



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 2024

Membership:

Jennifer Keenan, Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2025)
Ryan D. Hayward, Vice Chair (Term Ex. 12/1/2026)
Doug Carr, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2025)
Peter Miller, Secretary (Term Ex. 12/1/2024)
Edward Wiest, Commissioner (Term Ex. 12/1/2025)
Eleni Glekas, 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 2024 were held via Zoom.

Meeting Dates: January 8, February 12, March 11, April 8, May 13, June 10, July 8, August 12, August 19*, September 9, October 7, November 18, December 9.

* Special meeting for demolition delay administration.

Contact:

Email: HistoricalCommission@Medford-MA.gov

Activities of the Commission in 2024:

- The Historical Commission budget decreased to \$35,000 for the current fiscal year. The Commission designated \$15,000 for a survey and planning project, another \$15,000 for the creation of inventory forms for demolition delay reviews, and \$5,000 to cover membership fees, legal expenses, postage, and website costs. The reduction in budget was made voluntarily in the spirit of collaboration, with the rest of the departments taking larger funding cuts.
- The Commission continues to work with the Building Department to facilitate permit reviews. The previous Building Commissioner departed and we invited the new Commissioner to come to our meeting to introduce himself. We continue to stay ahead of the tide of applications received. Only

a small percentage of those permits signed off on actually come before us for demolition review.

- We were awarded a CPC small grant to develop an archaeological cap at Thomas Brooks Park. Peter Hedlund of Hedlund Design Group designed a schematic concept to protect the Thomas Brooks House Site following completion of the next round of archaeology. The work is complete and was shared with the public. Feedback was favorable.
- The Commission partnered with the Cemetery Trustees to develop a plan for the restoration of Cross Street Cemetery. Medford's second-oldest burying ground requires restoration after seventy years of weathering. Fannin-Lehner was hired to conduct the assessment, which was funded by grants from the CPC and Freedom's Way National Heritage Area. With this information, we applied for a second round of grants from the same groups to restore fifteen veteran headstones as a pilot project. Restoration work is slated to begin in the spring of 2025.
- The Commission also advised the city on the development project planned behind City Hall. Among the parcels is the former home of Cross Street Cemetery. The Commission worked with an archaeologist to test the grounds for subsurface sensitivity. The findings will provide the City with answers to whether additional work will be required. Work is ongoing, and the Commission will continue to provide help in the matter.
- The Commission benefited 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 the past year. We would also like to thank Theresa Dupont, Community Preservation Act Manager, and Jackie Forcina, the Head Clerk at the Department of Planning, Development, and Sustainability, for their administrative assistance.
- 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 that allowed projects to move forward on an expedited basis.
- Historical survey work under the aegis of the Commission is ongoing. We completed the Fulton Heights neighborhood survey. This area is built with smaller structures that are prone to development pressures. Consultants documented a large swath of the neighborhood as part of this project. It was funded by a grant from the Massachusetts Historical Commission.
- Work is ongoing to prepare for a survey of Sagamore Vale. The dense neighborhood north of Medford Square is one of our earliest residential developments. We are in the process of hiring a consultant and expect work to wrap up in the middle of 2025.

New Inventory Forms:

The Commission procured Massachusetts Historical Commission Form Bs for 14 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:

- 43 Allston Street
- 314 Winthrop Street
- 27 Almont Street
- 82 Greenleaf Avenue
- 18 Wedgemere Road
- 9 Trout Avenue
- 38 Pearl Street
- 68-70 Billings Avenue
- 179 Main Street
- 18 Cherry Street
- 106 Alexander Avenue
- 110 Brooks Street
- 39 Wilson
- 39 Marion

A Massachusetts Historical Commission Area Form was prepared for two areas covered by review:

- Fellsway/Fern Road Area, which includes 89 Fellsway West.
- 400 Mystic Avenue

More forms were obtained through the Fulton Heights Survey Project:

- 8 Massachusetts Historical Commission Form As (area forms) were prepared, and 154 buildings were recorded. An additional 13 buildings were individually recorded in Form Bs. A total of 167 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 beginning survey work in the Sagamore Vale Neighborhood just north of Medford Square. This collection of early buildings is among the first wave of residential development and a top priority to record.

