



## PLANNING REPORT

# Architectural Review Board

Wednesday, March 15, 2023

## 36-40 N. HIGH STREET 23-015INF

<https://dublinohiousa.gov/arb/23-015>

### Case Summary

Address	36-40 N. High St, Dublin, OH 43017
Proposal	Informal review and feedback for the repair and replacement of stones within a historic retaining wall on shared lots totalling .46 acres in the Historic District, northeast of the intersection of Wing Hill Lane and N. High Street.
Request	This is a request for non-binding review and feedback of a future development application.
Zoning	HD-HC: Historic District-Historic Core
Planning Recommendation	<u><a href="#">Consideration of the Discussion Questions</a></u>
Next Steps	Subsequent to informal review and feedback, the applicant may apply for a Minor Project Review (MPR) to be considered by the Architectural Review Board (ARB).
Applicant	Wes Davis, Osborn Engineering
Case Manager	Sarah Tresouthick Holt, AICP, ASLA, Senior Planner (614) 410-4662 <a href="mailto:sholt@dublin.oh.us">sholt@dublin.oh.us</a>

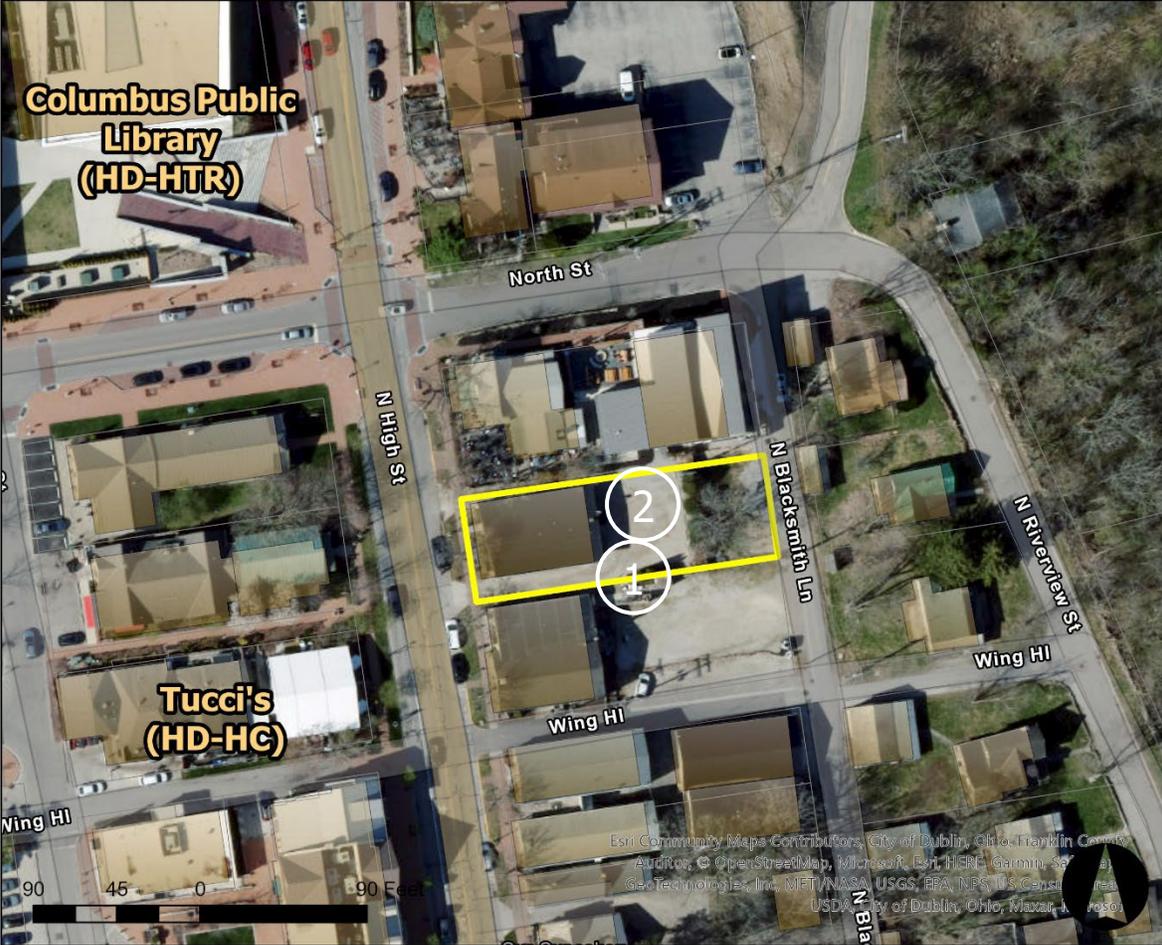
Site Location Map

23-015 INF | 36-40 N. High St



**Site Features**

- 1 2-story privy  
36-38 N. High
- 2 40 N. High parking  
lot



## 1. Background

### Site Summary

This approximately 102-foot long historic wall straddles three lots and ownerships: 38 and 40 N. High Street and 25 North Street and is part of a continuous wall system that includes the historic privy behind 36-38 N. High Street. The section between 36 and 40 N. High Street is experiencing deterioration. The property is zoned HD-HC, Historic District - Historic Core and is located immediately north of Wing Hill Lane, between N. High Street and N. Blacksmith Lane.

The U-shaped wall sits towards the rear of the properties and accommodates approximately seven feet of grade change from west to east. The wall is visible from both Wing Hill and N. Blacksmith Lanes and contains the notable two-story privy at 38 N. High Street. The applicant seeks to stabilize the wall for two of reasons: a Final Development Plan (FDP) condition of approval for the mixed-use development at 36-38 N. High Street and conservation of the historic resource generally.

The wall is not identified on the City's Historical and Cultural Assessment from 2017. Nevertheless, we know it was constructed in ca. 1934 by Forest "Ticky" Wing, for which Wing Hill Lane is named. It is part of the system that supports the two-story privy found at 38 N. High, which has been identified as a significant historic object.

