



Department of Planning and Development
 Staff Report to the Historic Districts Commission

May 4, 2021

| Road improvements - Avon Road between Dequindre & 23 Mile Road | |
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| REQUEST | Certificate of Appropriateness for road improvements |
| APPLICANT | Stephen Roberts, Jacobs on behalf of GLWA and RCOC |
| FILE NO. | HDC # 20-039 |
| PARCEL NO. | 15-13-427-002 |
| ZONING | N/A |
| HISTORIC DISTRICT | Yates Cider Mill |
| STAFF | Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting |

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Request

This is a follow-up request for a certificate of appropriateness for a small modification to the water main project the Commission approved in January 2021, and approval the roadway design, preliminarily reviewed in August 2020, of Avon Road between Dequindre Road and 23 Mile Road, through the Yates Cider Mill Historic District, a single resource district.

Previously approved GLWA project:

- Installation of a 96” diameter water transmission line including replacement of a portion of the mill race culvert to match the existing.

Requested modification to GLWA project:

- Replacement of the entire mill race culvert with a matching culvert.
- Replacement of the concrete headwall at the pond side of the mill race culvert.

Road Commission Avon Road Project:

Once the water main is replaced it is proposed to widen Avon road to three lanes, install pedestrian pathways on both sides, install a pedestrian crossing signal, new fencing, retaining walls, and create traffic circles at the intersection with Dequindre Road and 23 Mile Road. Only the north part of the project is within the historic district.

When the Commission reviewed the preliminary road project in August 2020, they raised several concerns:

- The height, materials, and locations of the retaining walls
- Interest in seeing the retaining walls be stepped instead of monolithic
- Providing a cross section of the roadway at the Yates Cider Mill
- Water run-off

Historical Information

The project runs through the single resource Yates Cider Mill Historic District at 1950 East Avon Road. The 2002 *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey* describes the district as containing the only mill building surviving in Rochester Hills. The first mill was built on the site in 1863, and the existing mill building was constructed in 1894 and was powered by a water turbine. “The three-story gambrel roof building has a brick lower level and frame upper levels. The mill race and dam survive also, in association with the Clinton-Kalamazoo Canal, part of which used to power the mill. The undershot water wheel on the exterior of the mill was built in 1961.”

The district has two parts – on the south side of Avon Road is the mill building and part of the race. On the north side is the dam and mill pond, the mill race runs under Avon Road to reach the mill building. The mill building, mill race, mill pond and dam are all considered contributing resources to the district.

Review Considerations

GLWA – modifications to previously approved projects:

- Replace an additional 65 feet of culvert with matching metal culvert lining in the same size and location as the existing culvert
- Replace concrete headwall and custom grate on pond side of mill race culvert with matching concrete headwall and custom grate in same size and location. The headwall does not appear to be original. The older concrete that appears to be part of the canal located to the right of the headwall will be protected and not altered.

RCOC – Avon Road Improvements

The proposed road improvements will create a three-lane roadway (two directions plus center turn lane, 35' wide total), 8' and 10' paved pathways on the sides, and traffic circles at the intersection of 23 Mile Road. All existing curb cuts will be maintained and repaved. Decorative concrete pavement is proposed in the traffic circle medians, some driveway medians, and along the south side walkway next to the mill. A pedestrian crosswalk with signals activated on demand will cross Avon Road at the mill location. The new roadway will not come any closer to the mill building than it does presently. Sensors will be installed around the mill building to monitor for excessive vibrations during construction.

A new retaining wall along the pond embankment within the district will be a maximum of 7' tall but will vary in height along the slope. The materials of the wall are tentatively proposed to be a rock faced light brown concrete, but the applicant is open to whatever the Commission prefers. The retaining walls will be sloped or stepped back, not straight up and down. Outside of the district to the east a matching retaining wall will be a maximum of 8'8" tall. New wood split rail fencing is proposed on the outside of the pathways as required by code. Tree trimming around the pond will be required to relocate the overhead utilities in the project area.

As noted in the preliminary review the biggest changes to the Yates Cider Mill Historic District will be on the north side of the road near the mill pond and race, not on the mill building side. In this area near the mill race the outside edge of the new pathway will be about 14' beyond the existing pavement edge. Further east above the pond, the road/traffic circle and pathway will extend into an area that is currently used for overflow parking for the mill, it has a grassy/gravel surface.

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

1. Corrugated metal pipe matching the existing pipe lining the mill race.
2. Concrete to match the existing headwall with a custom trash gate in front of culvert opening.
3. Asphalt paved road and pathways with decorative concrete (pewter color theme) in crosswalks and other locations.
4. Pedestrian crossing signal and arm.
5. Split rail wood fencing similar to existing fencing at cider mill and in park.
6. Textured colored concrete blocks resembling stone for retaining walls.

Summary

1. The project bisects the Yates Cider Mill Historic District, a single property district at 1950 E. Avon Road. The millrace is a contributing element to the district.
2. The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness to replace a larger portion of the corrugated metal pipe lining the millrace with matching corrugated metal pipe and the existing concrete headwall with custom grate on the pond side of the mill race culvert.
3. Staff offers the following comments on the proposed water main modification request. The existing corrugated metal pipe is likely not the original lining of the mill race which has concrete walls at both ends. There is previous ground disturbance above and below the mill race for the city water main installed in 1997 and the city sewer line installed in 2002. The existing headwall and grate likely date from the same time as the non-original culvert pipe lining. The new headwall will not disturb the older concrete canal walls and will match the existing headwall. The request to replace the additional length of culvert and headwall as proposed meets The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as the replacement of the pipe lining the mill race will not destroy historic materials, will match the existing, and will not alter the location or course of the mill race which contributes to the character of the historic district.
4. The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness for the roadway improvement project consisting of a 3-lane roadway that will be 35' wide, a new traffic circle, 8' and 10' wide pathways on the sides of the roadway, new guardrails, crosswalk, pedestrian signals, fencing, and retaining walls.
5. Staff offers the following comments on the proposed roadway improvement project. The request to install the new wider roadway, traffic circle, paths, pedestrian crossing and signals, fencing, and retaining walls as proposed meets The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as the

roadway will not come any closer to the cider mill building, will not destroy historic materials, and the new pathways, fencing, and retaining walls as proposed are compatible with the historic district.

Potential Motions

(Subject to adjustment based on Commission discussion)

MOTION, in the matter of File No. HDC 20-039, that the Historic Districts Commission **APPROVES/DENIES/POSTPONES** the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for modification of the previous approval to replace additional length of the millrace and replace the concrete headwall and grate; and the new roadway, traffic circle, paths, retaining walls, fencing, and pedestrian crossing and signals as proposed at 1950 Avon Road in the Yates Cider Mill Historic District, Parcel Identification Number 70-15-13-427-002, with the following Findings and Conditions:

- 1) The mill building, mill race and headwall **do/do not** contribute to the historic character of the district;
- 2) The proposed removal of the additional length of corrugated metal pipe lining the mill race and replacement with matching corrugated metal pipe; replacement of the concrete headwall with a matching headwall and custom grate; construction of the new 3-lane roadway with paths, traffic circle, retaining walls, fencing, and pedestrian crossing and signals as proposed **is/is not** in keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines, where it is recommended to repair deteriorated historic features and have compatible new construction that does not destroy historic materials, in particular standard numbers 6 and 9 as follows:

6. *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.*

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.*