

****Please note that these recommendations have been prepared by the Mayor's Advisory Committee and are a work in progress. Additional recommendations are forth coming for the Pedestrian Connectivity & Safety, Design Elements, and Conclusion sections. The final report with the key findings and recommendations will be available online at the end of October/early November. ****

INTRODUCTION

The Mayor's Advisory Committee was formed in March 2009 by Mayor Barnett to investigate resident concerns and identify opportunities for improvement within the boundaries of the City's two contiguous Historic Districts. The Mayor charged the Committee with seeking public input from residents and to provide recommendations for potential improvements. The Committee focused on the Tienken and Washington Road corridors from the Sheldon Roundabout to the City border at Dequindre Road. Additional area surrounding the corridors was evaluated as necessary. The Committee includes staff from the City's Planning, Engineering and Parks Departments, members of Oakland County's Planning and Economic Development Services Division, and staff from the Road Commission for Oakland County (RCOC).

The Stoney Creek Historic District is a Nationally Registered Historic District, and both the Stoney Creek and Winkler Mill Pond Districts are designated locally by the City of Rochester Hills. Recognition of the significance of these Districts to the City's history and the greater Rochester area, and the importance of protecting the integrity of that history, was the impetus for the creation of the Mayor's Committee. This is the first time a Committee has been established to create a vision for the protection and improvement of both Districts with a focus on Tienken and Washington Roads.

Tienken and Washington are county primary roads that run through unique historic residential areas. Both roads within the project area exhibit characteristics that make the typical road planning and design process more challenging. It is the goal of the Committee to establish recommendations that recognize the RCOC's primary road designation, strongly consider the residents' concerns and ideas, clearly reinforce the City's desire to protect the Historic Districts, and to preserve the residential nature and neighborhood feel of the area.

The Committee conducted an Awareness Survey and held two public input sessions including a Residents' Forum and an Awareness Walk of the Districts. The intent of those efforts was to gather input from as many residents as possible, and experience the study area from the perspective of the people who live there. That input was reviewed by the Committee, evaluated and strongly considered in drafting the following recommendations. These recommendations represent not only the input of the residents, but the professional opinions of the Committee members. It is important to note that many of these recommendations involve multiple jurisdictions with varying review standards, and it is not within the City's power to impose these recommendations universally. However, it is important that the City have a defined vision for Tienken and Washington Roads in the Historic Districts, so as they move forward with other agencies to implement projects there is a common understanding of the City's priorities.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT & ASSESSMENT

Stoney Creek Village was first settled when Lemeul Taylor and his family built the first permanent dwelling there in 1823. Development as a true village followed in 1824 when a saw mill, grist mill, blacksmith shop and distillery were erected along with additional homes. A hotel and woolen mill soon followed and by 1836 Joshua Van Hoosen, the name most closely associated with the village, made this the site of his family's farm. By 1848 the village was significant enough to build the one room Stoney Creek School which still exists on Washington Road south of the roundabout. The 'Village' developed in a rectangular plan, typical of early 1800's, along an east-west axis, Tienken Road; originally the only road in and out of the Village. Stoney Creek Village is the only intact community exhibiting nineteenth century development patterns and rural architecture in the area. Seventeen historic structures, mostly of the Greek Revival style along with the Van Hoosen farm remain. The Village became a state historic site in 1971 and in 1972 it was recognized by the federal government as a National Historic Site; with the period of significance from 1823 to 1952.

The Historic Nomination describes the contextual setting of the Stoney Creek Village as "... roads are still gravel, arched over by thick branches of hardwood trees."

For nearly thirty years after the nomination was written, the 'Village' context essentially remained true to this description. Then, beginning in the late 1990's and early 21st century dramatic changes began to occur to the context of the village. Changes include the two lane paving of Runyon Road to the east and the rapid development of large home, single family subdivisions directly south, east and west of the Village. The most recent development was the completion of Stoney Creek High School in 2001. Limited new construction has occurred within the village, but as the Michigan State History Division states, "Some modern homes have been added within the district but are sensitive to the surrounding historic structures." Thus the Village remains intact and is being more adversely affected from external, rather than internal, development. Adverse impact is occurring primarily do to traffic volume and vehicle speeds on Tienken Road.

