

**State Historic Preservation Office
Michigan State Housing Development Authority**

**Staff Comments, April 14, 2015
Elimination of the David Simmons House (22000 Haggerty Road)
Local Historic District, Farmington Hills**

It would be helpful to include photographs of the house at the time it was designated as a local historic district and of the 1978 additions and how they relate to the original structure.

A reminder that the National Register integrity criteria include location, feeling and setting. Moving this resource could result in a loss of integrity. It should be a last resort.

Maps should be labeled with the district name.

FARMINGTON HILLS HISTORIC DISTRICT PRELIMINARY STUDY COMMITTEE
REPORT FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF ELIMINATION OF EXISTING HISTORIC
DISTRICT #7 DAVID SIMMONS HOUSE

Property Location: 22000 Haggerty, Parcel ID 23-31-101-020

THE CHARGE OF THE COMMITTEE

The Farmington Hills City Council appointed the Historic District Study Committee on June 8th, 2009 pursuant to the City of Farmington Hills Code of Ordinances, Chapter 15, Historic Preservation. In this case the current owners of Historic District #7, David Simmons House, have requested to have the historic designation removed from the home. In accordance with Section 15-32, of Chapter 15, Article II Historic Districts and Historic District Commission, the study committee has completed this preliminary review report to re-evaluate the appropriateness of maintaining the historic designation.

The preliminary process for considering the elimination of an existing district is that the study committee issues a preliminary report, a public hearing is held, and final report is issued. The elimination of a district constitutes an amendment the code of ordinances. Therefore City Council has the authority of final approval or denial of the request. In order to be considered for elimination one or more of the following criteria must be shown:

1. The historic district has lost those physical characteristics that enabled the establishment of the district
2. The historic district was not significant in the way previously defined
3. The historic district was established pursuant to defective procedures

COMPOSITION OF THE COMMITTEE

Joan Barber is a member of the Farmington Historical Society and has served on the Farmington Historical Society Board. She has also served on the Farmington Hills Historic District Commission as Secretary and most recently as vice chair. She is a docent at the Warner Museum in Farmington. Mrs. Barber has a M.S. in Historical Preservation. She is also an expert on antique gardening and owner of an historic home.

David McCall Johnston is a graduate of the Art Center of Design in California. David has established himself as a well accomplished artist specializing in historic structures and paintings related to history. Prior to being appointed to the Farmington Hills HDC, he lived in Franklin, MI where he saved and restored a historic Civil War era Post Office as his home, served on the Franklin Historic Commission, and co-illustrated the book All About Franklin. David's life-time experience with living in and restoring historic homes spans the nation from California to Connecticut. His current residence is a historic home that he has moved and painstakingly restored the exterior and interior to its truest form.

Kenneth Klemmer has been a member of the HDC member since 2014, brings to the commission significant experience gained in the planning, design and construction industry. Educated at Lawrence Technological University and Michigan State University (Architecture, Interior Design and Historic Preservation) Kenneth is president of Oakewood Services, a design and

preservation consulting firm; formerly he practiced architectural lighting design for 22 years at Illuminating Concepts, based in Farmington Hills. He is actively restoring his own 1925 Storybook Tudor home in Farmington Hills and vintage British sports cars.

NAME OF DISTRICT

HD#7 David Simmons House

WRITTEN AND VISUAL BOUNDARIES OF DISTRICT

Common Description: 22000 Haggerty, Farmington Hills, MI 48335

Parcel ID: 23-31-101-020

Legal Description:

T1N, R9E, SEC 31 PART OF NW 1/4 BEG AT PT DIST S 1004.39 FT FROM NW SEC COR, TH S 109.12 FT, TH N 89-11-07 E 580.10 FT, TH N 00-12-33 W 108.51 FT, TH S 89-14-37 W 579.71 FT TO BEG ALSO BEG PT DIST S 978.39 FT FROM NW SEC COR, TH N 89-14-37 E 579.75 FT, TH S 00-07-55 E 26 FT, TH S 89-14-37 W 579.81 FT, TH N 26 FT TO BEG 1.80 A5/12/86 FR 004 & 005

Attachment 1 titled Visual Boundaries of District provides a map showing the location of the property.

HISTORY OF THE PROPOSED DISTRICT

It is believed that the home was originally constructed in 1843 by David Simmons, a relative of the pioneer Simmons family of Livonia. It is known that an addition was made to the house by incorporating the carriage house as the south wing. City building records do not reveal any significant alterations to the home. *Note: The records of the City Building Department will only reflect work for which permits were applied for and issued after Farmington Hills was incorporated in 1973.*

The home was included as Historic District #7, David Simmons House, in the initial adoption of Chapter 15, Historical Preservation, to the Farmington Hills municipal code in 1981. The house is also listed on the Michigan State Registry of Historical Places.

LAND DESCRIPTION

The 2,340 square foot home is situated at the front of a 1.8 acre lot on the east side of Haggerty Road, approximately 1,000 feet south of Nine Mile Road. The dimensions of the parcel are 109 feet wide by 580 feet deep. The lot is heavily wooded and contains a variety of mature trees. The property is relatively flat with a slight depression in the middle. The property represents a sole RA-1 (Single-Family Residential) zoned parcel between Nine and Eight Mile Roads along Haggerty. The adjacent properties to the north and south are zoned OS-4 (Office Research District). The property on the west side of Haggerty is within the City of Novi.

HOUSE DESCRIPTION

The house is an excellent example of vernacular Greek Revival with pleasing proportions. The date of construction is believed to be between 1834 and 1843. For the place and time of construction, it is a somewhat elaborate example with considerable detailing.

