

To: Mark Tisdell, Council - President
Council Members
City of Rochester Hills

From: Kevin Baird (Owner)
Sandeep and Swapna Chada (Prospective buyers)

Subject: Request to remove 820 E. Auburn from the Historic District potential list

Date: December 8, 2015

We respectfully request that you remove 820 E. Auburn Road (the “Referenced Property”) from the City's historic potential list (the “Potentials List”). We recently learned from Mr. Ed Anzek, Planning and Development Department, that the Referenced Property is on the Potentials List. Per our conversations with Mr. Anzek, it is our current understanding that the City Council, when presented with such a request, has two options: remove the parcel from the list for historic consideration; or request the Historic District Study Committee to initiate a thorough evaluation.

The Referenced Property is not part of a non-contiguous Historic District (“non-contiguous” was first used for a single parcel of land containing historic resources). When the Historic Districts Ordinance was enacted in 1978, provisions were included to establish a Potentials List for future consideration. At the time of adoption, there were about 30 non-contiguous historic properties. In 1992 the city commenced with the establishment of the Potentials List with about 50 additional sites, which eventually expanded to 70 parcels in 1997.

In March, 2002, the City contracted the services of an expert on historic preservation to revisit all the sites deemed historic, including those on the Potentials List. Her recommendation was to de-list 3 sites declared historic and the Potentials List was reduced to 17 sites with 8, including the Referenced Property, marked as "requiring more information".

However, in this case, we respectfully disagree that this structure offers any salvageable historical or architectural significance. Based on a professional inspection conducted on December 8, 2015 by Mr. Chung, a licensed inspector the original structure was a center entrance colonial of approximately 1,200 S.F. Over the years, the home has undergone major alterations including at least two significant additions off the rear of the home; removal of the original exterior wood siding, now replaced with aluminum siding; and addition of a detached two car garage with aluminum siding (circa 1990).

The recent inspection disclosed major structural defects, including, but not limited to, the following: main support beam no longer structurally sound; heavy northern lean on load bearing wall with portions removed/damaged is structurally unsound; numerous floor joists are compromised and bridging is missing/damaged; evidence of water infiltration with heavy mold growth throughout; heavy sag in floors and ceilings due to instability of the structure; posts do not have appropriate footings and sit on Earth floor or broken cement; and stairs no longer structurally sound. More seriously, the structure may pose significant health risks from “peeling paint observed throughout house that require immediate attention due to lead risks to health” and possible “asbestos tiles.”

Furthermore, the inspection revealed that all major electrical, plumbing and heating/cooling systems are in a state of neglect and utter disrepair: cast iron waste stacks are in poor condition from corrosion; portions of piping are missing from theft and other portions are damaged from frozen temperatures and neglect; and plumbing systems require complete removal and replacement.

Full inspection report attached.

We have, over the past 9 months, diligently worked with the relevant departments to propose and develop The Goddard School, a nationally-recognized pre-school for children ranging from six weeks to six years of age. The Goddard School was established over 25 years ago and has grown to more than 400 Schools in 35 states. The school is recognized for using the most current and academically endorsed methods, accredited by AdvancED Corporation, to ensure that high standards specific to early learning, development and care are met.

The proposed school will be a two-story brick building with a capacity to care for and educate 140 students. The building will be approximately 11,000 S.F. with about 23 employees. The preschool will feature state-of-the-art facilities, including a library/technology room, indoor gym and approximately 8,000 S.F. of protected outdoor play space. We plan to offer immersive experiences in foreign languages, including Spanish and Mandarin Chinese, to prepare young students for a more globalized world. To insure that children develop pride in their roots, we will train our teachers to incorporate the rich history of Rochester Hills and Michigan into their daily lessons. Our goal is to encourage children to develop at their own pace in a nurturing environment, lovingly guided by highly skilled, professional teachers.

There is a compelling need for these services. Based on our outreach into the community, there are over 3,500 children under the age of 5 within an approximately 2.6 mile radius of the Referenced Property. We have talked to residents who live in the Country Club Village Subdivision surrounding the Referenced Property and there is strong support for the proposed school. Anecdotally, one resident commented that the proposed school would not only provide more options for schooling and caring for children, but would likely increase their property values.

Again, we respectfully ask that you remove the Referenced Property from the Potentials List. The structure is unsafe and unsound. The costs to bring this structure back into use as a home or other uses is prohibitive, and would offer little if any historical or architectural value. A prolonged study now would not only cause significant losses in investments but would make the project entirely untenable.

We fully recognize and support the value of preserving a community's cultural resources. To this end, we look forward to working with the Council and the various departments to explore constructive ways to instill the pride and the splendid history of Rochester Hills into our future preschool.