On the other hand, Winkler Mill Pond, a locally designated historic district north/east of the village, appears to have been more affected by development within the district itself. Winkler Mill Pond historically developed as a farm region just outside of the Village. It is recognized as such today, with the structures set further apart and further back from the road than they are in the Village. The road frontage retains much of its rural character, but encroachments are incurring that will continue to compromise the historical character if not appropriately managed.

The internal and external impacts of growth and development are something experienced by nearly all historic and cultural resource sites. While it is something that can't be avoided, its impact can be lessened to preserve the context, history and character of the historic resource. With little, no, or inappropriate intervention, growth and development can thoroughly weaken a historic area to a point of irrelevance.

The formation of this committee was well timed to look at and develop preservation strategies to protect these two very different and historically significant areas. Stoney Creek Village is just that a village. Measures need to be instituted to help retain it and re-identify it as a village. Winkler Mill Pond is the 19th century rural area just outside of the village and measures need to retain and re-identify this area as such as well. If properly preserved, both of these areas can make an ever increasing economic contribution to Rochester Hills and the surrounding area. The preservation of distinctive places and their

stories are seen as a primary ingredient in Michigan's new economy. Resolute application of the preservation and design recommendations of this study will enhance the qualities that already make this a desirable place to live. Implementation of the recommendations may also present opportunities to position these historic areas in the fastest growing segment, heritage tourism, of Michigan's largest industry.

The measures and strategies recommended herein place residents' concerns and the historic importance of the area at the fundamental core of the report, yet the recommendations are framed after long deliberations, consideration of alternative solutions and expression of diverse expertise and opinions.

The report is formatted under six major headings. Under each major heading are specific recommendations. The major headings include:

- Vehicular Speed
- Truck Traffic
- Washington Road
- Stoney Creek Bridge and Approaches
- Pedestrian Connectivity and Safety
- Design Elements

VEHICULAR SPEED

The Mayor's Advisory Committee feels the most critical goal to accomplish is to reduce the travel speed of vehicles throughout the study area, with particular emphasis on the segment between the Stony Creek Bridge and the Washington Roundabout (the Village). It is clear to the Committee that the study area, although designated a County Primary road by the RCOC, is a residential corridor in design, feel and use. Vehicle speed should be consistent with that neighborhood character. The committee recommends that the following actions be taken to accomplish the goal of reduced vehicular travel speeds.

1. The City should request travel lane width reductions, from the appropriate authority, to the minimal safe standard as allowed by the AASHTO design exemptions for the segment of Tienken and Washington roads between the Sheldon Roundabout and Dequindre.
2. Tienken and Washington roads between Clear Creek and Dequindre should remain 2 lanes.
3. As part of the Tienken Road project the City should work with the RCOC to evaluate the Sheldon Roundabout to determine if it meets current design standards. If possible, the roundabout should be reconfigured, within safe standards, to reduce travel speeds entering the study area.
4. The center island and approaches of the Sheldon Roundabout should be landscaped to help slow traffic. The City should work with the RCOC to determine a safe plan to incorporate vegetation as a means to visually narrow the approaches and break up visibility across the center island. Entrance signage to the village should also be incorporated into the center island (please refer to the project map for additional detail and examples). The City should evaluate

the potential use of funds from the Tree Fund to initiate the landscape installation. Also, the City should identify additional funding for the construction of the proposed entrance signage.

5. East of the roundabout and prior to the Stony Creek Bridge, the City should work with the RCOC to incorporate a mid-block pedestrian refuge island to improve pedestrian safety when crossing from the non-motorized path on the north side of Tienken Road to the south side. The island should be incorporated into the Stony Creek Bridge replacement project. The proposed island will also act as a traffic calming device to slow traffic entering the village.
6. Work with the RCOC to install a "Your Speed" indicator sign for east bound traffic approaching the Stony Creek Bridge.
7. Create two transition zones that identify a change to motorists and make it clear that they are entering a residential area and to slow their speed. The transition zones are: Tienken Road between the Sheldon Roundabout and the Stony Creek Bridge and Washington Road between the Washington Roundabout and north east of Avon Players. (please refer to the project map for additional detail and examples)

Road segments that are in the City of Rochester, outside of this project study area, but where transition zones into the Village, would be appropriate. They are located on Runyon Road between the Washington Roundabout and Ramblewood Street, Washington across from Avon Players and on Washington north and south of Dunham. The City of Rochester should be contacted to determine their interest in establishing Village transition zones in these areas.

