

PRELIMINARY REPORT
ROCHESTER HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICTS STUDY COMMITTEE
2371 SOUTH LIVERNOIS ROAD
ROCHESTER HILLS, MICHIGAN
Draft December 7, 2009

CHARGE OF THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS STUDY COMMITTEE

The historic districts study committee was appointed by the Rochester Hills City council on December 15, 1999, pursuant to the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances, Chapter 118, as amended in 2009. The study committee is a standing committee charged with conducting the duties and activities of a study committee on a continuing basis. These duties include inventory, research, and preparation of a preliminary study committee report for a proposed historic district. Study committee members serve two year terms. A list of current committee members follows.

Pursuant to Chapter 118, Section 129, the City Council referred a request for elimination of the historic district located at 2371 South Livernois Road to the Historic Districts Study Committee on October 26, 2009. The study committee is to make a recommendation back to City Council within 180 days.

STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

John Dziurman is a registered architect with a practice focused on historic preservation, meets the federal professional qualification standards for historic architect. He has served on the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission for over fifteen years, many of those years as chairperson.

James Hannick is a long-time Rochester Hills resident with an interest and knowledge of local history.

Peggy Schodowski has a strong background in research and analysis, and is currently employed part-time as a Marketing Director/Research Analyst for a locally owned company. She has recently provided research assistance to a local private school regarding the historic background of their school building, and has also assisted several local communities with research about historic buildings.

Dr. Richard Stamps is an associate professor of anthropology at Oakland University. A professional archaeologist with a strong interest in history, he is also a member of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission.

Jason Thompson is chairperson of the Historic Districts Study Committee, and is a member of the Rochester Hills Historic Districts Commission. He has received a bachelor's degree in history from Oakland University, and a masters of public administration from Oakland University. His academic and work activities include a strong background in research and grant writing.

LaVere Webster is an art and antiques conservator who lives in one of the city's designated local historic districts. He has served on the board of directors of the Rochester-Avon Historical Society for more than six years.

Murray Woolf is a general contractor and founder of a vocational school.

Kristine M. Kidorf, Kidorf Preservation Consulting, assisted the study committee with their work.

INVENTORY

An initial survey was conducted by Avon Township (now Rochester Hills) in 1978, out of which the property at 2371 South Livernois Road was designated a local historic district. In 1993 and 1994, the staff members of the Rochester Hills Museum updated the photo documentation of properties previously designated. A photographic inventory of the district was conducted in 2002 as part of the *Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey*. Copies of the inventory forms are located at the Rochester Hills Planning Department, the Rochester Hills Museum, and the State Historic Preservation Office. Additional photographs were taken in November, 2009 as part of the preparation of this report.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DISTRICT

The district consists of a ten-acre parcel located on the east side of Livernois Road, approximately three-quarters mile south of Hamlin Road and just north of M-59. The parcel is rectangular, is generally flat, and is heavily treed except for the area around the house and garage.

There is a house and garage on the property, near the north property line, approximately one-hundred feet east of Livernois Road. A gravel driveway enters the property from Livernois and creates a circle at the rear of the house to access the house and garage.

The Colonial Revival style house, constructed in 1945 with a 1971 addition, has a rectangular footprint and is one-and-a-half stories tall with an offset one-and-a-half story wing on the south end. Both the house and wing have large side-gable asphalt roofs with flared eaves that are pierced by gable front dormers. An addition (1971) that is incorporated into the main roof runs along the entire rear of the house. The entire house is clad in wood clapboard siding with the exception of behind the front porches which has vertical wood siding. The house has a brick foundation.

The front of the house faces west, and has a full-width, shed roof porch on the main block and wing. The porches feature Doric columns supporting a wide fascia under a cornice with dentil moldings. The first floor wall behind the porches has vertical wood siding. The main block features a central entrance door with an eight-over-twelve double-hung window with shutters on each side. The wing has an entrance doors near the south end with two eight-over-twelve double-hung windows facing west. The main block has two gable-front dormers, and the wing has one central dormer. All three dormers have one eight-over-eight double-hung window that is flanked with fluted trim. The gable ends have pediments with dentil molding.