### Case History

#### *December 2022*

An FDP for 36-38 N. High was approved by Board and included a condition of approval stating a MPR would be needed to demonstrate how to stabilize this wall prior to any demolition work on the 36-38 project. The condition was added due to the proximity of future utilities to the wall, where excavation for such could further endanger the wall.

#### *November 2022*

An MPR was submitted for repair of this wall, spanning the 36-40 N. High Street addresses, on November 29, 2022. After a round of reviews, the project stalled with differing opinions about how to repair the wall and to what extent. In order to keep the project moving forward, Staff suggested that the Informal process be used to gain direction from the Board.

#### *May 2021*

Dublin requested PDL review the wall, its integrity, and the potential for either reconstruction or demolition. A structural assessment provided by Korda/Nemeth Engineering is attached. The report noted the original wall functioned because a free-draining material backfilled behind the interlocking face stones, allowing natural drainage to percolate through the structure. It also noted mortar-filled joints from alterations and repairs have trapped water behind the wall, leading to areas of compromise. The study recommended a professional stonemasons be consulted to provide additional options for preservation and prevention of further deterioration, including limiting parking surcharges, drainage, and invasive tree growth.

#### *Early 2020*

The owner of 40 N. High Street brought Informal Review for expansion of building, addition of townhomes, partial demolition of the historic wall, and full demolition of the historic privy under previous Code. The Board expressed unanimous support for preserving both wall and privy and

did acknowledge potential for wall dismantling and rebuilding. The proposal did not move forward; minutes from the meeting are attached.

### **Process**

An Informal Request allows non-binding feedback from the Board to an applicant, prior to the submittal of a formal application. The next step in this process would be an MPR, which allows an efficient review process for qualified projects per Chapter 153 of the Code. Upon review and approval of the MPR by the ARB, the applicant may file for a building permit, which, in this case, would include a full structural design.

## **2. Zoning Code**

### **Historic District – Historic Core District**

The site is zoned HD-HC: Historic District – Historic Core. The intent of the Historic Core is to ensure sensitive infill development and provide an improved environment for walking while accommodating vehicles.

