



STAFF REPORT

Town of Wellesley - Planning Department

Application: DR-2018-19 - 8 Dexter Road - Preservation Determination
Subject Property: 8 Dexter Road (Assessor's Parcel ID # 99-11)
Applicant: Gilbert Dailey
Property Owner: Gilbert Dailey
Date: Report prepared 5/1/2018 for 5/14/2018 Historical Commission Meeting
Staff Contact: Claudia Zarazua, Planner
Staff Recommendation: **Preferably Preserved**

APPLICATION OVERVIEW

Applications for Eligibility Notice and Preservation Determination were submitted on April 11, 2018 indicating the intent to demolish, in its entirety, a building located on the property and used as a dwelling. An Eligibility Notice was issued on April 18, 2018 determining the subject building to be an Eligible Building. A public hearing before the Historical Commission is scheduled for May 14, 2018.

DESCRIPTION

In consideration of the application for Eligibility Notice, it was determined that the original dwelling was constructed no earlier or later than July 17, 1929, the date provided on Building Permit No. 3273 for the construction of a "dwelling" on 8 Dexter Road. On December 14, 1968 a permit No. 15324 was filed to extend the first floor room an approximate 3.5' towards the rear.

The land was originally owned by Frances M. Kennear and later acquired and subdivided by Dexter Kingsbury in 1909. The Kingsbury family was part of a group of donors that helped protect Fuller Brook Park. Emma Kingsbury, sole heir and sister of Dexter Kingsbury, sold the land in 1928 to Harley and Helen Reed. Harley Reed applied for a building permit to build a dwelling in 1929. The house was sold to Robert and Margaret Abrahamson in 1956. The property was recently sold to Westerly Road Inc. in early 2018.

The dwelling is a 2-story frame colonial with an asymmetrical front facade, minimally altered. According to the original building permit, the house was constructed by Ambrose Knights, a prolific Wellesley builder and developer of the subdivision. Staff believes the original architecture of the house is best characterized as a modest Tudor influenced. The style is characterized by steep pitched roofs, large chimneys and narrow windows with multi-pane glazing. This particular example has a simple round-arched doorway with heavy batten board, wood shingle siding and multi-pane glazing.

PRESERVATION DETERMINATION STANDARDS

In consideration of a Preservation Determination for the building, the Historical Commission is to determine whether or not the building should be Preferably Preserved, a term defined as building “the demolition of which that is proposed...would be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage of the Town because such Building is (i) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the United States of America, (ii) historically or architecturally important by reason of period, style, method of building construction or association with a particular architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of Buildings, or (iii) located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the boundary line of any federal or local historic district and contextually similar to the Buildings located in the adjacent federal or local historic district.”

If the Commission determines that the Building should be Preferably Preserved, then no Demolition Permit with respect to such Building shall be issued until twelve (12) months after the date of the Preservation Determination.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff is of the opinion that the subject building **is** (i) associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the Town, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts or the United States of America, (ii) historically or architecturally important by reason of period, style, method of building construction or association with a particular architect or builder, either by itself or in the context of a group of Buildings, and (iii) located within one hundred fifty (150) feet of the boundary line of any federal or local historic district and contextually similar to the Buildings located in the adjacent federal or local historic district.

With respect to standard (i), the previous resident, Robert Abrahamson was a World War II veteran and an architect. A graduate of Harvard College and the Harvard University School of Design, Mr. Abrahamson practiced architecture under George W. W. Brewster. As an architect, George W. W. Brewster was considered to be a significant contributor to residential architecture in the New England region, using the New England vernacular his own way. Most of his residential projects included glass walls located in a courtyard often U-shaped or L-shaped. Brewster retired in 1968 and decided to dedicate his life to painting. As a painter his work is part of Farnsworth Museum, Portland Museum, and Harvard University collections.

With respect to standard (ii), Staff is of the opinion that the construction method and style of the dwelling is architecturally important by reason of period and style. The building is one of two distinct and important example of Tudor influenced architecture in the neighborhood, 6 Morton being the other one. In addition, the potential demolition of the house at 8 Dexter Road would be a detriment to the character of the immediate group of buildings that has remained of similar scale and architecture.

Under his own practice, Architects Designs Group II, Mr. Abrahamson specialized in library restoration and renovation. Some of his most renowned projects were the addition to the Boston Public Library in 1967 and the addition to the Wellesley Free Library in 1980. See Figure



Mr. Abrahamson is seen here presenting the addition to City of Boston Mayor Collins. Abrahamson is fourth from left to right. Source: Mayor John F. Collins records, Collection #0244.001, City of Boston Archives, Boston

With respect to standard (iii), Staff notes that the potential demolition of the house at 8 Dexter Road would be detrimental to the integrity and character of the Fuller Brook Park. The Park was established in 1899 serving a two-fold purpose: first, to prevent the building of homes in vital floodplains and wetlands, and second, to give pedestrians a safe passageway removed from the traffic on Washington Street. In 2013, the Park was listed on the National Register of Historic Places due to the “early and sophisticated municipal expression of an integrated multi-purpose civic improvement project” and its association with renowned 19th century landscape designers including John Charles Olmsted, Warren Manning, and Ernest Bowditch.

Therefore, based upon the above, **Staff is of the opinion that the demolition of the subject building would be detrimental to the historical or architectural heritage of the neighborhood and Town and thus Staff recommends that the building should be deemed Preferably Preserved.**