The home has a "T-shaped" floor plan, with a gable front on the main 2 story portion of the house. The single story ell on the South side of the 2 story mass has a recessed porch on the west side, and a large brick chimney on the south end. A newer brick chimney on the north elevation has been added to accommodate a 20th century furnace and water heater in the basement.

The house appears level and plumb. There were additions made to the home in 1978. A two story addition on the east side, and a carport with a decorative balustrade at the roof (mostly missing) on the north side. These additions are in fair condition, but inappropriate to the house.

There are 2 ancillary structures on the property, a well house, likely the same age as the home, and a small "potting shed" likely dating from the early-mid 20th century, with a newer gazebo attached.

Two major restorations have been made to the interior and exterior of the home. The first in 1935, and the other around 1960.

EXTERIOR CONSTRUCTION

The house is of two story construction with the primary facade oriented in a Westward direction and situated on the high point of the narrow lot. The foundation on the two story portion is fieldstone, largely granite, while the foundation of the ell has been covered in common brick. It is not known what material is under the brick, an undated photo from the late 1800's shows the foundation as fieldstone. The hallmark Greek revival soffit return and deep frieze are intact and may be the original material. The wood corner pilasters are present on the house but appear to be newer replacements. The body of the house is covered in aluminum siding with an 8" reveal. The clapboard in the ca. 1900 photo appears to have a 3" reveal. It is not known if the original siding is still underneath. The pilasters surrounding the recessed porch appear to be unchanged from the photo and the operable wood shutters appear to be the same as well.

The pattern and style of windows, 6 lite over 6 lite double hung has been retained. Windows have been removed and added on the north elevation. The fieldstone foundation reveals window openings that have been covered over with similar material. There are no window openings in the ell foundation. It is presumed that this portion of the building contains only a crawl space. The historic portion of the structure has 2 major window modifications on the North facade: a 6 over 6 window has been removed or minimally sided over at the NW corner, first floor and a smaller modern window has been added at the NE corner, second floor which intercepts the frieze.

It is not known what if any windows or detailing remains where the two story addition meets the historic structure on the East elevation.

The roof is currently asphalt 3 tab shingles with roof vents added.

INTERIOR CONSTRUCTION

Access to the interior was not available during our visit. The time of construction would indicate that the structure is likely true post and beam or braced frame construction. This is mentioned in the historic material. Balloon framing existed at the time, but is unlikely in a remote region such as this. The interior rooms would have been dominated by fireplaces for heating and cooking and the presence of center chimneys as seen in the ca. 1900 photo indicate this was the case.

HISTORIC VALUE

This home is one of 19 historically designated surviving Greek Revival homes from the early 19th century in the area. Much of its original detailing is still intact, and the changes that have occurred over its lifetime are now considered historic as well, such as early 20th century windows.

Due to its condition, construction method and proximity to a major road, this house would be an excellent candidate for relocation or restoration. It would be relatively easy to remove the later addition and separate the house into 2 easily managed parts, the two story portion being approximately 18' x 30' and the single story ell being approximately 18' x 35'.

Due to its braced frame construction, it would be theoretically possible to completely disassemble the house and rebuild it at a new location.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION PROVIDED BY OWNER

ATTACHMENT 4, titled "About Vicki and Howard White", provided by the property owner, provides a description of the motivation and intention of the historic designation originally initiated by his parents.

ATTACHMENT 5, titled "Meeting with Farmington Hills Historic Commission on June 10, 2015", also provided by the property owner, provides a detail on the history of the actions taken to sell the entire property as well as to list just the house for sale for \$1.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATION ON ELIMINATION OF DISTRICT

In accordance with the requirements for consideration of the of a historic district outlined in Section 15-32, of Chapter 15, Article II Historic Districts and Historic District Commission, in order to be considered for elimination one or more of the following criteria must be shown:

1. The historic district has lost those physical characteristics that enabled the establishment of the district
2. The historic district was not significant in the way previously defined
3. The historic district was established pursuant to defective procedures

The David Simmons house is not eligible for declassification under the guidelines of Section 15-32, Chapter 15, Article 2 for the following reasons:

1. The house retains its condition, structural integrity, detailing and setting as when it was established as a historic district.

2. The original metrics for historical significance were met when the district was established.
3. The establishment of the historic district was not done with defective procedures.

The study committee agrees with these findings and encourages the relocation of the principle structure, minus the ca. 1978 additions, within the city boundaries, removing the impediment to sale of the property.

PROPERTY TRANSFERS

Oakland County on-line recorded deeds records indicate that this property has been under the ownership of the White Family since 1964. Transaction history prior 1964 is not available.

