

**City of Rochester Hills  
Department of Planning**

**STAFF REPORT TO THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS COMMISSION**

June 1, 2011

<b>Certificate of Appropriateness</b> Removal of chimney, hot tub, and fencing	
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Robert C. Bruhn
<b>LOCATION</b>	1081 W. Auburn Road (SW corner Livernois)
<b>SIDWELL</b>	70-15-33-200-013
<b>FILE NO.</b>	HDC04-004
<b>ZONING</b>	R-4 (single family), FB-1(flexible business overlay)
<b>STAFF</b>	Kristine Kidorf, Consultant
<b>REQUEST</b>	<b>Certificate of Appropriateness</b> Removal of chimney, hot tub and fencing
<b>HISTORIC DISTRICT</b>	Terry House (non-contiguous resource)



Looking southeast at 1081 W. Auburn, May 2011

**SUMMARY**

The subject property is an individual parcel historic district and is located on the south side of Auburn Road just west of Livornois. The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness to remove a non-original chimney, removal of an outdoor hot tub and repairing the deck, and removal of some fencing in the rear yard. The applicant appeared in front of the HDC at the March 2011 meeting, please see the minutes. At that time he was trying to purchase the property through auction for the purposes of using the house and yard as a tea room. Mr. Bruhn was the successful bidder and is taking steps to repair the house. He is meeting with the city's planning consultant to discuss the zoning, site plan, parking and driveway requirements for the proposed tea room. The proposed site plan changes will come before the HDC at a later time.

The applicant proposes to remove a massive, non-original chimney near the east end of the house. The brick chimney was added at some point in the past and was constructed in the attic without structural support. As a result the roof is bowing, and causing structural damage to the walls. Once the chimney is removed the roof will be patched to match the existing asphalt shingles. Although not part of this application at a future date the owner would like to recreate the small chimney that shows in historic photos and renderings of the house.



**Detail of chimney proposed for removal, looking south, May 2011**

At the rear of the house there is a deck area with a stone foundation extending from the back porch with a hot tub sitting on it. The applicant proposes to remove the hot tub and repair the deck floor with new boards that closely resemble the existing floor boards.



Looking west at rear of house, arrow indicates existing hot tub, May 2011

There are two fence-lines in the rear yard. Both fences are comprised of wire fencing and wood posts. The northern fence-line supports grape vines and no work is proposed. The south fence-line runs from the stone pump house to the east edge of the property. The owner proposes to remove this fencing as it is deteriorated.



Looking south at south fence-line proposed for removal, May 2011

The packet contains the application, survey sheets, photos and history information from the museum, and the March 2011 HDC meeting minutes.

### **HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

From the Intensive Level Survey Sheet, “Albert Terry came to Michigan in April 1839 purchased the northeast quarter of section 33. He added 132 acres to his first purchase and in 1877 and had a 192 acre farm that Durant described as one of the best in the township. Terry was township supervisor from 1862 to 1876. The front of the house looks as it did in Durant’s history. It is an excellent example of a brick variation of the Greek Revival style.”

In 1927 the house was purchased by Ferdinand Carl and Georgianna Kersting. They purchased the adjacent 120 acres of farmland in the early 1930s and leased it for farming until 1955 when they sold it. The Kerstings added the large windows on the southeast corner of the house and planted the rare trees on the property. Mrs. Kersting was a science teacher in Detroit and brought her students to study the trees. Mrs. Kersting lived in the house until 1987.

### **ANALYSIS:**

1. The applicant is requesting a certificate of appropriateness to remove a non-original chimney and repair the roof to match the existing; remove a non-original hot tub and repair the floor to match the existing; and remove a rear yard fence.
2. The chimney and hot tub proposed for removal are not original and are not character defining features. The fence proposed for removal is in the style of historic farm fencing but does not appear to be original to the property. Museum photos show a newly replaced northern fence and the southern fence appears to be about the same vintage.
3. Staff Recommendation/Draft Motion: I recommend that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for Application HDC04-004 at 1081 W. Auburn Road for the removal of the non-original chimney and repair of the roof; removal of the hot tub and repair of the deck; and the removal of the southern yard fence as proposed. The work meets The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, in particular standard number 2, “The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.” Neither the chimney, hot tub nor fencing are distinctive materials or character defining features of the property.

Attachments: Application  
Location map  
Survey Sheets  
Historic Information  
Photos from museum file, unknown date