The south elevation consists of the gable end of the main block and the intersecting gable of the offset wing. Dentil molding runs along the rakes. There are cornice returns where the porch roof begins. The main block has

a single door at the first floor and one eight-over-eight double-hung window with shutters near the west side at the second floor. The wing has two eight-over-twelve double-hung windows with shutters at the first floor and a pair of eight-over-eight double-hung windows with shutters in the center of the gable at the second floor.

The north elevation is one large gable end with the porch and rear addition on both sides. There is dentil molding along the rakes and at the cornice returns located at the intersection of the front porch and addition. The first floor has a three-sided bay window with eight-over-twelve double-hung windows in each side and a hip roof. There are three other eight-over-twelve double-hung windows with shutters at the first floor. The second floor has two large eight-over-twelve double-hung windows with shutters spaced equally apart.

The west or rear elevation has a central porch with a gable front roof with dentil molding around the eave and gable that is supported by Doric columns. The door has sidelights. There is an eight-over-eight double-hung window with shutters on each side of the porch and one eight-over-twelve double-hung window with shutters further south on the elevation. There is a large three-bay wide gable-front dormer projecting from the center of the roof. There are three eight-over-eight double hung windows with a pediment surrounded by dentil molding above.

The one-story garage (unknown construction date) has a rectangular plan that sits perpendicular to the house. It has a gable roof and vertical board and batten siding. The south side has two double-car wide paneled overhead garage doors. The east end has two boarded-over windows and the west end has a central door with a multi-pane window on each side. The north elevation does not have any openings. The garage has a concrete block foundation.

COUNT OF HISTORIC AND NON-HISTORIC RESOURCES

There is zero historic and two non-historic resources in the district. The house and garage in the district are non-historic.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Parcel ID 15-27-151-003

T3N, R11E, SEC 27 PART OF NW; ¼ BEG AT PT DIST S 2070.8; 4 FT FROM NW SEC CORN, TH S 5 33.88 FT, TH N 89-29-30 E 81; 3.63 FT, TH N 002245 E 534; .02 FT, TH S 89-29-30 W 817.; 36 FT TO BEG 10 A;

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The district consists of the entire parcel associated with the property.

Newer housing subdivisions exist in all directions from the property, including across Livernois Road.

HISTORY OF THE DISTRICT

The house was constructed in 1945. It was designed by Rochester architect Jack Burns for Mr. and Mrs. George Berklich. It was originally located at the corner of Rochester and Auburn Roads. Jack Burns also designed Sign of

the Black and White Cow located in the Stoney Creek Historic District. No other information could be located about Jack Burns or his work.

The ten-acre property on South Livernois Road was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Louis W. Berklich(1926-1997), the son of George Berklich, in 1956 from the estate of Barbara Shuell Sanders. At that time they constructed a one-story, flat-roof, concrete block building near the south end of the property. In 1970, the five-acre George Berklich property on Rochester Road was sold for development and Mr. and Mrs. Louis Berklich moved the house to the property. According to township and county permit records the move took place in 1971 and new front porches and an addition to the entire rear width of the house were constructed at that time. Louis Berklich was an architect and presumably designed the addition. It is not known whether the front porches replicated the originals, or were new designs by Mr. Berklich. Mrs. Berklich lived in the house until after 2001 when the property was sold to the present owner.

CRITERIA FOR DISTRICT ELIMINATION

Pursuant to Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances, Chapter 118, as amended in 2009, and PA 169 of 1970 as amended, if considering elimination of a historic district, the study committee shall follow the procedures set forth in this division for issuing a preliminary report, holding a public hearing and issuing a final report, but with the intent of showing one or more of the following:

- 1) Lost physical characteristics. The historic district has lost those physical characteristics that enabled establishment of the district;
- 2) Insignificance. The historic district was not significant in a way previously defined; or
- 3) Defective procedure. The historic district was established pursuant to defective procedures. (Section 118-34, Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances)

Lost Physical Characteristics

The house at 2371 South Livernois Road has not changed from the time of designation in 1978. Therefore the district has not lost its original physical characteristics from when it was designated.