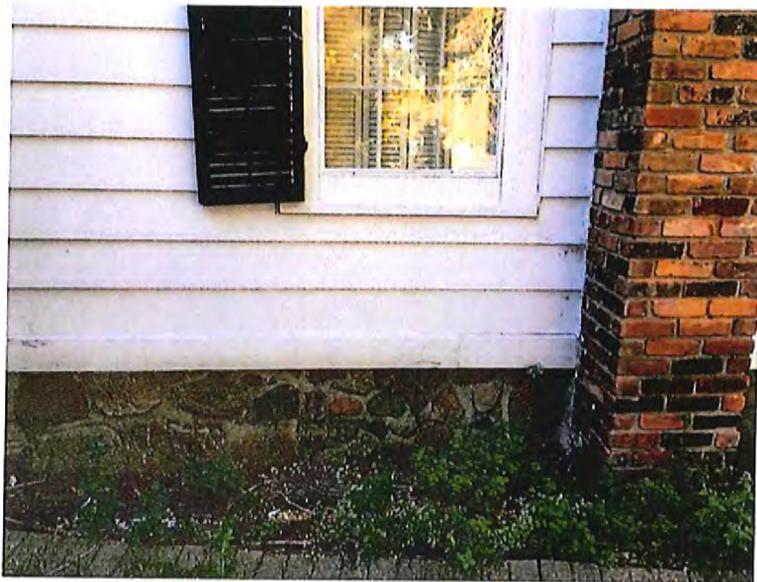
PHOTOGRAPHS WITH CAPTIONS



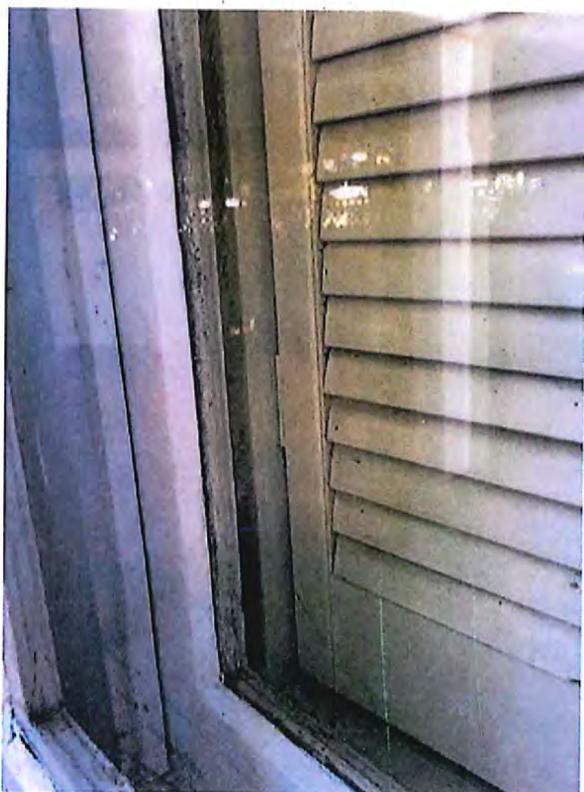
Front of home, November 9, 2015



View of front of home taken from southwest corner of the lot



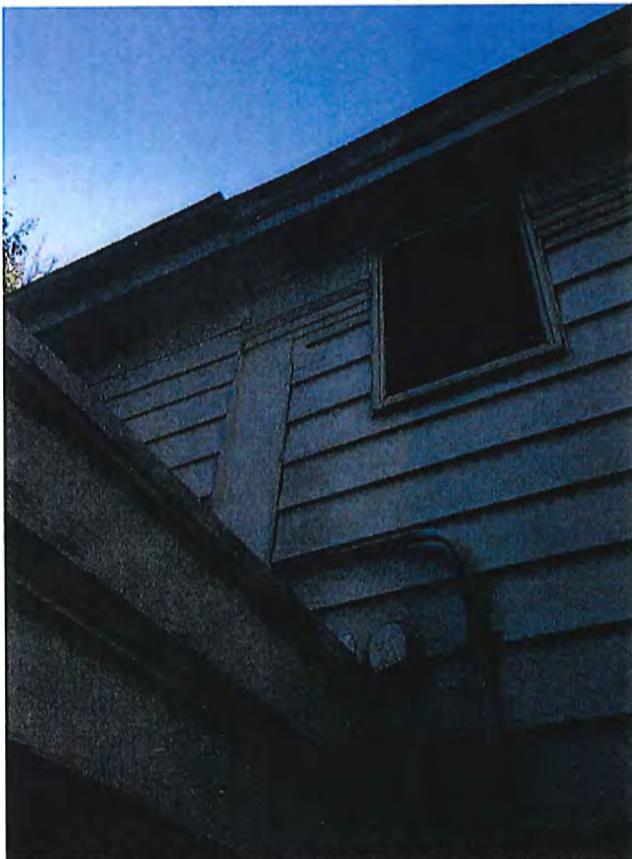
North Elevation illustrating removed foundation window and added utility chimney



Wood window sash



Operable shutter with hardware intact



North elevation illustrating original structure/addition junction and added second floor window



Northwest corner illustrating pilaster (replaced)



North elevation illustrating wood water table



North elevation illustrating window area covered in aluminum siding



West elevation illustrating intact wood pilaster, pilaster capital, frieze, cornice return and window surround



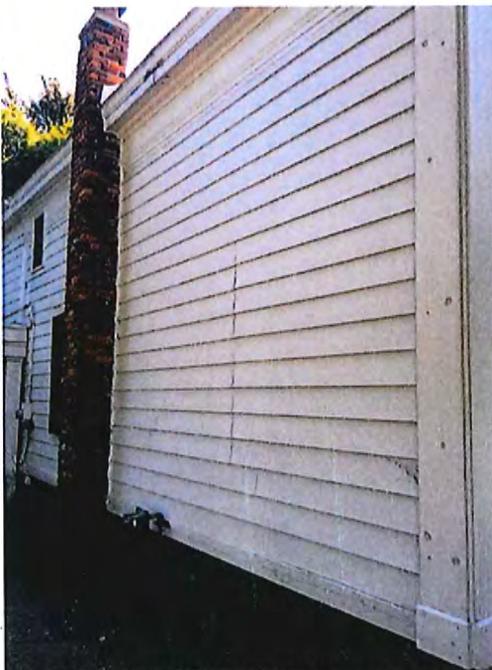
Southwest corner illustrating intact wood pilaster, pilaster capital, frieze, cornice return and window surround



