

STAFF REPORT: 7/14/2021 MEETING

PREPARED BY: J. ROSS

ADDRESS: 4100 & 4200 BLOCK LINCOLN STREET

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WOODBRIDGE FARM

APPLICANT: JAKE DWYER (ARTIST)

OWNER: CITY OF DETROIT/DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 7/22/2021

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 7/1/2021

SCOPE: ADD PAINTED MURALS TO STREET BED

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The current project is proposed for location within the street/public-right-of-way in the 4100 and 4200 block of Lincoln Street within the Woodbridge Farm Historic District. The street bed within the project area is concrete with an asphalt surface which is grey in color, and measures approximately 40'-0" in width/curb-to-curb. Curbs are concrete and stone. Approximately 5'-0"-wide grassy berms with intermittent street trees are adjacent to the curbs within the 4100-4200 blocks of Lincoln Street. Approximately 6'-0" wide sidewalks are adjacent to the berms and mark the edge of each property within the project area. The concrete sidewalks vary from good to poor condition, with some flags having been recently installed as they display a "bright white" brushed finish, while some flags present a weathered grey appearance with exposed aggregate visible. Ten homes front the project area. Specifically, four remain within the project area's 4200 block while six remain in the 4100 block. These homes date from ca. 1890 through ca. 1920 and are 1 ½ to 2 ½ stories in height. Exterior walls are clad with brick, wood, or modern composite siding. Setbacks from the sidewalks range from approximately 6'-1/2" to 19'-0". The remaining parcels within the 4100 and 4200 block of Lincoln Street are vacant lots.



Staff photo, 4100 block of Lincoln, facing northwest from intersection of Lincoln and W. Willis Streets



Staff photo, 4200 block of Lincoln, facing south from intersection of Lincoln and Calumet Streets

PROPOSAL

Per the current submission, the applicant proposes the following work:

- Paint one 320'x40' midblock mural on the asphalt surface/streetbed in the 4100 block of Lincoln Street as per the submitted renderings. The southern end of the mural will be located 20' north of the intersections of Lincoln Street and Alexandrine, while the northern end of the mural will be located 20' south of the intersection of Lincoln and West Willis Street
- Paint one 320'x40' mural on the asphalt surface/streetbed in the 4200 block of Lincoln Street as per the submitted renderings. The mural will begin 20' north of the intersection of Lincoln and West Willis Street. The northern end will be 20' south of the intersection of Lincoln and Calumet Streets.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The murals are proposed for location within City right-of-way. The City of Detroit Public Works Department has developed a set of guidelines/requirements for such projects. See the attached City

of Detroit document entitled “Paint the Street: painted street murals & crosswalks” which outlines the requirements to which this project must adhere

- Per DPW’s guidelines, a permit is required for any future touch ups to the mural
- Per DPW’s guidelines, a water-based traffic paint is required for easy clean-up/to allow for an easy power-washing to remove the murals
- The applicant has submitted a letter from the Woodbridge Neighborhood Development Corporation (WND), which notes that the residents of 4100 and 4200 block of Lincoln initiated this project in order “to call attention to the residential quality of the area and thereby reduce traffic speeds.” The letter also outlines the opinions of all eight occupied households within the project area.
- A meeting to include the neighborhood residents, the muralist, and WND is set to be held on July 9, 2021. The applicant has stated that he will present any neighborhood feedback to the Commission prior to the July 14, 2021 meeting.
- It appears that paint will be applied to the non-historic asphalt surface only and that curbs will not be affected by the project.
- Per staff’s conversation with Angie Gaabo on 7/9/2021, the WND will be responsible for maintaining the murals. Also, Ms. Gaabo stated that the WND hopes to maintain the murals as permanent elements within their proposed locations.

ISSUES

- The murals will represent a strong new visual element within this portion of the historic district. Such a surface treatment/location of painted graphics (outside of typical traffic control graphics) is not typical within the streetbeds of the Woodbridge Farm historic district. Though the street beds within the project area are not of historic age, it is staff’s opinion that the introduction of painted graphics to the street is not in keeping with the character of the district as streets are generally represented as grey concrete and asphalt horizontal hardscape elements. It is therefore staff’s opinion that the project does not meet the SOI Standard #2, which notes the following:

The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

- However, staff does recommend that the Commission consider the allowance of the project via the issuance of a Notice to Proceed, under the following prongs as the project does appear to have strong community support and has been proposed in order to mitigate dangerous conditions within the project area (speeding traffic within the 4100 & 4200 blocks of Lincoln Street):
 - (1) *The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or the occupants;*
 - (4) *Retention of the resource would not be in the interest of the majority of the community.*
- The project will not set precedent as all cases should be reviewed on their own merit/on a case-by-case basis.

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-73. Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)

Staff recommends that the Commission deny the issuance Certificate of Appropriateness for the proposed project because it does not conform to the district's Elements of Design and meets the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation. In particular, Standard # 2, *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

Section Sec. 21-2-75. Issuance of Notice to Proceed (NTP)

Staff recommends that the Commission issue a NTP for the project as proposed because the following two conditions prevail:

- (1) *The resource constitutes a hazard to the safety of the public or the occupants;*
- (4) *Retention of the resource would not be in the interest of the majority of the community.*

However, staff recommends that this NTP be issued with the condition that the paint application be limited to the asphalt street surface/that no paint be applied to the curbs or sidewalks within the proposed project area.