Insignificance

In 1978, when the Avon Township Historic District Study Committee conducted their investigation of potential historic districts in the township they had relatively little guidance. Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act, PA 169 of 1970, instructed study committees to conduct studies and research and make a written report on the cultural, social, economic, political, architectural, or historical significance of the property under consideration. The law did not specify how to go about this study, what the report should include, or what criteria should be used to evaluate historical significance. Furthermore, in the 1970s methods to identify and evaluate historic properties were less sophisticated than they are today.

A primary purpose of the 2002 Rochester Hills Historic Districts Survey was to re-evaluate all of the properties that were designated in 1978. This was because the practice of historic preservation has progressed greatly

since then and techniques for identifying and evaluating historic properties have advanced notably. Michigan's Local Historic Districts Act has been amended extensively. The 1992 amendments specify requirements for study committee reports in some detail and require study committees to be guided by the evaluation criteria for the National Register of Historic Places.

Rochester Hills' historic preservation ordinance has also undergone substantive amendment, in large part to follow state law. The original ordinance limited the local historic district to one hundred feet from the primary structure. This was amended in 1995 to include the entire parcel in the local historic district. Thus, it became necessary to evaluate all of the resources on the property. Finally, the former Avon Township had grown and changed tremendously since 1978. It was necessary to evaluate the historic districts within the context of the Rochester Hills of 2002.

It is important to note that at no point did Michigan's enabling legislation, PA 169 of 1970 as amended, or Chapter 4-06, Historic Districts, of the Rochester Hills Code of Ordinances as amended, ever specify that a property had to be fifty years old to qualify for historic designation. The 2002 *City of Rochester Hills Historic Districts Property Owner Guide* erroneously stated that the property had to be fifty years old as part of the criteria for local designation. The statement in the *Owner Guide* was not taken from state law, local ordinance, or the national register criteria, and has no bearing on past or future local historic district designations.

After the 1992 amendments to Public Act 169 of 1970, and prior to 2002, Public Act 169 of 1970, as amended (PA 169) required that study committees be "shall guided by" the criteria for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. In 2002, the State Historic Preservation Office, per Section 399.205 (3) of PA 169, adopted rules regarding local historic district designation that every study committee is required to follow. Those rules state that any local historic district--single or multiple resource--"shall follow" the criteria for listing in the national register. Any local historic district established between 1992 and 2002 was created under the "shall be guided by" requirement, which then existed in Public Act 169. Previous to the 2002 rules, PA 169 of 1970 allowed the local community more autonomy in determining what they considered to be historic and worthy of protection. Therefore not meeting the national register criteria is not valid grounds to de-designate a single resource historic district designated before 2002.

National Register Criterion C along with criterion exception B is relevant to the designation of 2371 South Livernois Road. Evaluation of the property according to these criteria leads to the conclusion that the property is not significant as originally thought.

The National Register Criteria

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archaeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

The 2002 Rochester Hills Historic Districts survey report states, "residential architecture dominates Rochester Hills, and most of the houses that have been designated are single-family houses, usually former farmhouses,

some with associated outbuildings.”¹ Evaluation standards for architecture include properties that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, form, or style. Buildings that are significant for their architecture must possess a high level of integrity of design. However requirements for integrity must also consider whether that type, form, or style is rare or common.²

The original study committee determined that the property was significant for its architecture as an example of the Greek Revival-Plantation style. The 1993 survey gives the information on the architect, the moving of the house from Rochester Road, and that Louis W. Berklich designed the rear addition. The 2002 survey confirms the area of significance for the property as architecture for the Colonial Revival style. None of the reports discusses whether the front porches are reconstructions of the original or new designs by Louis W. Berklich.

National Register Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)

B. A building or structure removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value, or which is the surviving structure most importantly associated with a historic person or event.

Properties that have been moved from their original locations are not eligible for listing in the National Register, except in the circumstances described in Consideration B above. These circumstances do not apply to the house at 2371 South Livernois Road.