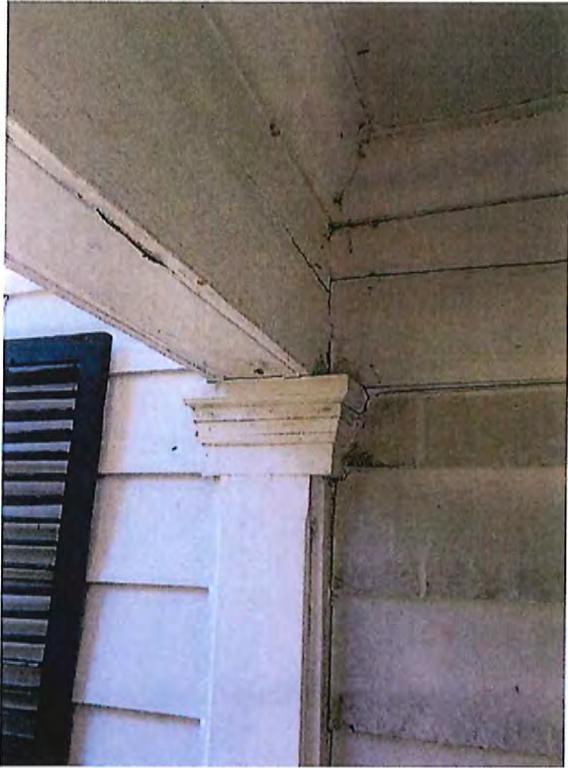
South elevation illustrating intact wood pilaster, pilaster capital, frieze, fascia, and shingle molding



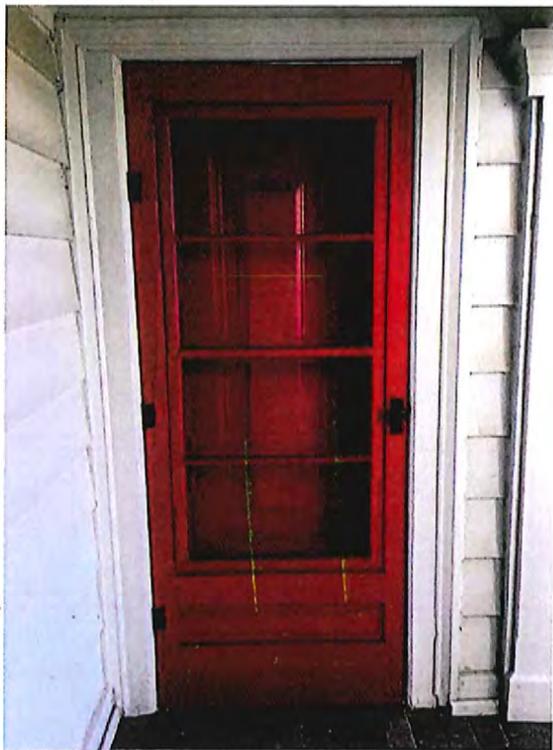
Detail of the north elevation illustrating frieze, soffit, fascia, and shingle molding with minor water damage



North elevation illustrating window area covered in aluminum siding and added brick chimney



Front covered porch interior illustrating cornice molding detail



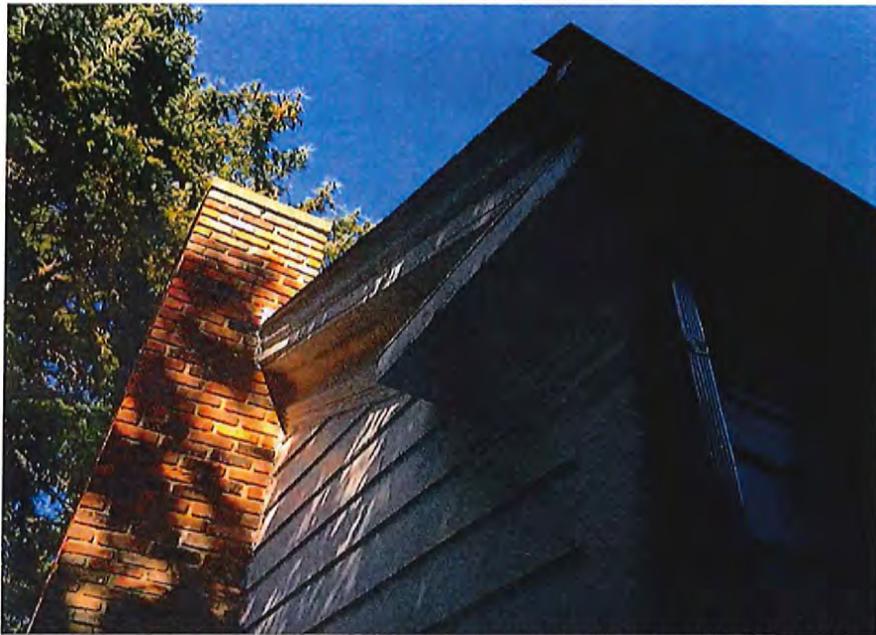
Front entry door (not original) with wood screen door



West elevation illustrating original ell with frieze, soffit, fascia and shingle molding intact. Foundation has been clad in brick or replaced.



South elevation (ell) illustrating later chimney built with reclaimed brick



Southeast corner (ell) illustrating intact wood pilaster, pilaster capital, frieze and cornice return



South elevation illustrating original structure/ell/addition junction. Later bay window added to ell is inadequately framed.



Close-up detail of South elevation illustrating original structure/ell/addition junction



Close-up detail of South elevation illustrating original structure/ell junction with loose aluminum siding over plywood repair



Close-up detail of South elevation illustrating original structure/addition junction with loose aluminum siding over plywood repair. Note original roof trim detail.



