

Ferry-Wayside Court/City Council address:

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Mayor Barnett, President, Rosen, Council members:

One of the unfortunate popular rumors about historic preservation is that it is simply a matter of personal opinion and private taste. It is for that reason we have separate commissions and committees, made up of experts as advisories, to help you council members make qualified decisions. Historic preservation is done as a scientific process with its own rules and regulations -- which HDC & the Historic Study Committee follow, as set down, not just by the state's historic offices -- but also the federal government.

Those of us who serve on commissions in Rochester Hills, tread very carefully between the pitfalls of individual property owners, who don't want interference from any ordinances, and the recommendations that take into consideration the overall benefit to the community for the future.

It can't be emphasized often enough that historic recommendations do not insist owners of historic properties live like "museum curators". Each historic property is judged by its unique, individual characteristics. Our Planning Dept. does everything possible to explain and help property owners with this.

Ten years ago, through Preservation Wayne, I conducted tours of the original Ferry property, around the corner from the Detroit Institute of Arts. This was where the Ferry Seed Company was located before it moved to our community. At that time this property was being considered for bulldozing away to make room for more parking. However, before doing it, the DIA hired consultants to do a feasibility study to determine the best use for the individual houses on the property. The answer came back that renovating the houses to be used as Bed & Breakfast hotels would

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guarantee a bigger profit on their investment. You can Google the internet for the success story about what is now known as The Inn on Ferry Street, in Detroit. You can also read favorable reviews from The NY Times and Frommiers.

When Rochester Hills took the precaution of hiring Jane Busch as an unbiased, professional consultant to scientifically research and document properties that were considered significantly important to our community, we did so in order to avoid lengthy debates such as this.

Basic criteria for judging historic importance to a community are as follows:

- 1) contribution to a "cultural" landscape
- 2) an important person to the community's history
- 3) A historic pattern of events

All of these criteria exist for the Ferry Ct./ Wayside property. Even more unusual for that time, was the provision made by the employer for housing its workers.

The Balls are a supremely personable couple, who are being hurt *more* by the current real estate, economic downturn than an inability to attract renters of sufficient quality to their investment.

In my opinion, the problem with their Wayside Court property is a lack of imagination in how it is being utilized. Even the big preservation success stories have multiple partners and investors. Trying to continue using it only as private housing just isn't compatible for today's lifestyles. If they would consider retrofitting the structures for another purpose, while retaining the basic identity and charm of the original setting, both the owners and our community would benefit.

Thank you.