The house at 2371 Livernois Road has been moved from its original location at Rochester and Auburn Roads. It is an example of the Colonial Revival style of architecture, and is one of two known examples of Colonial Revival buildings designed by Rochester architect Jack Burns in the City of Rochester Hills. A rear addition, and possibly the front porches were designed by architect Louis W. Berklich in 1971. No historic photographs were able to be located showing the original 1944 house at the Rochester Road location, so it is unknown how much the existing house was changed in 1971 from its original design. It is known that new front porches and a full-width rear addition were constructed at that time, however it is not known whether the front porches were replicas of the original, or a new design. There is limited information on the original architect, Jack Burns, or the presumed designer of the 1971 alterations, Louis W. Berklich, so it is concluded that neither were architects of note.

Because it cannot be documented what the house looked like originally, nor is there information indicating either architect was notable in the profession, the house is not significant for its architecture.

In summary the house at 2371 South Livernois Road is not significant in the way the original study committee thought. The house was moved to this location in 1971, and the Colonial Revival style of the house cannot be documented as early as originally thought. There are other examples of Colonial Revival architecture and one other example of the design of Rochester architect Jack Burns. The property at 2371 South Livernois is not significant to the architecture of Rochester Hills.

Defective Procedure

¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

² *Ibid.*, 34.

The procedures followed in establishing the 2371 South Livernois Road Historic District were not defective. When the property was designated a local historic district in 1978, the Avon Township Board and Avon Township Study Committee correctly followed the procedures prescribed by state law at that time. The study committee adopted evaluation criteria, conducted an inventory, prepared inventory sheets on each property, prepared a preliminary and a final report, drafted an ordinance, and undertook the required transmittals and public hearing. Of the several hundred properties that the study committee inventoried, sixty-five were recommended for local historic district designation. The Avon Township Board designated thirty-one of these as non-contiguous historic districts each containing one building and the remainder as part of the Stoney Creek and Winkler Mill Pond Historic Districts.

The legal description on the affidavit filed with the County Register of Deeds for the property matches the legal description of the current property. So even though the Parcel ID Number and the addresses of the two buildings on the property have changed over the years, the parcel is the same as referenced in the legal description.

The historic districts ordinance that Avon Township adopted in 1978 limited a non-contiguous district to the designated structure on the property and the area within one hundred feet from that structure (or to the property line if that was less than one hundred feet away). In 1995, the city of Rochester Hills amended their ordinance to include the entire parcel with all of its historic and non-historic resources.³ This was done to comply with the changes in state law.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study committee finds that the house at 2371 South Livernois Road should no longer be designated as a local historic district. The original study committee did not have the benefit of the complete history of the property. The house does not possess the historic or architectural integrity needed for it to be considered significant for its architecture. It is not an outstanding example of the Colonial Revival style. Neither is it associated with a person or event significant to the history of Rochester Hills.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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³ Rochester Hills Historic Districts Study Committee. "Preliminary Historic District Study Committee Report, Demay-Potere Farm Historic District, Rochester Hills, Michigan" no date, p. 13.

“Louis William Berklich Sr.” Obituary, *Rochester Clarion*. July 31, 1997. Found in the obituaries section of the Local History Room in the Rochester Hills Public Library.