Potting shed with later gazebo addition located east of the main house on the property. Earlier portions date circa 1920



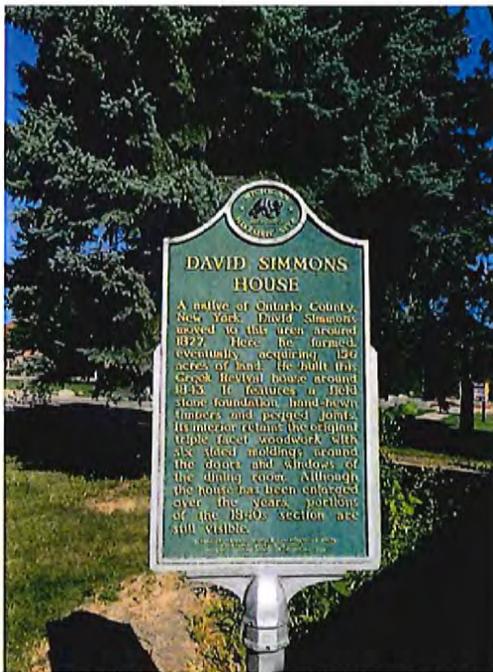
Accessory structure in rear yard



East side (rear) of attached carport structure



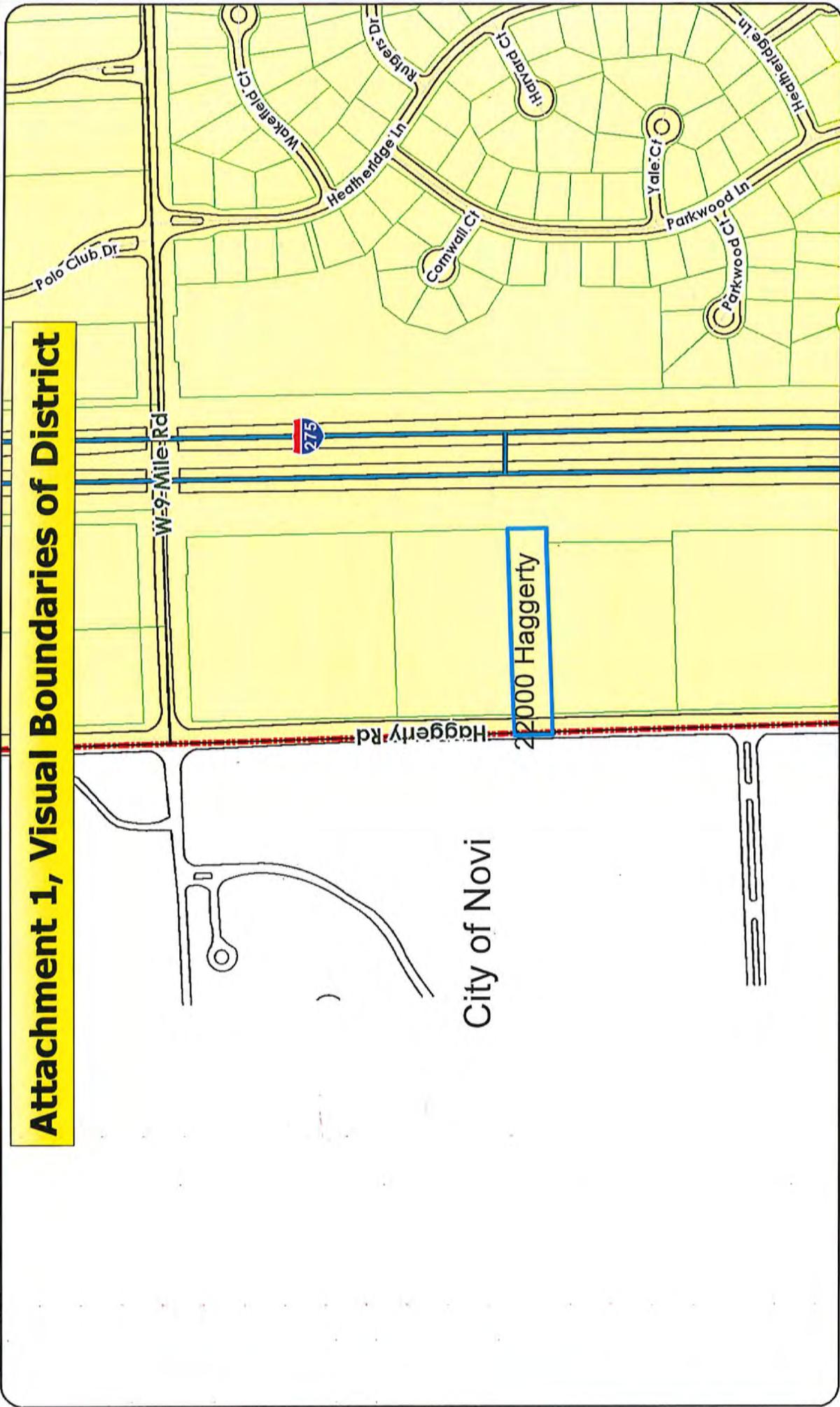
North side of attached carport structure



State of Michigan historic marker located on West side of main house



Attachment 1, Visual Boundaries of District



Author:

Date: 11/11/2015

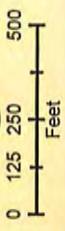
DISCLAIMER: The information provided herewith has been compiled from recorded deeds, plats, tax maps, surveys and other public records. It is not a legally recorded map or survey and is not intended to be used as one. The City of Farmington Hills assumes no liability for any claims arising from the use of this map.

