

CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139
Tel. 498-9011

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1987 AUG 20 PM 1:21

CAMBRIDGE MA.

EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

AGENDA

AUGUST 14, 1987 DATA

NOTES

1. Transmitting communication from Robert W. Healy, City Manager, relative to the recommendation of the Cambridge Historical Commission that the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 113 River Street, be designated as a landmark under Ordinance 1002.



City of Cambridge

Calendar Item No. 12

~~Agenda Item No. 1~~

IN CITY COUNCIL

~~September 14, 1987~~

September 21, 1987

ORDERED: That the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 109-113 River Street be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter Two, Article XVI, Section 2-147(k) of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on August 6, 1987. The premises so designated are defined as Parcels 54 and 55 on Assessor's Plan 125.

This designation is justified by the important associations of the building with the architectural and social history of the City as an important example of the vernacular Greek Revival style. It is significant in the context of its immediate surroundings on Wilson Square and as a visual anchor to the neighborhood.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated landmark area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of the Ricker House, that would in either case be visible from a public way without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall permit the owner to rehabilitate the original portion of the Ricker House in conjunction with the proposed townhouse development, subject to overall determination by the Commission that the final plans for the townhouse development not be incongruous with the rehabilitated Ricker House.

In City Council September 21, 1987.

Adopted by a yea and nay vote:-

Yeas 5; Nays 4; Absent 0.

Attest:- Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

A true copy;

ATTEST:-

Joseph E. Connarton

Joseph E. Connarton, City Clerk.

9/21/87 (VICE-MAYOR VELLUCCI HAS NOTIFIED THE CITY CLERK OF HIS INTENTION TO MOVE RECONSIDERATION IN THIS MATTER)
9/28/87 - RECONSIDERATION FAILED. THE ACTION TAKEN ON SEPTEMBER 21, 1987 ADOPTING THE ORDER STANDS.

City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

Sept. 25 1987

Calendar # 16 - Reconsideration by Vice Mayor Vellucci

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
Mr. Thomas W. Danehy	✓			
Mr. Francis H. Duehay		✓		
Ms. Saundra Graham		✓		
Mrs. Sheila T. Russell		✓		
Mr. David E. Sullivan		✓		
Mr. Alfred Vellucci	✓			
Mr. William H. Walsh	✓			
Ms. Alice K. Wolf		✓		
Mayor Walter J. Sullivan	✓			

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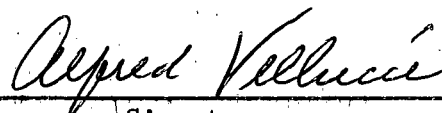
Motion to Reconsider Failed

MOTION FOR RECONSIDERATION SUBMITTED BY COUNCILLOR VELLUCCI

September 21, 1987

Date

Vice-Mayor Vellucci has notified the City Clerk of his intention to move Reconsideration of the vote of the City Council taken on Monday, September 21, 1987 adopting an order that the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 109-113 River Street be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter Two, Article XVI, Section 2-147(k) of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by the vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on August 6, 1987.



Signature

City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council September 14

1987

AGENDA ITEM NO. 1

RE: DESIGNATION OF THE GEORGE & JEREDIAH RICKER HOUSE AT 113 RIVER STREET, CAMBRIDGE AS A LANDMARK UNDER ORDINANCE 1002.

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
Mr. Thomas W. Danehy		✓		
Mr. Francis H. Duehay	✓			
Ms. Saundra Graham	✓			
Mrs. Sheila T. Russell	✓			
Mr. David E. Sullivan	✓			
Mr. Alfred Vellucci		✓		
Mr. William H. Walsh		✓		
Ms. Alice K. Wolf	✓			
Mayor Walter J. Sullivan		✓		

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City of Cambridge

MASSACHUSETTS

In City Council

Sept. 21

1987

*Vice Mayor Vellucci - Motion to Postpone Calendar #12
for one week*

	YEA	NAY	ABSENT	PRESENT
Mr. Thomas W. Danehy	✓			
Mr. Francis H. Duehay		✓		
Ms. Saundra Graham		✓		
Mrs. Sheila T. Russell		✓		
Mr. David E. Sullivan		✓		
Mr. Alfred Vellucci	✓			
Mr. William H. Walsh	✓			
Ms. Alice K. Wolf		✓		
Mayor Walter J. Sullivan	✓			

4 5

Failed by Adoption

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August 14, 1987

To the Honorable, the City Council:

On August 6, 1987, the Cambridge Historical Commission unanimously voted to recommend the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 113 River Street, to the City Council for landmark designation under Ordinance 1002. A copy of the proposed order implementing this designation is enclosed for your consideration.