### **Historic Design Guidelines**

The development standards are supplemented by the *Historic Design Guidelines*, which provide the Board additional direction on preservation, sensitive design, and complementary materials. The Guidelines provide best practices for rehabilitation and new construction. Specifically, Section 6.4 speaks to walls, stating that original stone walls...should be maintained, retained, and not be modified in any way. In this case, the wall appears to be deteriorating and intervention is required. Section 6.4C states that where possible, degraded stone walls should be rehabilitated without compromising the integrity and character.

## **3. Project**

The applicant is seeking non-binding feedback for repair of a portion of the wall that spans 36-38 to 40 N. High Street. The portion behind 25 North Street appears to be in stable condition. Various options are available for consideration, some of which would set a precedent within the District.

Since this is such a unique project, staff consulted with Preservation Designs, Ltd. (PDL) for their expertise and guidance. This report includes their recommendations, and their full responses are attached.

### **Site Conditions**

The existing wall between 36 and 40 N. High Street shows a number of areas of deterioration, as noted in PDL's latest report and photographs, attached. Areas of bulging are seen on the south-facing portion of the wall at 36-38 N. High Street. Currently, 40 N. High Street uses the top of the walled area as customer parking, which adds an unanticipated surcharge to the structure. Additionally, drainage from 40 N. High has been directed to the side of the wall facing 36-38, via a flexible pipe, directly above the previously-mentioned deformation on the south side of the wall. According to PDL's research, this wall was originally designed to be dry laid, with water allowed to percolate through it. Over the years, portions of the wall have been mortared together, compromising the original structural integrity.

At some point in the past, a sewer line from 40 N. High was installed into the east side of the wall, compromising the structural integrity and aesthetics in this location. Finally, invasive Ailanthus trees have been allowed to grow on top of and below the wall at 40 N. High, where their roots and suckers further break apart the structure.

### **Proposal**

Initially, the applicant proposed to dismantle the affected portions of the wall, install French drains to carry water away from the building at 40 N. High, regrade the parking lot at 40 N. High Street, and reconstruct portions of the wall using a local stonemason. Staff has been unable to obtain structural calculations to ensure that this approach is adequate.

The applicant has submitted a MPR application for the wall repair. Staff recommended the application be brought to the ARB informally to help answer the larger outstanding question of the extent of the wall repair, particularly given the multiple ownerships involved. The applicant is proposing approximately 26 linear feet (20 feet south-facing, and 6 feet east-facing) of wall repair on the south and east sides. This would address the portion that is immediately adjacent to the previously-approved 36-38 N. High Street project, but would leave the issues behind 40 N. High unaddressed. This wall functions as a total system based on it being pervious to water infiltration, and staff has concerns that repairing some of the wall to be impervious/mortared does not address the wall system as a whole. Staff requests the Board's comments on the desired approach to the wall repair.

A potential alternative suggested by the applicant and staff to ensure the longevity and safety of the wall is to build a new concrete wall faced with the original stones. The 2021 Korda report also recommended that the wall be replaced with an engineered system, "rather than relying upon a patch and repair approach to the existing wall". Korda stated that any future development adjacent to the wall is likely to exceed the designed loads and pressures for the historic wall, further supporting their opinion for an engineered wall. Structural calculations, and a soils report, are necessary for this approach. There is anecdotal evidence that the area below the parking lot is solid bedrock; however, this would need to be proven at next review. Staff is concerned about setting negative precedents within the District for complete wall reconstruction, since the Guidelines' goal is to preserve walls to the greatest extent possible. Staff requests the Board's thoughts on total reconstruction of this wall.

PDL's opinion from its November 2022 memo is to consult with professional stonemasons and structural experts who may have other ways to better preserve the wall without complete deconstruction. They could also assist in management strategies, such as avoiding surcharges from parked cars and drainage from existing structures as described herein. In the MPR submittal, the applicant has not provided evidence of contacting specialists in these kinds of structures and their preservation.

### **Drainage and Sewer Impacts**

Weep holes and outlets to drain water through the wall will need to be appropriately designed, no matter the construction technique decided upon. These should replicate typical details at the time of construction, and should not use any exposed, or visible, PVC pipe. Demonstration of this would need to occur at MPR.