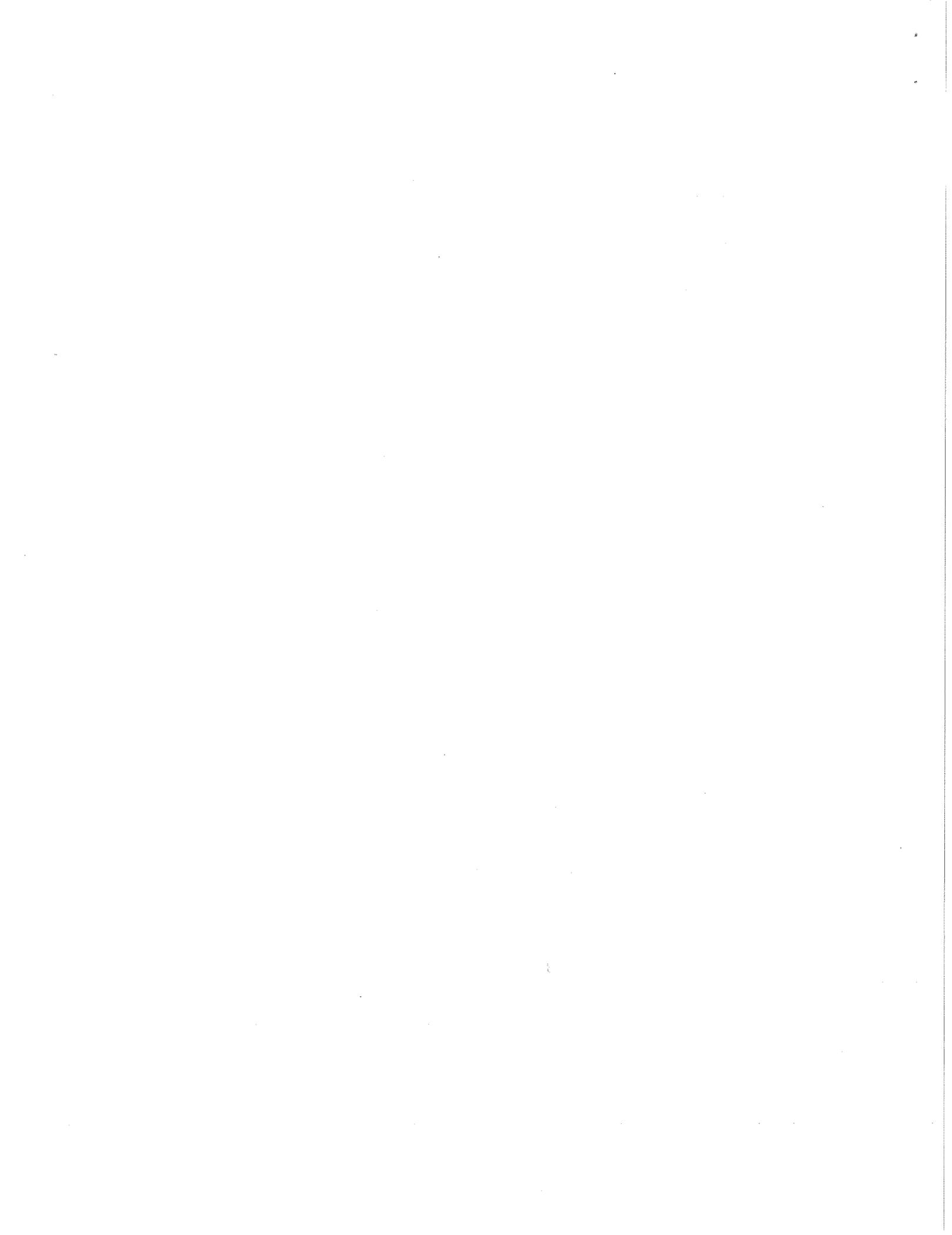
Legend

-  Interstates
-  State
-  Major roads
-  Minor roads
-  Road edges
-  Tax parcels
-  Municipal boundaries

