



City of Rochester Hills
AGENDA SUMMARY
NON-FINANCIAL ITEMS

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Legislative File No: 2015-0548

TO: Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: Ed Anzek, Director of Planning and Economic Development, ext. 2572

DATE: December 18, 2015

SUBJECT: Request to remove 820 E. Auburn from the Historic Districts Potential List – Sandeep and Swapna Chada, buyers and Kevin Baird, seller, as Applicants

REQUEST:

The applicants would like the property at 820 E. Auburn removed from the City's Historic Districts Potential List in order to redevelop the property with a Goddard School for pre-school ages. The .8-acre parcel, zoned B-2, General Business with an FB-2, Flexible Business Overlay, is located at the southeast corner of Auburn and Graham Dr., west of John R. Private Schools are permitted in the FB-2 district; however, this request concerns any historic value of the property and what subsequent steps should occur to resolve the question. The potential redevelopment use of a private school should not be a consideration in determining historic value.

BACKGROUND:

First some history. When the ordinance was first adopted in 1978 there were about 30 non-contiguous properties that were established by Ordinance as historic. The Ordinance also identifies in Sec. 118-65 the duties of the Historic District Commission. One of these duties is to maintain a list of potential districts and include a brief statement about each one. In 1992 the city commenced with the creation of a "potential" historic resources list. The list contained about 50 additional sites that the HDC might study but is not mandated to study them. In 1997 that effort was revisited and expanded to 70 parcels. It is believed that HDC members and staff created the list. In March, 2002 the City contracted the services of Jane Busch, an expert on historic preservation, to revisit all the sites deemed historic plus those on the potential list.

Her recommendation was to delist 3 sites declared historic and the potential list was reduced to 17 sites with 8 of them remaining as "requiring more information". The site in question (820 E. Auburn) is one of those needing more information.

Unfortunately, over time the HDC has not initiated any further studies on the properties contained on the potential list and it has evolved to an "as needed" basis. Another way to say it is when someone wants to redevelop their property the question to remove it from the list or study the site for historic value is moved to the forefront. That is what the applicant's letter has initiated. Typically the HDC would make this decision to study or not to study however, over time and by policy the question became that of the City Council. The thought behind this policy evolved around the fact that the Historic District Study Committee reports to the City Council, different from the HDC, is designed to take an objective un-biased review and this is not to say the HDSC wouldn't but it's considered a checks and balance

system. This policy was set up in the early 2000's after a home was demolished that was on the potential list. The Building Department was not aware of the list but they do maintain the list now to red flag any proposed action to a structure on the potential list.

The process utilized by Council is triggered by the HDC wanting a property studied or the owner wishing the property be removed from the list. This action before you is being initiated by the owner wanting to redevelop the site.

Once the City Council receives a letter from the property owner requesting the site be removed the Council decision is to:

- 1) removed from the potential list, or
- 2) send the issue to the Study Committee to determine if the site has any historic significance that would support it being designated historic;

In order for the Council to make an informed decision, albeit limited, without a full-blown study we have arranged a site visit with Kristine Kidorf, the City's Historic Preservation Consultant, and Kelly Winters, Deputy Building Official. Ms. Kidorf will review for architectural integrity and Mr. Winters will review for structural integrity. Ms. Kidorf has also been reviewing various historic documents provided by the applicant.

A Study to determine if any value exists takes about 9 months to a year should the Council choose to study the site completely.

RECOMMENDATION:

At this writing staff cannot make any recommendation as to how to proceed. It is hoped that the field work, scheduled for January 5, 2016, by our consultant and Deputy Building Official will provide sufficient information to advise Council at the January 11, 2016 meeting. Staff will provide an updated memo including the field research and available documents.

APPROVALS:	SIGNATURE	DATE
Department Review		
Department Director		
Mayor		
City Council Liaison		