



Department of Planning and Development

Staff Report to the Historic Districts Commission

July 30, 2020

Avon Road between Dequindre & 23 Mile Road	
REQUEST	Preliminary review of road widening and traffic circles
APPLICANT	Road Commission for Oakland County
FILE NO.	HDC # 20-020
PARCEL NO.	N/A
ZONING	N/A
HISTORIC DISTRICT	Yates Cider Mill
STAFF	Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting

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Request

This is a preliminary review request on the proposal to widen Avon Road between Dequindre Road and 23 Mile Road which runs through the Yates Cider Mill Historic District, a single resource district. The Road Commission for Oakland County (“RCOC”) would like the Commission’s input on a plan to widen the road, install sidewalks, and create traffic circles at Dequindre Road and 23 Mile Road. Only the north part of the project is within the historic district. Final engineering drawings have not been completed, the RCOC will return for final approval once the plans are finalized.

The subject property is the stretch of Avon Road between Dequindre Road and 23 Mile Road that goes past Yates Park and Yates Cider Mill. The project proposes to create a three-lane roadway with paved pathways on both sides, and traffic circles at the Dequindre and 23 Mile Road intersections. The RCOC proposes to do the widening on the north (park) side of Avon Road so that no pavement comes any closer to the mill building than the current road. The south edge of the new pathway will be in about the same location as the existing southern road edge. New paved aprons into the Yates Cider Mill parking lots will be in the same locations as the existing pavement.

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

The proposed project is to widen the stretch of East Avon Road between Dequindre and 23 Mile Road, a portion of which runs through the Yates Mill Historic District. The existing road is a two-lane road with deteriorated paved shoulders and a metal guardrail. There are no sidewalks/pathways on the sides of the road. There are traffic lights at both intersections. The reconstruction of the road is part of a planned water main replacement that exists under the roadway.

The proposed widening will create a three-lane roadway (two directions plus center turn lane), paved pathways on both sides, and traffic circles at the two intersections. 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. Two new retaining walls between 4’ and 6’ tall will be needed on the north and south sides of the road to the east of the mill. The materials of the wall are unknown.

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. 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. Asphalt paving, decorative concrete, retaining wall materials unknown.

Summary

1. The project bisects the Yates Cider Mill Historic District, a single property district at 1950 E. Avon Road.
2. The applicant is requesting an informal review of a proposed road widening that includes new pathways and traffic circles to take place as part of a water main replacement project.
3. Staff offers the following comments on the proposed road reconstruction project. As preliminarily designed the project appears to meet The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. Once project designs are completed and exact dimensions and materials are known this will need to return to the Commission for formal review and approval.

Potential Motions

(Subject to adjustment based on Commission discussion)

As this project is preliminary review without a formal application no motion is needed.