



From: Chris McLeod, Manager of Planning  
To: Historic Districts Commission  
Date: November 9, 2023  
Re: 1021 Harding Lot C – New Construction

Historical Information

The Eureka Fruit Farm at 1021 Harding is an individual historic district that was designated by the City of Rochester Hills in 1978. The 1.8 acre property contained two contributing (historic) buildings, the house and barn, and two non-contributing buildings, a pumphouse and shed. The house was constructed in about 1865 and in 1870 Henry Ostrom established the Eureka Fruit Farm on the property. Ostrom appears to have retained the property until his death in 1913. Henry Ostrom was a successful berry farmer and introduced the custom of driving the berries to Detroit by team, avoiding “commission men” and selling direct to the consumer. Eighty-five berry pickers were employed at the farm at the height of the season.

The district is significant with events or person(s) significant in the history of Rochester Hills as it pertains to agriculture and the Eureka Fruit Farm. The house was the residence of the Ostrom family, the founders, and operators of the Eureka Fruit Farm from its establishment in 1870 until at least 1910 and likely until 1913 when Henry Ostrom died. The barn dates from 1905, within the district’s period of significance.

A previous owner requested that City Council de-designate the property due to a fire in the house in 2017. The previous owner stated he was unable to make repairs to the house due to lack of insurance at the time of the fire. Council directed the Historic Districts Study Committee to study the requested de-designation in December 2020. The study committee visited the property in January 2021, held the required public hearing, and in April 2021 adopted a final study committee report recommending against the de-designation as the property retained its original physical characteristics from when the property was designated. In October 2021 City Council reviewed and declined the de-designation request, expressing a desire to maintain the historical character of the property while recognizing the current buildings on the site may not be structurally viable or salvageable. However, at the December 2021 Historic Districts Commission meeting, after hearing testimony from the City Building Official and other design professionals, the Commission voted to approve a notice to proceed with the demolition of the proposed structures as they were determined to be structurally unsafe and no longer salvageable. Since that time, the structures have been removed and the property has been split into 3 individual parcels.

The current interested purchaser of the one of the parcels has inquired from City staff as to how a future home will be reviewed for the remaining property(s) since the District regulating the property is a standalone, noncontiguous district and the residence and association farm buildings that contributed to the historic designation of the property are now gone. Staff has had a number of conversations with Mr. Hug and has provided him with the appropriate City’s ordinances as well as links to US Secretary of the Interiors Guide for Historic Buildings amongst other resources. Mr. Hug would like to discuss design concepts for a potential home with the Commission and obtain some initial feedback regarding what standards or design cues the Commission will ultimately review a future home under. Please keep in mind this is not an official review and answers will not be binding as this item is intended for discussion purposes only. City Staff along with Ms. Kidorf can also provide input the night of the meeting regarding the images provided by Mr. Hug as potential design concepts and how they may or may not fit into the historic district regulating the property at 1021 Harding.

MEMO

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