Justification of Landmark Designation

Ordinance 1002 was enacted to: "preserve, conserve, and protect the beauty and heritage of the City of Cambridge and to improve the quality of its environment through the identification, conservation and maintenance of... structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose..."

Section 4 of the Ordinance states that the Commission: "may recommend for designation as a landmark any...structure...historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of construction or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures."

The Commission found that the Ricker House is significant individually as an example of the vernacular Greek Revival style, one of Cambridge's most characteristic styles and the earliest style of architecture associated with the development of Cambridgeport as a residential suburb in the mid 19th century. It is significant in the context of its immediate surroundings and in relation to other buildings of the period in the neighborhood. The prominence of the Ricker House on Wilson Square and the importance of the house in visually anchoring this location give it additional contextual significance.

Issues Raised in the Public Hearing

The major issue raised in the public hearing concerned the ability of the developer to construct townhouse units on

the Ricker House lot while still retaining the Ricker House, either in part or in toto, given the size and configuration of the lot. It was the opinion of the developer's counsel that economically viable new construction was not possible if the Ricker House was to be preserved. The Commission noted several cases in Cambridge where new construction has been successfully incorporated with historic buildings. The motion of the Commission noted that rehabilitation of the original portion of the Ricker House take place in conjunction with the proposed townhouse development, thereby allowing for demolition of non-original portions of the Ricker House.

Effect of Designation

The effect of the designation would be that no new construction, alteration or demolition could take place on the premises of 109-113 River Street without review and approval of the Historical Commission. However, the proposed order takes the concerns of the developer into account by recognizing the necessity of alteration, limited demolition and new construction to accomodate his plans.

The Historical Commission has found that the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 109-113 River Street, meets the criteria established in Ordinance 1002 for landmark designation, and has directed that this recommendation be transmitted to the City Council for its consideration.

Respectfully,

Charles M. Sullivan /
Charles M. Sullivan *NLD*
Executive Director

Proposed Designation Order for the George and Jerediah
Ricker House, 109-113 River Street


ORDERED:

That the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 109-113 River Street, be designated as a protected landmark pursuant to Chapter Two, Article XVI, Section 2-147(k) of the Code of the City of Cambridge, as recommended by vote of the Cambridge Historical Commission on August 6, 1987. The premises so designated are defined as Parcels 54 and 55 on Assessor's Plan 125.

This designation is justified by the important associations of the building with the architectural and social history of the City as an important example of the vernacular Greek Revival style. It is significant in the context of its immediate surroundings on Wilson Square and as a visual anchor to the neighborhood.

The effect of this designation shall be that no construction activity can take place within the designated landmark area, and no action can be taken affecting the appearance of the Ricker House, that would in either case be visible from a public way without review by the Cambridge Historical Commission and the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness, Hardship or Non-Applicability, as the case may be. In making determinations, the Commission shall permit the owner to rehabilitate the original portion of the Ricker House in conjunction with the proposed townhouse development, subject to overall determination by the Commission that the final plans for the townhouse development not be incongruous with the rehabilitated Ricker House.

Adopted by a unanimous vote of 7-0
August 6, 1987


Nancy L. Doonan, Secretary
Cambridge Historical Commission

Landmark Designation Report

George and Jerediah Ricker House, 113 River Street

Cambridge Historical Commission
June 18, 1987

Landmark Designation Report

George and Jerediah Ricker House, 113 River Street

I. Location and Background

The Ricker House at 113 River Street is a wood frame, two and one-half story double house on the north side of River Street between Kinnaird and Pleasant Streets, facing Cottage Street and the small city park at Wilson Square. It is located on two lots totaling 5,553 square feet. The zoning is Business BA along River Street and Residence C-1 in the rear. The surroundings are primarily residential, although there are some small scale retail activities along River Street. The physical condition of the neighborhood has improved rapidly in recent years.

