



# City of Medford

HISTORICAL COMMISSION &  
HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

City Hall – Room 308  
85 George P. Hassett Drive  
Medford, Massachusetts 02155

## Medford Historical Commission Annual Report 2023

### Membership:

Jennifer Keenan, Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2025)  
Ryan D. Hayward, Vice Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2023)  
Doug Carr, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2025)  
Peter Miller, Secretary (Term Ex. 12/1/2024)  
Edward Wiest, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2025)  
Jessica Farrell, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2023)  
Kit Nichols, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2024)

### Meetings:

Second Monday of every month, except to avoid conflict with Monday holidays. All meetings in 2023 were held via Zoom in compliance with COVID-19 restrictions.

Meeting Dates: January 9, February 13, March 13, April 10, May 8, May 11,\* June 12, July 10, August 14, September 11, October 16, November 13, December 18\*\*.

\* Special meeting for demolition delay administration.

\*\*Meeting moved to accommodate a public hearing.

### Contact:

Email: [HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov](mailto:HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov)

### Activities of the Commission in 2023:

- The Historical Commission budget increased to \$38,050 for the current fiscal year, broken down into three parts: a \$17,500 match of a yearly grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission; \$19,000 for the creation of inventory forms as-needed in connection with demolition delay review and other Commission business and \$1,550 for memberships, legal fees, postage, and website maintenance.
- The Commission continued to work extensively with the Building Department to facilitate permit reviews. The new Building Commissioner, in office at the time, attended one of our meetings to

introduce himself to all members of the Board. We continue to keep ahead of the tide of applications for permits received by the City. A summary of all projects reviewed by the MHC is provided below.

- The Commission completed phase I work at Thomas Brooks Park. The \$365,500 project was awarded to conduct archaeological due diligence and to complete the restoration of Pomp's Wall and the entirety of the fieldstone wall along Grove Street. The Commission is grateful to the Community Preservation Committee ("CPC") for funding this work.
- We have begun planning for additional work at Thomas Brooks Park. The Commission applied to the CPC for funds to hire a landscape architect to design a suitable landscape feature to protect the archaeologically sensitive area. The CPC awarded the Commission \$5,000, which was matched by funds from the Commission's budget. Concurrently, the Commission applied for the funding of Phase II of work at the park. This will include a second comprehensive archaeological investigation, pruning of trees, and the construction of necessary crossing and ADA/MAAB accessibility upgrades at the designated entrances along Grove Street.
- The Commission benefitted from City Hall staff support throughout the entire year. The Commission would like to thank Denis MacDougall for his hard work facilitating the Commission's meetings and serving as the public face of the Commission at City Hall for this past year. We would also like to thank Theresa Dupont, the former Head Clerk at the Department of Planning, Development, and Sustainability, for her administrative assistance and Jonathan Cabral for his help.
- The Commission, using its knowledge and expertise with significant historic buildings, provided input on the as-built design of multiple new or renovated structures, which improved the fit of those structures within the context of their surrounding neighborhoods. The Commission expresses its appreciation to the willingness of many owners of properties under demolition delay to address the Commission's concerns in a manner which allowed projects to move forward on an expedited basis.
- The Commission will continue to work with the Department of Planning, Development, and Sustainability to ensure it continues to receive the ZBA and Community Development Board agenda and attachments during a period in which all city agencies have been conducting digital, rather than in-person, meetings. The Commission (three of whose members are architects and/or historic preservation consultants) believes it provides valuable input to these discussions with its institutional knowledge of the existing landscape and its expertise in incorporating historical elements into new project designs.
- Historical survey work under the aegis of the Commission is ongoing. We completed the Brickyards/Mystic Park Neighborhood Survey, a \$46,000 project funded in part with grants from the Massachusetts Historical Commission. This neighborhood, bordering Somerville and the recently completed Green Line Extension (GLX), is a dense collection of twentieth-century resources, making it a challenge for a traditional survey. Using methodologies developed during previous projects, the Commission's consultants were able to cover large swaths of buildings, so as to present a general understanding of the area and its development patterns as it experiences intense pressure from development.

- Work is ongoing to prepare for a survey of Fulton Heights. The Commission’s consultants expect to give this project their full attention now that the Brickyards/Mystic Park project is complete. We expect this project to wrap up mid-2024.

**New Inventory Forms:**

The Commission procured Massachusetts Historical Commission Form Bs for 22 properties, adding to its historical inventory, many of which provided critical assistance in determining whether the properties met the standards for Historical Significance and should be Preferably Preserved under the standards set forth in the City’s historic preservation by-law:

- |                            |                       |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|
| ● 28 Grove Street          | ● 6 Manning Street    |
| ● 91 Winchester Street     | ● 30 South Street     |
| ● 1 Clematis Avenue        | ● 42 South Street     |
| ● 40 Sherman Street        | ● 84 South Street     |
| ● 44 Sherman Street        | ● 67 Court Street     |
| ● 17 Green Street          | ● 56 Wareham Street   |
| ● 12 George Street         | ● 587 Winthrop Street |
| ● 28 Winter Street         | ● 64 Myrtle Street    |
| ● 142 Mystic Avenue        | ● 27 Almont Street    |
| ● 23 Winter Street         | ● 43 Allston Street   |
| ● Walkling Court Area Form | ● 314 Winthrop Street |

More forms were obtained through the Brickyards/Mystic Park Neighborhood Survey Project:

- 7 Massachusetts Historical Commission Form As (area forms) were prepared, and 210 buildings were recorded. An additional 28 buildings were individually recorded in Form Bs. A total of 238 resources were documented as part of this project.

Inventory forms are available online on the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS) through the Massachusetts Historical Commission website.