8. The bridge replacement project should be used as an opportunity to slow traffic entering the Village and improve pedestrian safety. Every effort should be made to keep the bridge as narrow as possible by requesting exemptions from strict bridge design requirements where appropriate and utilizing available flexibility in the design of the new bridge. It is the committee's recommendation that a pedestrian component is imperative to the study area and must be incorporated into the current replacement project (please refer to the bridge section below for full design recommendations).
9. The City should engage the school district regarding the potential to request the area between the Sheldon Roundabout and the Washington Roundabout be posted as a "School Zone".
10. The Committee recommends that the existing road surface be maintained on Tienken Road between the Stony Creek Bridge and the Washington Roundabout. But because at some point in time this segment will need to be reconstructed, the City should also work with the RCOC to investigate alternative paving treatments for this segment. The research should consider cost and funding, color, texture, noise generation, maintenance, snow removal and appropriateness relative to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation.
11. Identify opportunities through the Village, (Stony Creek Bridge to Washington Roundabout), to install traffic calming devices and choke points to further reduce speed through the district. The City should work with the RCOC to determine appropriate traffic calming measures and to identify funding sources to implement proposed improvements. (please refer to the project map for additional detail and examples)

12. As part of the Washington Road paving project the Washington Roundabout should be reconfigured to slow vehicle speeds and improve pedestrian safety. Roundabout geometry including the alignment of approaches and entries, entry curvature, and exit geometry should be evaluated to determine if it meets current design guidelines.
13. The center island and approaches of the Washington Roundabout should be landscaped to help slow traffic. The City should work with the RCOC and the City of Rochester to determine a safe plan to incorporate vegetation as a means to visually narrow the approaches and break up visibility across the center island. Entrance signage to the village should also be incorporated into the center island (please refer to the project map for additional detail and examples). The City should evaluate the potential use of funds from the Tree Fund to initiate the landscape installation. Also, the City should identify additional funding for the construction of the proposed entrance signage.
14. Work with the Oakland County Sheriffs Office to increase speed enforcement throughout the area.

TRUCK TRAFFIC

The Committee is recommending measures to help reduce truck traffic through the study area. The Committee recognizes that this is a county primary road and understandably will experience a certain amount of truck traffic. However, the Committee also recognizes this area is historically significant and residential in nature and as such should not be utilized for truck trips not servicing the immediate area if other alternative routes exist. (Requests for Traffic Control Orders (TCOs) from the RCOC will require that all appropriate truck speed and count studies be conducted prior to approval.)

1. The City should request a review of the study area for a Traffic Control Order (TCO) from the RCOC. The TCO should evaluate the possibility of posting the area to limit truck traffic, without putting an undue burden on other residential areas of the City.
2. Request a TCO from RCOC to lower permissible truck speeds within the study area.
3. Work with the Oakland County Sheriff's Office to increase speed enforcement throughout the area.
4. Create a City adopted "truck route" policy and map for the study area. If possible work with the RCOC to install City signage regulating truck traffic through the District.
5. Implement the Vehicular Speed recommendations in this report. These improvements will help to reduce both the amount of truck trips and speed.

WASHINGTON ROAD

Similar to Tienken Road in the Village, Washington Road has its own unique characteristics and the recommendations for this area are designed to protect and enhance its rural nature. Washington Road

extends northeast from the Washington roundabout to the City's border at Dequindre. The entire segment is part of either the Stoney Creek Historic District or the Winkler Mill Pond Historic District. The Committee recognizes that, similar to Tienken, Washington Road is a County Primary Road. However, the road is rural in design and feel and is developed almost exclusively as single family residential. Many homes along Washington front directly onto the road increasing the importance of preserving the rural residential nature.

