

STAFF REPORT
for
SEPTEMBER 4, 2019 HRC MEETING

Case #: COA2019-062
Staff: Heather M. Bratland

Applicant: Jeff Soriano
Owner: Jeff and Christina Soriano

LOCATION

District: West End Historic Overlay District #390
Street: 923 West End Boulevard
Building: James House
Local Historic
Landmark#: n/a

REQUEST(S)

- After-the-fact approval of a highly-visible fence
- Master landscape plan

APPLICABLE SECTIONS OF DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES

West End Historic Overlay District Design Review Guidelines
(Please refer to the applicable sections of the *Guidelines*, as detailed in the staff comments.)

PROJECT DESCRIPTION/ELEMENTS

Please refer to the information provided with the application.

STAFF COMMENTS

On November 7, 2018, the Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission (HRC) approved COA2018-098 for the after-the-fact construction of a retaining wall and concrete patio at the southern sideyard, adjacent to the James House driveway. As a condition of COA2018-098, the HRC required that “the applicant shall, in consultation with a landscape architect, submit a landscape plan to the Historic Resources Commission within six (6) months. The landscape plan shall include screening of the patio and retaining wall.”

On February 12, 2019, HRC staff approved COA2019-010 for the construction of a wood-picket fence parallel to First Street (First Street Fence). Per the application materials, the First Street Fence will be 42” high. The application also states that “The fence style and material will be similar to the one that already exists on the property” Two photos of the existing picket fence at the rear yard are included in the application for COA2019-010. Photo 3 is captioned “This is a photo of the existing fence. The new fence will match this in style, height and material.” Photo 4 is captioned, “closer detail of existing fence.” On March 28, 2019, staff received a complaint that the First Street Fence was a solid fence, not a picket fence, and 48” tall. Zoning Enforcement conducted a site visit and confirmed the style and 48” height of the First Street Fence. Subsequently, staff requested that the owner either (a) remove the First Street Fence or (b) submit a plan to bring the First Street Fence into compliance with the *New Fences in Highly Visible Areas from Street Level* West End Guidelines as a component of the landscape plan required under COA2018-098.

Staff received a Master Landscape Plan on May 21, 2019, six days past the deadline for cases to be heard at the June 5, 2019, HRC meeting. The Master Landscape Plan received in May does not include the required information about the First Street Fence. On August 13, 2019, staff received a revised Master Landscape Plan, which includes a Planting Plan and information about the First Street Fence. Staff calendared the case to be heard in September 2019 as COA2019-062.

STAFF FINDING

Commission staff finds that First Street Fence is incongruous with the character of the West End Historic Overlay District because:

- 1) The First Street Fence, as-built, is 48" high. It is not appropriate to introduce fences taller than 42" in areas that are highly visible from street level. (*New Fences in Highly Visible Areas from Street Level*, West End Guideline 6)
- 2) The First Street Fence is a shadowbox fence with dog-eared vertical boards. To construct a shadowbox fence, vertical boards are nailed onto alternating sides of the horizontal support members, creating a wooden privacy fence. The design of new fences should be compatible with the style or period of the building and appropriate with the period of significance of the neighborhood. Inappropriate styles of fencing in highly visible areas include board-and-batten fencing. Both board-and-batten and shadowbox fences are types of vertical board fencing consistent in style and period with post-WWII suburban development; vertical board fencing is not compatible with the style or period of the West End Historic Overlay District, a City Beautiful era, picturesque streetcar suburb. (*New Fences in Highly Visible Areas from Street Level*, West End Guidelines 2 and 5)

Commission staff finds that the Planting Plan is not incongruous with the character of the West End Historic Overlay District because:

- 3) Rhododendron, azalea, boxwood, Leyland cypress, podocarpus, aucuba, and Japanese holly will be planted between the patio/retaining wall and sidewalks along First Street and West End Boulevard. Azalea and rhododendron are native plants that will grow to a height of 4' to 10', screening the patio at eye level. The aucuba and podocarpus will reach similar heights. The size and scale of the proposed materials are appropriate to the surrounding environment. (*Vegetation*, West End Guideline 4)
- 4) The topography of the slope in the sideyard, dropping toward First Street and the rear lot line, will not be altered. (*Vegetation*, West End Guideline 3)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission deny COA2019-062 as it pertains to the First Street Fence and approve COA2019-062 as it pertains to the Planting Plan, both at the James House, located at 923 West End Boulevard, within the West End Historic Overlay District (PIN# 6825-75-1244.00), with the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant shall receive, prior to commencement of the work, all other required permits or permissions from governmental agencies;
- 2) 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
- 3) 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.