



Department of Planning and Development

Staff Report to the Historic Districts Commission

May 2, 2012

1855 & 1899 Washington Road – New House

REQUEST	Certificate of Appropriateness for construction of a new single-family house
APPLICANT	CP Ventures LP
FILE NO.	HDC # 12-005
PARCEL NO.	15-01-227-015 & 15-01-227-034 & 15-01-227-035
ZONING	RE – Residential Estate
HISTORIC DISTRICT	Winkler Mill Pond
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Request

This is a revised application for a new house. The initial proposal was denied by the Commission at the February 2012 meeting. Differences between the revised application and the plan that was denied include:

- Moving the house towards the pond and down the pond-facing slope, lowering the finished floor elevation.
- Lowering the roofline of the house by two feet
- Alternate building materials intended to be consistent with the District
- Reducing the size of the driveways
- Eliminating the pool, cabana and pond-facing terrace
- Significant landscape changes, including the elimination of the tall walls and rock outcroppings which have been replaced by more subtle grading to extend the natural contours of the site

The subject site is located on the west side of Washington Road near the north end of the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District, on the east bank of Winkler Mill Pond. The owner has combined three parcels that are presently vacant. The HDC approved demolition of a non-contributing house at 1899 Washington in 2005. The house at 1855 was demolished by a previous owner in 2005, the demolition permit was issued without HDC review or approval. The 2002 survey sheet for 1855 lists the house as being constructed in 1945 with more information needed to determine if the property was contributing.

This portion of the district contains mostly non-contributing properties except for directly across the Winkler Mill pond. The applicant is proposing to construct a broad 2-story manor style house with a total area of 11,385 square feet with an attached 2,900 square foot garage (the combined first floor footprint of the house and garage is 10,781 square feet). The proposed house is located near the center of the site on the pond-facing (west) side of the ridge that bisects on the property.

Two existing gravel driveways are incorporated into the plan, one leading to a paved motor court in front of the house and one to access a paved motor court that provides access to the lower garages in the rear. The entrance to the house and front motor court are proposed below the crest of the ridge running through the property and will not be visible from the street. About half of the existing trees on the site will remain and nearly two hundred very large new native-species trees will be planted as screening. The rolling terrain of the site will remain intact.

Historical Information

The subject property is located in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District. The 2002 *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey* describes the district as generally surrounding Winkler Mill Pond from the north edge of the Stoney Creek Historic District along both Winkler Mill Road and Washington Road. The district is almost wholly residential in character, with houses dating from the 1830s to the 1990s. A few of the houses retain agricultural outbuildings. The foundation of Winkler Mill is visible and two of the mill dams are functioning. The district has sloping terrain and is heavily treed.

The district was developed around the Winkler Mill (a gristmill that burned in 1985) and a wool carding mill owned by Levi Cole who also owned the majority of the property in the nineteenth century. In the 1920s the first suburban and summer homes appeared in the area. Most of the residential development around the mill pond took place after World War II, particularly beginning in the 1970s. The district is comprised of 32 parcels that collectively contain sixteen contributing resources and forty-three non-contributing resources, with two resources that require more research to determine their status. Some of the most significant properties in the district include the Greek Revival Levi Cole house; the house at 1740 Washington Road; the Colonial Revival Von Isser House built c. 1918; the mill house on Winkler Mill Road; the mill dams and the mill pond.

As previously noted, the 2002 survey identified the house that previously existed at 1899 as non-contributing and the house at 1855 as needing more information to determine whether it contributed to the district. Both houses were demolished in the mid 2000's.

Review Considerations

The proposed house has an irregular footprint and spans across the most of the width of the property, from the edge of fifteen foot setback on the north to within sixty feet of the south property line. A gravel driveway on the north edge of the property runs from the street to a paved motor court in front of the house to access the upper garage. A stone retaining wall is proposed in front of the motor and service courts that will be hidden from the street by the existing hill on the property. An existing gravel driveway located along the

south edge of the property will provide access to a paved motor court and four-car lower garage at the rear of the house.

The existing property contains 151 trees, of which the applicant proposes to retain 73 and to remove 78 non-native or damaged trees. The applicant is also proposing to plant 189 new native species trees that include white pine, Douglas fir, dogwoods and American beech. The new trees will be added at the front and side property lines to provide screening of the house from the street and neighboring houses. It is notable that the applicant is proposing to plant 25' tall pine trees, which will provide immediate screening impact. The lawn areas will be no-mow meadow lawn species instead of a typical grass lawn. An apple orchard is proposed for the southwest corner of the property and two rain filtration perk gardens are proposed, one in front of the house and one near the pond.