The owner, Stephen S. Porter of the 103 River Street Trust, plans to construct townhouses on a site that also includes the single family houses at 103 and 107 River Street. The entire site totals 10,035 square feet.

Applications to demolish 103, 107, and 109-113 River Street were reviewed by the Historical Commission at a public hearing on December 11, 1986. At that time, the Commission voted that 103 River Street was significant but not preferably preserved; that 107 River was not significant; and that 109-113 River was significant and preferably preserved. The six month delay of demolition for the latter building ran from the date of the hearing and expired on June 11, 1987. The buildings have not been demolished because the city council is considering a downzoning petition for this vicinity, and a demolition permit cannot be issued until this proceeding has been resolved and a building permit issued.

II. Description

The Ricker House was built in 1844. It is a double house with the flank of its gable roof facing the street. It has strongly characteristic Greek Revival detailing, with broad pilasters, pilaster capitals, and frieze boards supporting pedimented gable ends. The house has a portico of four Doric columns, the roof of which has been altered, sheltering floor-to-ceiling 6+9 windows.

The Ricker House is presently in poor condition, having been neglected for many years. In addition to general neglect, the house and yard is filled with debris and trash. An inspection of 109-113 River Street in the company of the Board of Survey in the spring of 1987 revealed that the house is structurally sound except for a later addition in the rear.

III. History

The Ricker House is located on the western edge of the Central Square neighborhood as it developed between the 1820s and the Civil War. The high ground in upper Cambridgeport - "the neck" in colonial times - was a relatively narrow peninsula extending at right angles to Massachusetts Avenue between Pleasant and Brookline Streets. Kinnaird Street marks the approximate western edge of this upland, which was surrounded by a broad belt of salt marsh and mud flats. As the "upper 'port" developed, Green and Franklin Streets filled with Federal period cottages between 1810 and 1830 and Auburn, William, Cottage, and Pleasant Streets with more substantial Greek Revival houses in the 1840s and 50s.

The development of this neighborhood was made possible by opening of the River Street Bridge in 1811 and the Western Avenue bridge in 1824. In 1833 Sarah Anne Dana, principal heir of the family that once owned most of Cambridgeport, subdivided the old Soden Farm near Pleasant and River Streets, but much of the land remained undeveloped for years.

The two Greek Revival houses at 103 and 109-113 River Street were built on the edge of this developing community in the mid 1840s. In January, 1844, Dana sold lot 14 of the Soden Farm subdivision to two housewrights, George and Jerediah Ricker. The Rickers subdivided the property and immediately built a double house. While Jerediah Ricker prospered at first, and was married in May, 1844, George appears to have been less successful and may never have lived there. In 1850 he sold his interest in the east side to his brother, and in 1860 put his remaining interest in trust before dying in 1863. Jerediah Ricker was declared an insolvent debtor in 1862, and the property was sold by the assignee. Both sides were sold frequently to absentee owners for the rest of the century.

IV. Significance

The Ricker House is significant individually as an example of the vernacular Greek Revival style. It is significant for the prominent place it occupies on River Street in Wilson Square, and also in the context of its neighborhood, portions of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

V. Relationship to Criteria for Landmark Designation

The purpose of landmark designation is stated in Section 1 of Ordinance 1002:

. . . to preserve, conserve, and protect the beauty and heritage of the City . . . and to improve the quality

of its environment through identification, conservation, and maintenance of . . . structures which constitute or reflect distinctive features of the architectural, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City; to resist and restrain environmental influences adverse to this purpose . . .

Section 4 states the criteria for landmark designation. It says that the Commission

. . . may recommend for designation as a landmark any . . . structure . . . either (a) importantly associated with one or more historic persons or events, or with the broad architectural, aesthetic, cultural, political, economic or social history of the City . . . or (b) historically or architecturally significant (in terms of period, style, method of construction, or association with a famous architect or builder) either by itself or in the context of a group of structures . . .

