teele Square LHD** (1170 Broadway, 7 Clarendon Avenue)

In addition one existing LHD is to be expanded in Group E:

- 1) **East Somerville LHD** (16 Lincoln Street);

### **Summary of Responses for Group E:**

A total of eighteen properties are held by twenty owners. Owners of sixteen (16) properties have either returned the Response Card or spoken with OSPCD staff. All have indicated that they understand the Local Historic District program; four have indicated either on their cards or verbally that they do not wish to be designated. An additional four (4) owners failed to respond to the Staff's multiple outreaches. Since then two of those four owners have acknowledged receipt of the public hearing notice, leaving only two owners (84 Hinckley Street and 21 Henderson Street) who have not been responded to any of the City's outreach. (See Attachment III for details.) (See Attachment II for the property-specific Survey Forms).

### **Recommendation**

It is recommended that the Board of Aldermen adopt the attached Ordinance amending the City of Somerville Historic District Ordinance #2003-1 to:

1. Create four new districts and add properties to those districts as identified below:

- **College Avenue Corridor of Faith LHD** (45 College Avenue);
- **Hinckley-Magoun LHD** (4 Berwick Street, 10 Henderson Street, 13 Henderson Street, 21 Henderson Street, 23 Henderson Street, 16 Hinckley Street, 80 Hinckley Street, 84 Hinckley Street, 282 Lowell Street, 308 Lowell Street);
- **Winter Hill LHD** (55-63 Adams Street, 399 and 399A Medford Street, 29-33 Sargent Avenue)

- Avenue); and
- **Teele Square LHD** (1170 Broadway, 7 Clarendon Avenue)
2. Expand one existing LHD known as the:
    - **East Somerville LHD** (16 Lincoln Street);
  3. Authorize OSPCD staff to file and/or record a historic district designation form for each property at the Middlesex South District Registry of Deeds and/or Division of the Land Court Department.

### **List of Attachments**

The following material is intended to be inserted in Tab 5 of the binders.

- I. Narrative of Historic Time Period (1874-1890)
- II. LHD Survey Form Bs for Group E (1874-1890) Properties
- III. Table of Group E (1874-1890) Outreach and Responses
- IV. Ordinance Amending the Local Historic District Map (Group E)

### **Other Items Previously Distributed**

- I. Letter from former Chair of the Historic Preservation Commission, Michael Payne (Tab 11)
- II. Property Owner Outreach Packet (cover letters, narrative of historic time period, Frequently Asked Questions, Flow Chart/Steps to Apply for Certificate, Acknowledgement Cards) (Tab 12)
- III. Third and Final Notice Flyers (Tab 12)