

February 8, 2007

City of Rochester Hills
1000 Rochester Hills Dr.
Rochester Hills, MI 48309

RE: Wayside Park
Rochester Hills, Michigan

Dear Council Member,

It is our understanding that the Historic Districts Commission will soon be presenting its recommendations to the Council regarding designation of historic districts within the City. We are the owners of Wayside Park (formerly known as Ferry Court and part of the Ferry Seed Farm that operated off of Hamlin Road between Rochester Road and John R), which is currently under consideration. We would like to take this opportunity to make you aware of our position in this matter.

We understand that it is the responsibility of the HDC to review the information available to determine whether a property/district meets the criteria as set forth by the State of Michigan. In so doing, our property may meet the technical criteria necessary to be recommended for designation as an historic district. However, there are many other factors that are not considered when making a recommendation. We cannot express strongly enough how we feel that these other circumstances need to be taken into consideration prior to making a decision.

While we appreciate the importance of preserving our local history, this particular property suffers from several unique circumstances that we feel make it an inappropriate candidate for historical designation. Its location, function, condition, and architectural insignificance are all factors that should be considered when deliberating the supposed merits of making this property an historical district.

First of all, this property is an investment, income producing property. It consists of six houses and four duplexes, and a large three-story house. According to our architect, he feels that it was most likely originally designed and built with the intent to provide accessible, affordable housing to the seed farm workers. Not only are they of no particular architectural interest/relevance, but the construction quality of these structures

does not come close to meeting today's standards, or even those of its own day. They are extremely small (625 square feet) and functionally obsolete. The bathrooms are located in the basements, where the ceilings are very low. With the high water table in the area, the basements often leak or even flood. This just contributes to an even lower occupancy rate in this very competitive rental market. Our attempts just to keep them habitable have required considerable amounts of money, time, and worry. While we have valiantly battled to update and maintain these units for the past 20 years, unfortunately, Mother Nature is winning the war.

At this time, it is not cost effective to put any more improvements into these properties. Because of their small size, the location of the bathrooms, and general deficiencies, rents cannot be increased enough to make further improvements, nor can we appeal to higher quality tenants. It is, quite simply, a vicious cycle that most certainly will not be cured by designating the property an historic district. We have no desire to perpetuate what can only be characterized as being "slum landlords". The properties would only continue to deteriorate, becoming a blight upon the community, having ironically the opposite effect of what was ostensibly supposed to happen.

Returning to the issue of updating the properties, it is also important to point out that the so-called "architectural integrity" of the properties has already been compromised. During the past 20 years of our ownership, we have made considerable repairs and changes to the property, replacing all the windows and doors, replacing the stucco exteriors with vinyl siding, adding some dormers, replacing roofs. All this has been done not as a "labor of love", but out of practical necessity; we needed to protect our investment.

In keeping with that thought, it was always our intention to eventually develop the property in some capacity. This was not some sentimental purchase made with the intention of lovingly restoring some aesthetically pleasing "this old house". Historical designation is better suited to those single residential homes that fit that profile. We purchased the property with the objective of maintaining it as a rental income producing property until such time as future development in the City would allow a higher and better use. Over the past dozen or so years, we have been in discussion with various City departments attempting to implement an acceptable plan. At one time, we were even approved for a plan to develop the property, but as a new master land use plan was being reviewed, we were advised by the planning department and their consultant to wait until the new plan had been adopted. Subsequently, this latest notion of perhaps creating an historic district arose, and has further stalled any progress for the past several years. At this time, we have determined that it is in our best interest to try to participate with our neighboring property owners, Bordine's, in developing the property. As it stands, the property is bordered to the east and north by the Christian Memorial cemetery, the Hampton apartments to the south, and Bordine's Nursery to the west. Including this property in the Bordine's development is a logical, compatible course.

Again, we acknowledge the importance and responsibility that a municipality has to preserve its history. However, not at the expense of the owners and against their

expressed wishes, and when it becomes financially irresponsible (even potentially ruinous) and economically unfeasible to do so. Therefore, we respectfully request that if and when the request for historical designation is put before the Council by the HDC, that you would deny its approval. Anything less could only be considered a “taking” of private property.

If you have any questions or would like to discuss this matter, we would be more than happy to meet with you or speak to you by phone or email.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

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