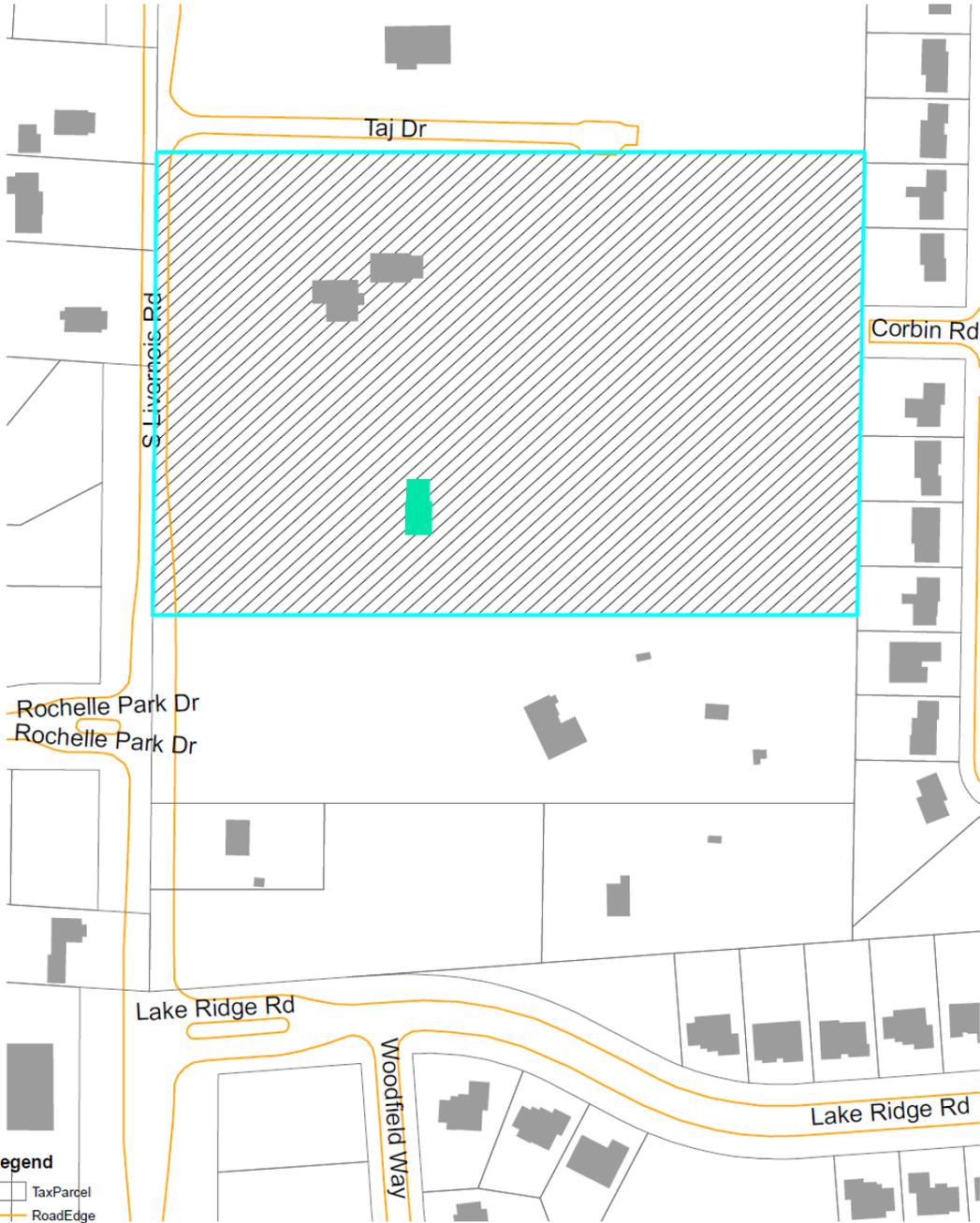
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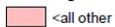
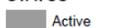
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DISTRICT MAP

2371 S. Livernois
15-27-151-003



Legend

-  TaxParcel
-  RoadEdge
-  Subject Parcel
- Building**
-  <all other values>
- STATUS**
-  Active
-  Demolished



Aerial photographs as of April 2008.
TaxParcel lines were obtained on 07-01-09 from Oakland County.
Although the information provided by this map is believed to be reliable, its accuracy is not warranted in any way. The City of Rochester Hills assumes no liability for any claims arising from the use of this map.

10-8-09

1 inch = 168 feet

PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1 2371 South Livernois, south and west elevations looking northeast, November, 2009



Photo 2 2371 South Livernois, south and east elevations looking northwest, November, 2009



Photo 3 2371 South Livernois, north elevation looking southwest, November, 2009



Photo 4 2371 South Livernois, detail of front porch looking southeast, November, 2009



Photo 5 2371 South Livernois, garage, south and east elevations, looking northwest, November, 2009



Photo 6 2371 South Livernois, garage, north and west elevations looking southeast, November, 2009