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DRAFT

MEMORANDUM

TO: Ed Anzek, Director, Planning and Economic Development, City of Rochester Hills

FR: Kristine M. Kidorf, Consultant

RE: 820 E. Auburn Road

Per your request I joined city staff on a January 5, 2016 site visit at 820 E. Auburn Road at the request of the owner and in preparation for the January 11 City Council meeting.

The two-story house and one-story garage sit on a parcel of just under one acre at the southeast corner of East Auburn and Bendelow Roads. The property is flat with numerous mature trees and shrubbery surrounding the house. A notable cluster of large mature oak trees is located on the east side of the house. The Greek Revival style side gable house is five bays wide and is clad in aluminum siding and trim. The center entrance door has sidelights, and the windows are the original six-over-six wood double-hung windows with wavy glass panes. A one-and-a-half story ell extends to the rear of the house and there is a one-story addition in the corner. A one-story enclosed porch extends from the rear wall and wraps around to the side. The interior of the house has a central hall and stair with one room on either side. The rear ell contains three rooms on the first floor, and two rooms on the second floor. There is a rear stair from the second floor to the kitchen. The wood trim and plaster in the three front rooms of the first floor and all four second floor rooms are styles prevalent in the 1800s. The front west room has the most decorative trim which is Greek Revival in style around the windows and doors. The front section of the house is on a stone foundation with a cobblestone veneer. The first rear addition is on a round stone foundation. The rear of the house is over a crawl space and there is a small section of poured concrete foundation. The porch has a newer stone foundation. The original wood siding and trim is visible in the southeast corner of the house within the enclosed porch area. There was no obvious evidence that the house was moved to this location and physical evidence that I observed pointed to the house being constructed in the 1800s with the exception of the bathroom and rear porch.

The house was likely built sometime after 1847 when Lewis Tibbals acquired the property. According to *Portrait and Biographical Album of Oakland County, Michigan* published in 1891, Lewis and Betsey Tibbals came to Avon Township from Monroe County, New York about 1826. The farm was named "Oak Grove... because of the giants of the forest that stand near the house." Although the front two-story section of the house was built first, probably about 1848, the rear one-and-a-half story addition was constructed soon after, probably within the first ten years of the Tibbals family owning the property to accommodate at least some of their eight children. Although there seems to be multiple deed transfers in the family, Lewis Tibbals deeded the property to his son Truman S. Tibbals and his wife Rosira, a former area schoolteacher, in 1868. In 1892 Truman's sister Berthania Elderkin deeded additional land to him.

Truman Tibbals sold the property in 1899 to Julius and Bertha Siess of Detroit. Julius was a Russian immigrant who was a dairy farmer in Detroit in the 1880s and 90s. Although Julius died in 1907 the Siess's owned the property until 1919 when it was sold to the Michelson Land Company who platted the entire area into the Brooklands Subdivision. The subdivision was vacated and replatted in 1920. In 1940 the Avon Township Supervisors replatted lots 53 and 54 of the subdivision which included the property at 820 East Auburn.

Despite the strong physical evidence that the house was constructed in the late 1840s and 1850s there are some inconsistencies in the historical records. There is no representation of the house in the 1925 Oakland County Atlas. Additionally, the 1938 Rural Property Inventory Card lists the house, garage (1923) and a hen house as being owned Harry and Gladys Rapson. However, the house footprint does not show the rear additions in the correct manner and says there is no basement and a concrete block foundation. It does list the house as a homesite and not a farm which is consistent with the subdivision platting in effect at the time.

The *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey* prepared in 2002 by Jane C. Busch and Hamilton Anderson Associates is used to evaluate the possible historic significance of the house. Although the property originally was a farmstead no agricultural buildings remain and so the property does not retain enough historic and architectural integrity to be significant for its association with the agricultural history of Avon Township and Rochester Hills. Preliminary research did not find any indication that the early or subsequent owners were notable in Avon Township or Michigan history. Therefore, the house does not appear to meet national register criteria A or B, association with the history of Avon Township or significant persons.

The only other context available to evaluate the property is Architecture, criteria C of the National Register of Historic Places. Most of the Greek Revival style houses extant in Rochester Hills are located in the Stoney Creek Village and Winkler Mill Pond Historic Districts. The house at 820 East Auburn Road was likely constructed about the same time. According to the survey report “Buildings that are significant for their architecture must possess a high level of integrity of design. However, requirements for integrity must also consider whether that type, form, or style is rare or common.” Despite the exterior aluminum siding and trim the house is a good example of the Greek Revival style of architecture. It retains its original windows and front door with sidelights. The Greek Revival form is evident and the stone foundation is intact. Because Greek Revival style houses are somewhat rare in the city, that may compensate for the slightly lower level of integrity of design due to the aluminum siding and trim. Therefore, there is a high likelihood that the house meets national register criteria C as a good example of a Greek Revival style house in Rochester Hills.

If you have any questions or require additional information, please contact me at 313-300-9376 or at kristine@kidorfpreservationconsulting.com.



Looking southwest at 820 E. Auburn Road, January 2016



Detail of front door and windows, January 2016



West and south elevations, January 2016



West room, first floor with Greek Revival trim, January 2015



Central hall and stair, January 2015



West room second floor, January 2015