1. Pave Washington Road - this recommendation is made contingent on the following recommendations being incorporated into the project. The Committee recognizes that funding is allocated to pave the road and should be utilized. It is the opinion of the Committee that the project can be designed in a manner that protects the existing rural feel and residential nature of the road and at the same time improves EMS access, addresses drainage issues, driveway grading issues, and reduces dust, while complementing its function as a primary road.
2. Protect existing mature trees and vegetation. The trees and vegetation along the Corridor are a key component of the existing character of the area. Because of the close proximity to the road edge, the trees and vegetation function as traffic calming devices, assisting in reducing traffic speeds through the area.
3. Redesign the intersection of Washington and Dequindre. If Washington Road is paved, it is important to utilize the opportunity to change the intersection. The intersection should be redesigned to create a "t-type" intersection (please refer to the attached map for additional design details), that would direct traffic towards Dequindre instead of Washington.
4. Maintain the narrow feel and existing design characteristics of the existing road. The current feel of the road is important to the residents and integrity of both Historic Districts. The City and RCOC need to work together to ensure that the road maintains its current "rural" appearance. The City and RCOC should consider minimal straightening or flattening of the road, as long as safety is not compromised.
5. Traffic speeds should be kept to a minimum through the area. The Washington Road project should investigate the incorporation of traffic calming measures such as bike lanes, the narrowing of travel lanes, and traffic calming devices into its design.
6. The City should also work with the RCOC to investigate alternative paving treatments for Washington. The research should consider cost and funding, color, texture, noise generation, maintenance, snow removal and appropriateness relative to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Preservation. The treatments would not necessarily need to be used for the entire segment, but used selectively as an aide in calming traffic.

STONEY CREEK BRIDGE & APPROACHES

The primary goal of the committee, with regards to this design element, is to have a context sensitive bridge replacement for Tienken Road over Stony Creek at the western edge of the historic village. The committee believes this bridge project will likely have the most significant impact on the historic village of any infrastructural improvement in the foreseeable future. Beyond its function as a transportation

link, the Stony Creek Bridge historically has served as the "Gateway Entrance" to the Village. Its successful design will respect the contextual history of the area, while greatly influencing and contributing to the success of other recommendations of this report. The committee makes the following specific recommendations for the bridge replacement:

1. The bridge should, in appearance and actuality, be as narrow as possible. The bridge should have two travel lanes and minimum shoulders. Travel lane widths of 12' or less and shoulders of 2' are recommended.
2. Providing a pedestrian crossing of Stony Creek is essential and can be accomplished with design sensitivity with its integral incorporation into the bridge deck itself.
3. The elevation of the new bridge deck and approaches should maintain the existing road topography and road alignment.
4. In addition to size and basic form, a successful context sensitive solution for the bridge should also consider materials and detailing of the feature elements. A metal open rail in combination with low profile concrete deflection curb is recommended. Standard concrete finish is recommended for the bridge abutments and road surface. Lighting of the bridge and or roadway is not recommended. (Please refer to the project map for additional detail and information)
5. The bridge approaches are critical to the overall design success and requires special attention. Standard steel guard rail approaches are not recommended. Field stone walls, mortared or loose laid, should be considered in conjunction with native landscaping, provided that safety is not compromised. Painted wood posts with open steel cables, allowing maximum scenic views, would be an acceptable alternative for cost considerations or integration with field stone walls. (Please refer to the project map for additional detail and information)
6. As the pedestrian path on the south side of Tienken Road approaches the bridge (from both the west and east) it should be separated from the road. Native landscape and appropriate roadside features should be used to enhance the space between the road and pedestrian path. The path should take advantage of existing landscape and natural features, particularly at the east bridge abutment, and swing south as soon as possible in order to preserve the existing vegetation. (Please refer to the project map for additional detail and information)
7. Larger trees and existing hedgerow should be protected. The vegetation impacted during construction should be restored using native plant materials. (Please refer to the project map for additional detail and information).
8. Measures must be taken to stabilize the stream bank from erosion during and after construction to protect water quality.

PEDESTRIAN CONNECTIVITY & SAFETY

DESIGN ELEMENTS

CONCLUSION