The existing roof drainage from 40 N. High Street will need to be rerouted to prevent further damage to the wall and impacts to adjacent properties. Refer to Item 4 in Figure 2, PDL report page 2. This needs to be fully addressed at MPR.

The assumed sanitary sewer service at 40 N. High Street running through the wall needs to be shown on the plans, along with its connection to the main line sewer. It also needs to be determined if this is an active service, and if so, brought up to current standards including relocation, provision of clean outs, and assurance of adequate pipe depth and slopes. Refer to Item 5 in Figure 2, PDL report page 2. This will need addressing at MPR.

### **Parking Impacts**

The wall's stress has been partly due to the vehicular parking surcharge from above, as seen in Figure 2, page 2 of PDL report. Calculations to ensure that this surcharge is acceptable need to be made, along with further calculations that determine the setback point from the wall where parking may safely occur.

### **Invasive Tree Eradication**

Confirmed by City Zoning Inspectors, there are invasive ailanthus trees on top of, and below, the wall at 40 N. High Street. These trees spread by suckers and once established, are very hard to eradicate. The applicant would need to work with the owner of 40 N. High Street to mitigate these trees and their impact to the wall.

## **4. Approach Options**

PDL provided three different options for consideration, and Staff is requesting input from the Board on which option they prefer. Details for each option are provided within their report and are summarized here.

### **No Action**

Without some kind of remediation, the wall will continue to deteriorate. A photographic comparison of the wall over the last two years indicates some potential movement on the south elevation. Precautions, such as roping off the top and bottom parking areas to prevent injury, are recommended by PDL. This approach would ultimately risk losing the historic object due to demolition by neglect.

### **Replace the Wall – Modern Structure**

This option includes the construction of a concrete footer and wall with an historic-appearing veneer using native stone and hidden mortar. This approach would remove the historic structure and its attributes, set a concerning precedent within the district, and also creating a false sense of history. It could allow, however, a more convenient wall location on each lot, or perhaps replacement with a series of lower walls, or some other creative solution for the grade change. How this would accommodate the preserved two-story privy at 36-38 N. High Street would have to be determined.

### **Repair and Preserve the Existing Wall**

This is the most preservation-oriented scenario and would best accommodate the structure's attributes as a contributing object within the district. The existing wall would have to remain in its current location. This option is only possible using stone masons and structural engineers experienced with historic dry stone masonry; PDL provides examples in their report, including

resources at the Dry Stone Conservancy. If this approach is preferred, the applicant would have to provide evidence of contacting and using these resources at MPR.

### **Long Term Strategies**

PDL also enumerates some longer term strategies to consider for the district going forward. Staff is not requesting feedback on these at the March hearing, but keeping them in mind for the upcoming Historic District Area Plan that will be a part of the Community Plan Update, currently in its beginning stages.

### **Façade Grant**

The City has recently re-instituted the Façade Grant program in the Historic District (see attached resolution and program description) which could be a very beneficial program for this project. This allows lot owners to receive grants for both historic façade improvements and site improvements, under which preservation wall work could qualify. Individuals are able to apply for up to \$25,000 of assistance and up to 50 percent of the total project cost. Each application is reviewed and determined by Dublin's Community Improvement Corporation, which happens outside the development review process.

## **5. Discussion Questions**

- 1) Does the Board support a holistic approach of repairing the entire wall system vs. individual repairs?
- 2) What recommendation does the Board have regarding the proposed design and structural approaches for the wall?
  - a. No action
  - b. Structural reconstruction of the wall using concrete footers and a false wall that would be faced with the historic stone and perhaps allowing the wall to be relocated in a more convenient place on the site.
  - c. Structural reconstruction using only the historic materials and techniques
- 3) What additional information would the Board need to make a determination on one of these solutions?
- 4) If the Board supports historic reconstruction, would the Board support the use of historic mortar that is not visible if it improved the structural strength of the wall?
- 5) Other considerations by the Board.