

ANN ARBOR HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

Staff Report

ADDRESS: 2781 Packard Road, Application Number HDC23-0058

DISTRICT: Cobblestone Farm Historic District

REPORT DATE: May 11, 2023

REPORT PREPARED BY: Jill Thacher, Historic Preservation Coordinator

REVIEW COMMITTEE DATE: May 8, 2023

OWNER

Name: City of Ann Arbor
Address: 301 East Huron Street
 Ann Arbor, MI 48104
Phone: 734-794-6000

APPLICANT

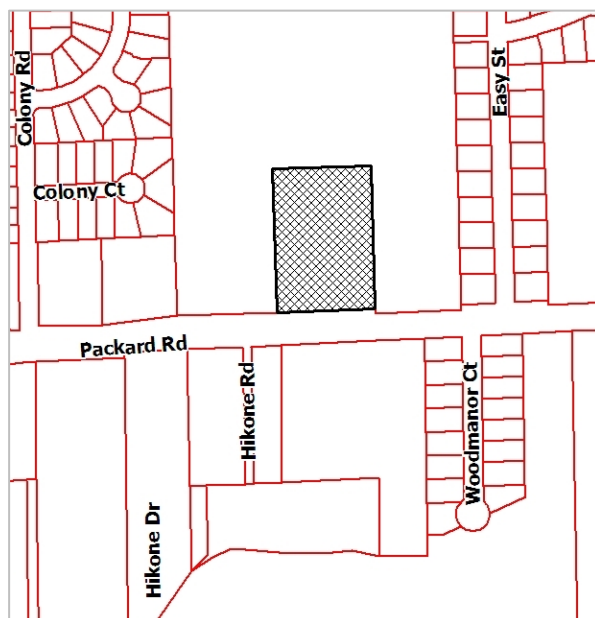
Linda Hoot, Homeland Solar LLC
 317 Metty Drive, Suite 4
 Ann Arbor, MI 48103

BACKGROUND: The Ticknor-Campbell house is known as the Cobblestone Farm because of the unique construction technique of the cobblestone house on the property. It was built by Dr. Benajah Ticknor in 1844 in the Classic Revival style and is one of the finest of the few examples of cobblestone construction in Michigan. Together with the wooden kitchen ell in the rear, it forms an unusually fine example of a pioneer Michigan farm dwelling. There has been only one alteration to the exterior of the cobblestone house. During the Booth family tenure (1860-1880), an Italianate-style wooden front porch with bracketed columns was added to the front façade. The barn was constructed on the property in 1986 as part of the farmstead restoration after the property was acquired by the City in 1972. The barn has no historic precedent (i.e. it is not a replica of a barn that once existed at this location on the farm), though the form is in keeping with those once found on the site.

In 2021 the HDC approved an application for walking paths, placards, and a kiosk on the property (HDC21-234).

LOCATION: The site is located on the north side of Packard Road, east of Colony Road and west of Easy Street.

APPLICATION: The applicant seeks HDC approval to install a solar array consisting of up to three rows of 18 solar panels on each of the event barn's two roof surfaces. The panels are black with silver frames.



APPLICABLE REGULATIONS:**From the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation:**

- (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.
- (9) New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.
- (10) New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

From the Secretary of the Interior's Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings:**Energy Efficiency**

Recommended: Placing a new addition that may be necessary to increase energy efficiency on non-character-defining elevations.

From the Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines (other Guidelines may apply):**Solar**

Appropriate: Mounting solar panels at grade or on ground pole mountings. In the absence of an appropriate ground-based mounting location, panels should be mounted on side or rear facing roof surfaces.

Installing mechanical and service equipment on the roof related to the solar units and their related devices so that they are inconspicuous from the public right-of-way and do not damage or obscure character-defining features.

For sloped roof installations, mounting solar panels parallel to and within 8" of roof surface.

Not Appropriate: Mounting solar panels and their related devices on primary elevations or roofs that face the primary elevation or in planes that are highly visible from the street view. This location has the highest impact on the historic character of the historic building and all other options should be thoroughly explored.

Any other alteration or installation procedure that will cause irreversible changes to historic features or materials.

STAFF FINDINGS:

1. The application proposes to install an array of 102 or 104 solar panels on the east and

west facing roof surfaces of the modern event barn (constructed in 1986). Meters, air conditioning inverters and other related mechanicals would be located on the rear (north) elevation. Because the panels are not black with black frames, staff cannot approve the application.

2. The event barn is near a smaller animal barn. This smaller barn does not appear on 1947 aerial photos (see end of staff report).
3. Per application attachments, the barn is located over 100 feet from the Ticknor-Campbell House and over 275 feet from the Packard Road right of way. The event barn is near a smaller animal barn. This smaller barn does not appear on 1947 aerial photos (see end of staff report). Staff feels the use of the more obvious silver-framed solar panels is acceptable given the barn's distance from the house and street. The height of the barn will further minimize their visibility. Since the site is part of a City park, visitors will have more vantage points from which to see the barn than only the street and sidewalk. Nevertheless, the distance between historic and modern structures means this work will not have a negative effect on any of the site's historic buildings, features or landscapes.
4. Staff believes that the materials and design of the solar panels are compatible with the existing structure, neighboring buildings, and the surrounding historic district, and meet both the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*.

POSSIBLE MOTIONS: (Note that the motion is only a suggestion. The Review Committee, consisting of staff and at least two Commissioners, will meet with the applicant on site and then make a recommendation at the meeting.)

I move that the Commission issue a certificate of appropriateness for the application at 2781 Packard Road, a contributing property in the Cobblestone Farm Historic District, to install a solar array on the roof of the 1986 event barn, as proposed. The work is compatible in exterior design, arrangement, texture, material and relationship to the rest of the building and the surrounding area and meets *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*, in particular standards 2, 9 and 10 and the guidelines for roofs, energy efficiency, and mechanical systems, as well as the *Ann Arbor Historic District Design Guidelines*, particularly as they pertain to solar installations.

ATTACHMENTS: roof plans, narrative, photos

2781 Packard Road, Application Photos (event barn at center)



2781 Packard Aerial Photos, 2020 and 1947