The Commission is awaiting survey products from the Fulton Heights Neighborhood Survey Project. Work is ongoing.

**Site Plan/Section 106 Reviews:**

- |                            |                     |
|----------------------------|---------------------|
| ● 421 High Street          | ● 243 Mystic Avenue |
| ● 200 Boston Avenue        | ● 550 Boston Avenue |
| ● 285-295 Middlesex Avenue |                     |

**City of Medford and Community Project Reviews/Support:**

- Shiloh Baptist Church Restoration Project
- Chevalier Theater Façade Restoration
- Walkling Court Redevelopment Project

## Demolition Delay:

In 2023, the Commission continued using the CitizenServe software to work with the Building Department to review permit applications, request additional information, flag projects that required full review under the demolition delay, and upload our findings for the permit record.

*A Note about Findings and Delays:* When a property is determined not Significant or not Preferably Preserved, the permit hold is released upon filing of the letter with the Clerk shortly after the meeting. If a building is found to be Significant and Preferably Preserved, an 18-month demolition delay is placed on the property. The amount of time properties are under demolition delay is often less than six months, as many property owners decide to make bona fide efforts to mitigate the impacts of demolition rather than delay demolition for the 18-month period required for Preferably Preserved properties.

The Commission acted on demolition delay applications on the following properties:

- **31 South Street:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Historically Significant (4-3) and Preferably Preserved (5-1). The Commission worked with the owner to find a solution to mitigate the demolition. The delay was lifted after 6 months.
- **7 Hamlin Avenue:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Not Significant (6-0).
- **28 Grove Street:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Historically Significant (6-0) and Preferably Preserved (5-0). The Commission worked with the owner to find a solution to mitigate the demolition. The delay was lifted after 2 months.
- **91 Winchester Street (Carriage House):** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Historically Significant (6-0) and Preferably Preserved (4-1). The owner began efforts to work with the Commission to mitigate the demolition. She sought revised repair estimates with builders and is looking to seek CPC funding to explore preservation. We are encouraging this path and awaiting additional information on how she wishes to proceed. The property is under an 18-month demolition delay through October 2024.
- **86 Suffolk Street:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property. The Commission passed on review. The sympathetic changes being proposed to the building did not rise to full board review.
- **1 Clematis Road:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The Commission passed on review as the MHC form B was not delivered on time to determine significance.
- **67 North Street:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Not Significant (5-0).
- **236 Boston Avenue:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Not Significant (5-0).
- **230 Boston Avenue:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The

Commission passed on review inasmuch as it was less than 75 years old.

- **222 Boston Avenue:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Historically Significant (4-1), but, after public hearing, not Preferably Preserved (4-1-1).
- **12 George Street:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Not Significant (4-2).
- **28 Winter Street:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Not Significant (6-0).
- **17 Green Road:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Historically Significant (6-0) and, after public hearing Preferably Preserved (4-0-1). The Commission worked with the owner to find a solution to mitigate the demolition. The delay was lifted in less than 30 days.
- **142 Mystic Avenue:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The Commission passed on review inasmuch as it was less than 75 years old.
- **37 Locust Street:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Not Significant (4-0).
- **28 Winter Street:** An application was received for a partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Not Significant (4-0).
- **69 Court Street:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Historically Significant (2-1-1). A Preferably Preserved public hearing forthcoming. This case is ongoing.
- **56 Wareham Street:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Historically Significant (4-1) and, after public hearing Preferably Preserved (5-0). The applicant plans to reach out to the Commission to discuss next steps.
- **587 Winthrop Street:** An application was received for the partial demolition of the property that would alter the building beyond recognition. The building was found to be Not Significant (3-2).
- **64 Myrtle Street:** An application was received for the total demolition of the property. The building was found to be Not Significant (5-0).

### **2023 Demolition Delay Summary:**

20 Total Properties Reviewed for Significance

- 4 properties were passed on review (20%)
- 1 property found to be Significant – pending further review in 2024 (5%)
- 4 properties found to be Significant & Preferably Preserved (20%)
- 1 property found Significant but not Preferably Preserved (5%)
- 10 Not Significant / Not Preferably Preserved (50%)

### **City of Medford:**

- Over 1,855 Building Permits issued in 2023
- Approx. 150 Building Permits (8%) were reviewed.
- 20 Permits were reviewed for Significance by MHC in 2023 (approx. 1%) and 50% of these were found to be **Not Significant**
- Only 4 Permits resulted in Demo Delay – less than ¼ of 1% of all permits in Medford

### **Goals for 2024**

- Update and revise the City of Medford Survey Plan to include all of the recommendations for survey work received over the past 15 years from Survey and Planning Grant projects.
- Work with the Historic District Commission to secure funding for a city-wide local historic district plan. This will utilize the extensive survey work that has been completed over the last 10+ years and assist with prioritization of the protection of historic resources while recognizing the goals of other departments.
- Work with the Department of Planning, Development and Sustainability to review existing city-wide plans and so harmonize them with the Commission's historic preservation objectives. The Commission will prioritize areas and apply funding toward the recommendation of additional survey work in these locations. We will share our findings with the Mayor and other City Departments to continue our ongoing collaboration.
- Strengthen the language in the Demolition Delay Ordinance so that it is clear, concise, and eliminate any questions as to its enforceability working with the Mayor, Building Commissioner, the Department of Planning, Development, and Sustainability, and the City Council in this process.
- Work with the Medford-Brooks Estate Land Trust to support their leadership transition and internal restructuring and provide resources for their immediate planning goals.
- We will continue to publish updates on our website and social media accounts to keep the public informed about any ongoing action by the Historical Commission and our colleagues of the Historical, District Commission.

Respectfully submitted,

Jennifer M. Keenan  
Chair, Medford Historical Commission  
January 8, 2024