The front elevation of the house features a complex roof line with gables, eyebrow dormers and round towers with conical roofs. The central entrance projects forward from the house and is marked by a gable front with heavy timber trim and a two-story (nineteen foot tall) window. A porch with a curved roof supported by stone piers projects from the entrance. The front doors are French doors with sidelights. The attached four car garage in the south half of the house has a gable roof with heavy timber trim and two shed roof dormers. The roof overhangs a section of the garage, creating recessed garage doors. Copper shed roof "vent" dormers are proposed for the roof on the north half of the house.

The rear of the house is proposed to have a walk-out basement. A multi-sided screened in porch above a terrace projects from the rear and has a conical roof. Two stone chimneys rise from the center of the house. Two porches with railings are located on the rear elevation.

The proposed house has a larger footprint than any other contributing or non-contributing property in the district. The footprint sizes of contributing properties in the district range from about 1,200 to 3,200 square feet. The size of non-contributing properties footprints range from about 1,000 to 8,560 square feet. The proposed house has a footprint of 10,781 square feet, but is also located on one of the larger parcels along Washington Road.

By situating the house further down the pond-facing slope and reducing the roof height, retaining mature and native trees, planting additional native trees as screening, planting a meadow lawn, and using the existing gravel driveways, the impact of the large size of the house is mitigated. The proposed plan retains the historic rolling terrain of the district and the important landscape features. This placement of the house and installation of the screening will allow the historic houses to remain the prominent features in the district.

The applicant has indicated that the following materials will be used for the project:

1. Both driveways will be gravel until they are near the house where the motor courts will be paved.
2. A stone retaining wall is proposed in front of the house along the motor court. The wall will not be visible behind the existing hill on the property. A second stone retaining wall is proposed for the south side of the house. The stone of both retaining walls will match the stone used on the house.
3. The walls of the house are proposed to be "Astoria Blend" natural stone which according to the applicant is native Michigan stone, with wood timber elements, cedar siding and cedar trim. The windows will be bronze aluminum-clad Marvin wood windows. Porches with railings and a screened in porch will be located at the rear.
4. The house will have a natural cedar shake roof with decorative copper finials, a copper chimney cap, and copper dormers.

Summary

1. The property is in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District. It is currently vacant and previously had two houses on the lots. The property backs on to the east side of the mill pond and fronts on Washington Road. The highpoint of the land is about halfway between the road and the pond.
2. The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a two- to three-story single family house with a total footprint of 10,781 square feet (including the garage). The house is proposed in a manor style with stone walls, heavy timber trim, and a cedar shake roof with decorative copper dormers and finials. The house will be placed on the back slope of the high point on the property meaning that the house will not be highly visible from the street.
3. The landscape design proposes to retain 73 mature and native trees on the site and to plant 189 new native trees for screening and an apple orchard. Two stone retaining walls are proposed that will match the walls of the house. Two gravel drives along the north and south property lines will lead to the house. Paved motor courts will be located in front of the upper and lower garage doors. The lawn areas are proposed to be no-mow meadow grass.
4. The proposed house and landscaping appear to be compatible with the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District. Although the house is larger other buildings in the district, the way it is placed on the site and the proposed landscape screening will allow it to blend in the district. The rolling terrain and mature trees will be preserved and the additional landscape features are compatible with the historic characteristics of the district.
5. The applicant has submitted the proposed plans to the City's Building Department for a formal review, conditioned on the decisions made by the Historic Districts Commission. Any work performed in connection with this project will be required to meet all zoning and building codes, rules and regulations.

Potential Motions

(Subject to adjustment based on Commission discussion)

MOTION, in the matter of File No. HDC 12-005, that the Historic Districts Commission **APPROVES/DENIES** the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for the construction of a new house at 1855 and 1899 Washington Road in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District, Parcel Identification Numbers 15-01-227-015 & 15-01-227-034 & 15-01-227-035, with the following Findings and Conditions:

Findings:

- 1) The proposed house is in the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District and **is/is not** compatible in massing, size, scale and materials with the district;
- 2) The proposed landscape alterations including retention of existing trees, planting of new trees and an apple orchard, the gravel driveways and stone retaining walls **are/are not** compatible with the rolling terrain of the district;
- 3) The proposed house construction **is/is not** in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines, in particular standard numbers 9 and 10 as follows:
 9. *New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be*

compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.

10. *New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in a such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.*