City of Farmington Hills

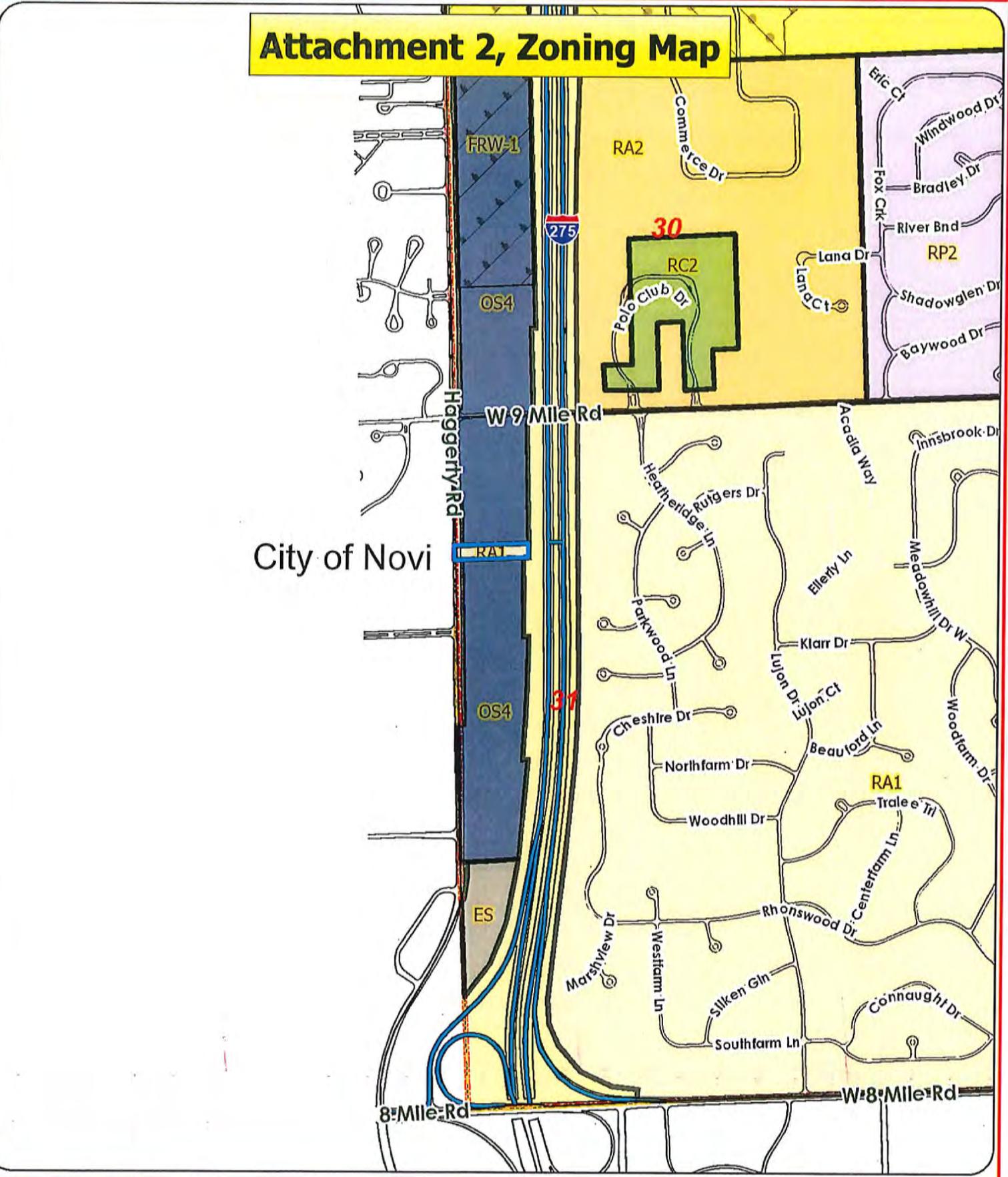
31555 W. Eleven Mile Rd
Farmington Hills, MI 48336
fhgov.com





Attachment 2, Zoning Map

City of Novi



Author:
Date: 11/11/2015

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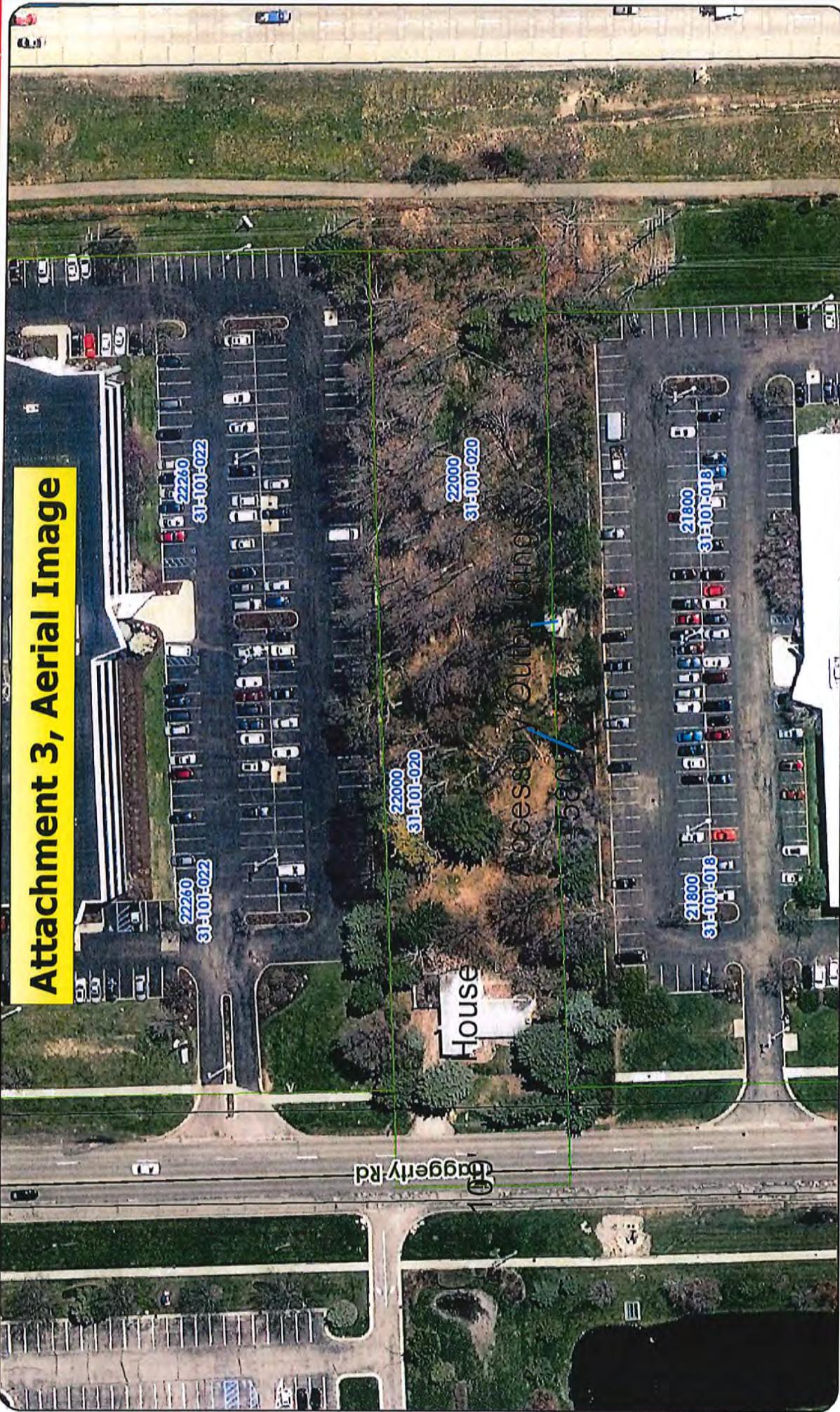
Legend

