

STAFF REPORT for OCTOBER 6, 2021 HRC MEETING

Case #: COA2021-077
Staff: Michelle M. McCullough

Applicant: City of Winston-Salem
David Avalos

LOCATION

District: Old Salem Historic District
Street: Academy Street, Liberty Street, Main Street, and Old Salem Road
Building: N/A
Status: N/A
Local Historic
Landmark#: N/A

REQUEST(S)

- Liberty/Main Two-Way Conversion Project

APPLICABLE DESIGN REVIEW STANDARDS

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation available at <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm> and *Old Salem Historic District Guide to the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Process and Design Review Guidelines* available at <https://www.cityofws.org/DocumentCenter/View/3451/Old-Salem-Historic-District-Design-Guidelines-PDF>

STAFF COMMENTS

Old Salem Road is classified as a major thoroughfare and, as such, must meet NCDOT and City of Winston-Salem standards while also following the guidelines published by the Federal Highway Administration.

The application proposes changes to Old Salem Road, Academy Street, Brookstown Avenue, and Main Street as part of a larger downtown street project. The larger street project will convert the one-way sections of Liberty Street and Main Street to two-way traffic. Brookstown Avenue is the southern terminus of the two-way street conversion of Liberty and Main Streets. The preferred treatment is to bring Liberty Street and Main Street traffic into one intersection at Brookstown Avenue. This allows replacement of a portion of the Old Salem Road pavement with a grassy area. The existing intersection at Brookstown Avenue and the northbound lanes of Old Salem Road will be widened to handle the new traffic volume and two-way orientation. The widening will require the relocation of utility poles and lines and the removal and trimming of existing trees in the right-of-way. The City is requesting to make all necessary and required changes to facilitate the new road configuration.

The *Old Salem Historic District Guide to the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) Process and Design Review Guidelines* does not consider the local and state requirements for major thoroughfares in any section. Therefore, staff reviewed the project using the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* along with the *Old Salem Guidelines*.

STAFF FINDINGS

Commission staff finds that the project is not incongruous with the character of the District because:

- 1) The proposed project will resurface portions of Old Salem Road and Brookstown Avenue; remove portions of Old Salem Road and seed the area in grass; grade the grass area and install a berm to ensure drainage; and widen an existing portion of Old Salem Road. This change will remove a

major incongruous feature, the roadway, and place the area back into a use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the site and environment. (Secretary's Standards, Rehabilitation, Standards 1 and 2)

- 2) The proposed work includes the relocation of five existing utility poles. The new poles will require the trimming of two existing trees and removal of four trees: two American Beech, one Silver Maple, and one Green Ash. The Green Ash tree is in a state of decline and infested with the Emerald Ash Borers. The City's Urban Forester has stated that due to the Emerald Ash Borers, the tree will not likely survive another growing season. The Silver Maple is in moderate health. However, it has dead limbs in the crown and decay fungus. The City's Urban Forester states that given the species characteristics, current condition, and excavation/construction to take place within its immediate environment, this tree is a good candidate for removal. The two American Beech trees were found by the City's Urban Forester to be in good condition and growing with vigor. However, the road widening, and utility pole relocation could compromise the root systems and will almost certainly submit their crowns to harsh utility pruning in the future. The utility lines cannot be relocated underground because such a major project would affect all vegetation and other features in the right-of-way, which would disturb the historic character that exists on the east side of Old Salem Road. (*Significant Landscape Features*, Old Salem Guideline 4 and *Public Rights-of-Way*, Old Salem, Guideline 8)
- 3) The proposed project includes new standard traffic signs that meet NCDOT Standards. The proposed new signs are metal and will be installed on posts that are typically 10' in height. They range in size with the largest being 36" x 36" x 36". The sheen to be applied to each sign meets the NC DOT, Division of Highways, Transportation Mobility and Safety Standards for retroreflective sign sheeting. The material, size, scale, typeface and character are appropriate for the major thoroughfare. The signage is not obtrusive, and it does not cover any building facades, significant architectural features, or block streetscape views. The signage is removable, and the posts relate to the sign and type of street. (*Signage*, Old Salem Guidelines 2, 3, 4, 5, and 9).
- 4) The proposed project installs a new brick sidewalk on the south side of Brookstown Avenue from Liberty Street to Main Street. The brick will be Pathway Autumn (rumbled), which was approved by the Commission and used recently in the Old Salem Infrastructure project. The new curbing will be concrete and differentiated from the historic granite curbing. (*Public Rights-of-Way*, Old Salem Guideline 6)
- 5) The proposed project will remove and replace in-kind the curb ramp at the southeast corner of Academy Street and Old Salem Road. All other existing concrete curb ramps at the intersections of Academy Street and Brookstown Avenue with Old Salem Road will be made accessible with the installation of American with Disabilities Act (ADA)-compliant mats. The mats will be black fiberglass reinforced composite material, 2' x 4' in size with a truncated dome texture. The ADA mats will not be installed on existing sidewalks constructed of brick or stone. The mats are required per the ADA for the safety of visually impaired pedestrians. (*Safety, Accessibility, and Code Requirements*, Old Salem Guideline 1 and *Public Rights-of-Way*, Old Salem Guideline 6).
- 6) The proposed project installs new pedestrian signals at the intersection of Academy Street and Old Salem Road. The new signals will be black-painted metal. The pedestrian signals and pushbuttons will be located on a combination of existing or replaced wooden utility poles or on new metal poles. The Type I pushbutton pole will be 5' high. The Type II pedestrian signal pole will be a minimum of 7' and a max of 10' to the base of the signal heads. The signal head will add another 3' to the total height. The square base will measure 13.75" x 13.75" and will be 15" high. The signals are being installed to provide the necessary pedestrian safety to cross the busy intersection. The signals will not be installed on any historic structures and will not affect the character defining features of the District. The signals will be painted black to make them as unobtrusive as possible. (*Safety, Accessibility, and Code Requirements*, Old Salem Guidelines 1 and 6).

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission approve COA2021-077 on Old Salem Road, located in the Old Salem Historic District, with the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant shall stop construction and contact staff for further direction if during the project any archaeological resources are discovered;
- 2) Within six months of completion of the work, the applicant shall plant at least six new trees on the applicant's property bounded by Old Salem Road, Main Street, and Brookstown Avenue. The species and location of said trees shall be approved by the City's Urban Forester and staff;
- 3) The applicant shall receive, prior to commencement of the work, all other required permits or permissions from governmental agencies;
- 4) Commission staff shall review and approve any revisions or deviations to any portion of the as-submitted work, that qualifies as a minor work, prior to commencement of that portion of the project; and,
- 5) The applicant shall submit the Certificate of Appropriateness Request for Certification of Completed Work form and photo documentation of the completed project to HRC staff within ten (10) days of its completion.