The Ricker House is not associated with historic persons or events, but it is significant in the architectural and social history of the City as an example of the vernacular Greek Revival Style in a neighborhood noted for the extent and variety of houses of this type.

In category (b), the Ricker House bears some significance as an example of the Greek Revival, one of Cambridge's most characteristic residential styles. More importantly, it is significant in the context of its immediate surroundings and in relation to other buildings of the period in the neighborhood. The prominence of the Ricker House on Wilson Square and the importance of the house in visually anchoring this location give it additional contextual significance.

VI. Recommendation

The Commission must consider two questions. First, the Ricker House has been determined to be significant and preferably preserved for the purposes of the demolition review ordinance. Is it significant enough to meet the criteria for landmark designation? Second, the public purpose to be served is to protect the beauty and heritage of the city and to improve the quality of its environment. In view of the development history and prospects of the neighborhood, will this be accomplished by designation?

Is the Ricker House Also Significant Under Ordinance 1002?

The criteria establishing significance under Ordinances 965 and 1002 are essentially the same. That is, the language of Section 2.2(c), paragraphs i and ii, of the demolition review ordinance tracks the language of Section 4, paragraphs (a) and (b), of the landmark designation ordinance. They

were adopted from the criteria for inclusion of properties in the National Register of Historic Places. The common usage was intentional as it affords a widely accepted criteria by which the significance of historic properties may be judged.

In both ordinances, the interpretation of the criteria is left to the judgment of the Historical Commission. In practice, judgment is founded in part on the effect of the Commission's actions. Under Ordinance 965, the severest burden on the property owner is a six month delay in demolition. Under Ordinance 1002, however, the Commission's recommendation for landmark designation may lead to permanent protection of the property - a significantly greater burden for the owner and greater responsibility for the Commission. Accordingly, successful candidates for landmark designation should meet a higher standard than for those for which demolition is to be delayed.

Finally, while the ordinances were designed to complement each other they were not meant to be equivalent in application. The demolition review ordinance provides the possibility of a six month delay during which alternatives to destruction may be sought. Landmark designation may be among the alternatives, but is not predetermined by the earlier finding of significance.

Would A Public Purpose be Served by Designation?

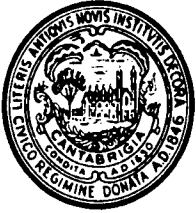
The consideration of public purpose requires that the Commission balance preservation versus demolition and new construction. Designation of the Ricker House would protect an individually significant house that is an important visual anchor on this important intersection, and would stabilize the traditional character of Wilson Square. Demolition would remove an important structure and allow the introduction of much higher densities than presently exist. Designation would not deny the owner the use of his property, but would allow new construction on the sites of 103 and 107 River Street and restoration of the Ricker House for residential purposes.

Staff Recommendation

The Ricker House was found to be significant and preferably preserved under Ordinance 965, and clearly can be admitted for consideration as a landmark under the criteria of Ordinance 1002. I recommend that the Commission recommend that the City Council designate it as a landmark, with the provision that the developer be permitted to rehabilitate it in conjunction with the proposed townhouse development.



109-113 River Street



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EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT
ROBERT W. HEALY
City Manager

RICHARD C. ROSSI
Deputy City Manager

August 14, 1987

To the Honorable, the City Council:

Enclosed please find copy of a communication from the Historical Commission relative to their recommendation that the George and Jerediah Ricker House, 113 River Street, be designated as a landmark under Ordinance 1002. Also enclosed is a copy of the proposed order.

Very truly yours,

Robert W. Healy
City Manager

RWH/mbf
Enc.

Agenda Item No. 1

*O. J. [unclear]
#16*

Re: recommendation of the Historical Commission that the George & Jerediah Ricker House located at 113 River Street be designated as a landmark under Ordinance 1002 & transmitting a proposed order pursuant to the recommendation of the Historical Commission.

In City Council,

September 14, 1987

C. Walsh

Charter Reg. Sec.