City of Farmington Hills
31555 W. Eleven Mile Rd
Farmington Hills, MI 48336
fhgov.com

0 250 500 1,000
Feet



Attachment 3, Aerial Image



City of Farmington Hills

31555 W. Eleven Mile Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48336
fh.gov.com



Legend

-  Interstates
-  State
-  Major roads
-  Minor roads
-  Road edges
-  Tax parcels
-  Red: Band_1
-  Green: Band_2
-  Blue: Band_3

Author:

Date: 11/11/2015

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ATTACHMENT 4

About Vicki and Howard White

In 1964, my parents moved from Detroit to their dream home "in the country". To my parents, the 22000 Haggerty Road home had charm and the surrounding property was reminiscent to my father of his childhood home in northern Michigan. Neighbors were few and you could count the surrounding homes on one hand. The Janer family, for example, lived directly to the south and had a large barn with horses. My parents purchased the home with 1.5 acres, and in 1966, when the two acres directly north of their home became available, they purchased it as well. Not quite the setting of David Simmons and his 166 acres but beautiful.

My father was quite handy and was able to care for and maintain the home until he fell ill in the late 1970s. For years, they were regularly approached by Friedman to sell their property. Their constant phone calls and offers were very upsetting to my parents as evidenced by the attached photo of one of many offers she tore up. As the landscape started to change on Haggerty Road, in 1981 that they decided to take an action so that "Friedman can't get his hands on it". She became aware of the Farmington Hills Historic district and looked to them as a means to prevent their home from being "condemned by the city, the house demolished and the property "given" to Friedman".

In 1985, due to my father's continued failing health and inability to work, my parents had no choice but to sell the two acres to the north of their property. Their neighbors to the south also sold their property and shortly thereafter, the landscape surrounding their home changed dramatically from a country setting to a commercial office complex with the newly built Friedman pair of office buildings flanking their home.

In 1992, my father passed away, leaving maintenance of the home to my mother. She replaced the roof and repaired the chimney but did little else to the exterior of the home, as she also fell ill. It wasn't until her passing in 2009 that the home had any substantive maintenance when the family spent \$11,000 to have the exterior of the home repainted, moldings restored, and trees and overgrown shrubs removed so the house was visible from the road in order to sell the home per her wishes.

The property is no longer in the idyllic country setting that existed when it was originally purchased in 1964 by my parents or even when it was designated as a historic district in 1981. The historic district designation was not pursued in order to protect the home's historic value, but instead, it was used by my mother as a means to an end to keep a developer from ever owning it.

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ATTACHMENT 5

Meeting with Farmington Hills Historic Commission on June 10, 2015

Personal Representative Obligation: Legal obligation to sell the assets of the Vicki S. White estate at 22000 Haggerty Road expediently and with a fiduciary responsibility to maximize the profit to her heirs

Issues:

- The house exterior has been restored, listed by four Real Estate Companies over 6 years, reduced in price to considerably below fair market value, and rejected by a local Historic organization
- The historic designation on the house reduces the fair market value of the property by \$100K-\$200K

Request of Historic Commission: Remove the historic designation from the property at 22000 Haggerty Rd

Rationale: Buyers saw the historic designation, required upgrades, & location of home on the property as an obstacle

Actions taken to sell property:

- Restored exterior of home with a loan (Estate is \$34,000 in debt due to upkeep of the residence)
- Listed the property four times over a 6 year period, with three residential and one commercial Real Estate Companies and reducing the asking price each time
 - 2009 listed with Clear Choice Realty for \$520,000
 - 2010 listed with Coldwell Banker for \$485,000
 - 2012 listed with Real Estate One for \$399,000
 - 2013 listed with a commercial broker, Thomas Duke, for \$289,000
 - Thomas Duke marketing actions:
 - contacted over 1000 brokers and prospective buyers
 - mailed flyers and other advertisements describing the property to clients
 - posted large sign at back of property to attract buyers from I275
 - Listed the house "for sale to move" in the Oakland Press for \$1 beginning 6/11/2015. No offers.

Other actions taken:

- Spoke with Greenmead about paying to move the house to their historic park (Greenmead rejected)
- Met with historic commission on a plan to build an IT office building (buyer rejected)
- Counteroffered property at \$229K, which reduced it an additional \$60K (buyer rejected)

Buyer Feedback:

Thomas Duke has shown the property to 22 prospective buyers (plus other brokers)

- Buyers have offered \$80K to \$150K for the property. Comparables for the property are \$335-\$350K
- Feedback from buyers:
 - House does not have the charm of a historic home (aluminum siding, 1980's two story unheated addition, carport, and few original historic features on exterior)
 - Location of the home on the property not a positive potential 'face of the buyer business'
 - Placement of the home on the property (front to depth ratio of 135 frontage, 510 depth) may require agreement to access back of property through neighboring office building parking lot
 - Costs to restore home are an added burden to developing the remaining property and include:
 - Replacement of Septic system
 - Connecting water and sewer
 - Replacement of windows
 - Insulate home
 - Install new HVAC
 - Prospective Buyer Contractors have all indicated that there are far too many unknowns to determine potential cost to restore the home

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