



Department of Planning and Development

Staff Report to the Historic Districts Study Committee

December 5, 2023

Winkler Mill Pond HD – Boundary Change

REQUEST	Review draft Final Study Committee Report and adopt if acceptable
STAFF	Kristine Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting

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Progress to date

On April 17, 2023, the Rochester Hills City Council directed the Historic Districts Study Committee to study the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District to determine if the boundaries of the district should be reduced as recommended in the 2002 and 2022 surveys of the district.

On August 10, 2023, the HDSC adopted the draft Preliminary Historic District Study Committee Report. It was transmitted by staff to the State Historic Preservation Office and the Rochester Hills Planning Commission for review and comment.

The city notified all property owners within the existing district of the educational session and then again prior to the public hearing.

An educational open house was held on September 14, 2023, at the city offices from 5:30 to 6:30. Two property owners attended. One non-contributing property owner was in support of the smaller district. The property owner at 1921 Washington was concerned about being eliminated from the district as she has a historic house. She has since provided staff with historic photographs and information on her property.

On September 19, 2023, the Rochester Hills City Planning Commission accepted the report as written with no comments.

On September 29, 2023, staff received the comments on the report from the State Historic Preservation Office which recommended changes to the district boundaries and to the report.

On October 12, 2023, the HDSC held the required public hearing on the proposed boundary revision. At least three residents were opposed to the district being revised and raised concerns as to why the changes were being proposed to the District along with how the proposed changes could affect the review authority of the Historic Districts Commission on Washington Road. They were concerned that the changes could potentially allow for future improvements or paving of the roadway, thereby changing the rural setting that presently exists and which has been maintained as many of the newer homes are set back from the road.

With only four members in attendance, the HDSC opted to postpone consideration of the final decision and report until the November meeting when more members may be in attendance, and the public comments received could be further discussed.

The HDSC asked that another, more “personal” letter be sent for the next meeting to the property owners within the district explaining the process which has been completed by city staff and seeking additional public input. Staff also sent an email to a member of the Winkler Mill Pond Homeowners association to answer various questions about the project.

A draft Final Historic District Study Committee Report that incorporates the comments from the State Historic Preservation Office was prepared for consideration by the HDSC.

Concerns raised at educational session and re-iterated at the public hearing, and again at the November 9, 2023 meeting:

Washington Road – currently much of Washington Road is within the existing historic district. This has required that the Road Commission for Oakland County come before the HDC for any changes to the roadway. The proposed boundary change would eliminate all but a small section of Washington Road from the district. Any portions of the road removed from the district would not be subject to review by the Historic District Commission should any changes be proposed to the road (or within the road right of way) in the future. Staff notes that there are not currently any plans, by the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC) or the City, to modify Washington Road. Additionally, both organizations have long term plans that identify possible road improvements, and Washington Road is not listed with specific improvements in any plan. If changes to the road are ever proposed in the future, they would be reviewed by the RCOC, City Council, and for those areas within the Historic District, the Historic Districts Commission as appropriate.

1921 Washington Road – The owner of this property questioned why they were being removed from the district when they have documentation that the house is historic. In the 2002 survey it was noted that the house “retains little, if any, of its appearance prior to World War II.” The original historic survey from when the district was designated notes that a one-story addition was added in 1948. Since 1956 “various interior remodeling projects and installation of some new window sash was accomplished.” Since 1964 “extensive interior remodeling, new roofing and siding, new doors and sash, and a new deck and screened porch were accomplished” by the owners at that time. In comparing the 1970s designation photo to what can be seen of the house today, it appears that the windows were replaced with vinyl or aluminum windows with a similar muntin pattern. Additionally, the 2002 survey notes that a three-car garage was added in 1987. It is presumed this addition was approved by the HDC. With regard to historical documentation provided by the homeowner regarding this property, there does appear to be significant information to suggest that while the house may not be technically significant to the timeframe of the District, there is overall historical significance to this property and thereby to the City that would provide justification if the board so chooses to allow it to remain in the district.

State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) comments:

That the resource counts be clarified in both the existing and revised district.

Consider removing 1725 Washington Road from the revised district as it isn’t really needed to include 1740 Washington Road.

That the report focus more on what is being eliminated from the district rather than what is being retained.

At the November 9, 2023 HDSC meeting, public comments generally supported keeping the district boundaries as originally designated in 1978. The primary concern raised by the public was the desire to keep Washington Road in the district to ensure Historic District Commission review of any changes to Washington Road.

The HDSC discussed the public comments regarding the district boundaries, additional information received, and the recommendation back to City Council. The HDSC passed a motion to recommend that the district boundaries remain unchanged, and that staff revise the draft final study committee report to reflect the unchanged boundary and that Washington Road and the residence at 1921 Washington Road be depicted as contributing elements to the overall district.

Since the last meeting, staff has prepared a revised final study committee report reflecting the HDSC's recommendation to retain the district boundaries and have Washington Road and the residence at 1921 Washington identified as contributing to the district. Staff also added Winkler Mill Road as a contributing feature to the district.

Next Steps

1. At the December meeting, the HDSC can review the draft final report and either: 1) adopt the draft report as the final study committee report and forward their findings back to City Council; OR 2) request minor modifications to the draft final report and adopt as revised and forward their finds back to City Council; OR 3) request major modifications to the draft final report and postpone adoption to the January meeting to review the revised report.