Site Plan/Section 106 Reviews:

- 280 Mystic Avenue
- Walkling Court Development

City of Medford and Community Project Reviews/Support:

- Mystic Riverbend Park Signage
- Unitarian Universalist Church Restoration
- Riverside Plaza Development
- Medford Square Parcel Development

Demolition Delay:

In 2024, the Commission continued using the CitizenServe software to work with the Building Department to review permit applications, request additional information, and 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:

- **43 Allston Street:** An application was received for the demolition of this building. It was heavily damaged by fire. A motion to find the building Historically Significant failed (0-6).
- **314 Winthrop Street:** An application was received for the partial demolition of this dwelling. A motion to find the building Historically Significant failed (0-5).
- **27 Almont Street:** A demolition application was received for the total removal of the nineteenth-century dwelling and garage. The building was found to be Historically Significant (4-0) and Preferably Preserved (4-0). The Commission reached out to the owner to find a solution, but the proponent did not engage with the board. The delay is ongoing.
- **82 Greenleaf Avenue:** An application for a fire-damaged building slated for demolition. A motion to find the building historically significant failed (0-4).
- **89 Fellsway West:** Demolished without Commission approval, the board received an application for review for this late nineteenth-century residence. The Commission accepted the application (4-0) but passed on review due to the state of the existing house (4-0).
- **18 Wedgemere Road:** The Commission accepted an application for review for this property. The house was determined to be Historically Significant (4-0). The application for demolition was later withdrawn.
- **85 Morton Avenue:** The application was rejected because of the age of the building, which was not yet 75 years old.
- **9 Trout Avenue:** A twentieth-century resource slated for alteration beyond recognition. The Commission found the building was not Historically Significant (4-0).
- **3 - 5 Pleasant Street:** A fire destroyed the building in the National Register Old Ship Street District. The Commission rejected the application for review because the building has been totally destroyed (4-0).
- **38 Pearl Street:** A renovation project involving the demolition of the rear ell and construction of a whole unit attached to the existing mid-nineteenth-century structure. The Commission found for Historical Significance (6-0) and Preferably Preserved Status (6-0). The Owners worked with the Commission to change their design to match the existing architecture. The demolition delay was released after 3 months.
- **68 - 70 Billings Avenue:** A twentieth-century dwelling. The Commissioners believed the building had lost integrity and therefore was not Historically Significant (0-6).
- **18 Cherry Street:** An application for the total demolition of this pre-1875 dwelling. The Commission reviewed the building and determined it was not Historically Significant (5-0).

- **106 Alexander Avenue:** The Commission accepted an application for the demolition of this dwelling to construct two new townhomes. The building was damaged by fire. The building was found to be not Historically Significant (5-0).
- **110 Brooks Street:** The Commission received an application for the partial demolition of this dwelling. The project exceeded permit approvals and was gutted down to the studs. The Commission found for significance (6-0) and Preferably Preserved status (3-0). The applicants worked with the Commission to resolve design issues and voted to lift the delay after 30 days.
- **56 Wareham Street:** The Commission concluded this project by working with the Owners to come to an agreement on the design. The Commission voted to lift the delay on the property.

2024 Demolition Delay Summary:

15 Total Properties Reviewed

- 1 property was passed on review (5%)
- 1 property lifted – concluded from 2023 (5%)
- 3 properties found to be Significant & Preferably Preserved (25%)
- 2 property found Significant but not Preferably Preserved (15%)
- 8 Not Significant / Not Preferably Preserved (50%)

City of Medford:

- Over 1,732 Residential Building Permits issued in 2024
- Approx. 170 Building Permits (10%) were reviewed.
- 12 Permits were reviewed for Significance by MHC in 2024 (approx. ½%) and 50% of these were found to be **Not Significant**
- Only 3 Permits resulted in Demo Delay – less than ¼ of 1% of all permits in Medford

Goals for 2025

- 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 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 organization as they implement their 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.

Respectfully submitted,

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