

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

August 21, 2024

HDRC CASE NO: 2024-266
ADDRESS: 314 W SUMMIT AVE
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 3264 BLK 8 LOT 5 EXC E 10 FT OF S 52.67 FT
ZONING: R-5, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
DISTRICT: Monte Vista Historic District
APPLICANT: Grant Garbo
OWNER: Grant Garbo
TYPE OF WORK: Amendment to a previously approved design
APPLICATION RECEIVED: July 11, 2024
60-DAY REVIEW: September 9, 2024
CASE MANAGER: Claudia Espinosa

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to modify the previously approved HDRC design. Within this request the applicant has proposed the following modify the height of an 8” curb modification to an 18” retaining wall.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 5, Guidelines for Site Elements

1. Topography

A. TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURES

- i. *Historic topography*—Avoid significantly altering the topography of a property (i.e., extensive grading). Do not alter character-defining features such as berms or sloped front lawns that help define the character of the public right-of-way. Maintain the established lawn to help prevent erosion. If turf is replaced over time, new plant materials in these areas should be low-growing and suitable for the prevention of erosion.
- ii. *New construction*—Match the historic topography of adjacent lots prevalent along the block face for new construction. Do not excavate raised lots to accommodate additional building height or an additional story for new construction.
- iii. *New elements*—Minimize changes in topography resulting from new elements, like driveways and walkways, through appropriate siting and design. New site elements should work with, rather than change, character-defining topography when possible.

2. Fences and Walls

A. HISTORIC FENCES AND WALLS

- i. *Preserve*—Retain historic fences and walls.
- ii. *Repair and replacement*—Replace only deteriorated sections that are beyond repair. Match replacement materials (including mortar) to the color, texture, size, profile, and finish of the original.
- iii. *Application of paint and cementitious coatings*—Do not paint historic masonry walls or cover them with stone facing or stucco or other cementitious coatings.

B. NEW FENCES AND WALLS

- i. *Design*—New fences and walls should appear similar to those used historically within the district in terms of their scale, transparency, and character. Design of fence should respond to the design and materials of the house or main structure.
- ii. *Location*—Avoid installing a fence or wall in a location where one did not historically exist, particularly within the front yard. The appropriateness of a front yard fence or wall is dependent on conditions within a specific historic district. New front yard fences or wall should not be introduced within historic districts that have not historically had them.
- iii. *Height*—Limit the height of new fences and walls within the front yard to a maximum of four feet. The appropriateness of a front yard fence is dependent on conditions within a specific historic district. New front yard fences should not be introduced within historic districts that have not historically had them. If a taller fence or wall existed historically, additional height may be considered. The height of a new retaining wall should not exceed the height of the slope it retains.

iv. *Prohibited materials*—Do not use exposed concrete masonry units (CMU), Keystone or similar interlocking retaining wall systems, concrete block, vinyl fencing, or chain link fencing.

v. *Appropriate materials*—Construct new fences or walls of materials similar to fence materials historically used in the district. Select materials that are similar in scale, texture, color, and form as those historically used in the district, and that are compatible with the main structure. Screening incompatible uses—Review alternative fence heights and materials for appropriateness where residential properties are adjacent to commercial or other potentially incompatible uses.

C. PRIVACY FENCES AND WALLS

i. *Relationship to front facade*—Set privacy fences back from the front façade of the building, rather than aligning them with the front façade of the structure to reduce their visual prominence.

ii. *Location* – Do not use privacy fences in front yards.

3. Landscape Design

A. PLANTINGS

i. *Historic Gardens*—Maintain front yard gardens when appropriate within a specific historic district.

ii. *Historic Lawns*—Do not fully remove and replace traditional lawn areas with impervious hardscape. Limit the removal of lawn areas to mulched planting beds or pervious hardscapes in locations where they would historically be found, such as along fences, walkways, or drives. Low-growing plantings should be used in historic lawn areas; invasive or large-scale species should be avoided. Historic lawn areas should never be reduced by more than 50%.

iii. *Native xeric plant materials*—Select native and/or xeric plants that thrive in local conditions and reduce watering usage. See UDC Appendix E: San Antonio Recommended Plant List—All Suited to Xeriscape Planting Methods, for a list of appropriate materials and planting methods. Select plant materials with a similar character, growth habit, and light requirements as those being replaced.

iv. *Plant palettes*—If a varied plant palette is used, incorporate species of taller heights, such informal elements should be restrained to small areas of the front yard or to the rear or side yard so as not to obstruct views of or otherwise distract from the historic structure.

v. *Maintenance*—Maintain existing landscape features. Do not introduce landscape elements that will obscure the historic structure or are located as to retain moisture on walls or foundations (e.g., dense foundation plantings or vines) or as to cause damage.

B. ROCKS OR HARDSCAPE

i. *Impervious surfaces* —Do not introduce large pavers, asphalt, or other impervious surfaces where they were not historically located.

ii. *Pervious and semi-pervious surfaces*—New pervious hardscapes should be limited to areas that are not highly visible, and should not be used as wholesale replacement for plantings. If used, small plantings should be incorporated into the design.

iii. *Rock mulch and gravel* - Do not use rock mulch or gravel as a wholesale replacement for lawn area. If used, plantings should be incorporated into the design.

C. MULCH

Organic mulch – Organic mulch should not be used as a wholesale replacement for plant material. Organic mulch with appropriate plantings should be incorporated in areas where appropriate such as beneath a tree canopy.

i. *Inorganic mulch* – Inorganic mulch should not be used in highly-visible areas and should never be used as a wholesale replacement for plant material. Inorganic mulch with appropriate plantings should be incorporated in areas where appropriate such as along a foundation wall where moisture retention is discouraged.

D. TREES

i. *Preservation*—Preserve and protect from damage existing mature trees and heritage trees. See UDC Section 35-523 (Tree Preservation) for specific requirements.

ii. *New Trees* – Select new trees based on site conditions. Avoid planting new trees in locations that could potentially cause damage to a historic structure or other historic elements. Species selection and planting procedure should be done in accordance with guidance from the City Arborist.

iii. *Maintenance* – Proper pruning encourages healthy growth and can extend the lifespan of trees. Avoid unnecessary or harmful pruning. A certified, licensed arborist is recommended for the pruning of mature trees and heritage trees.

FINDINGS:

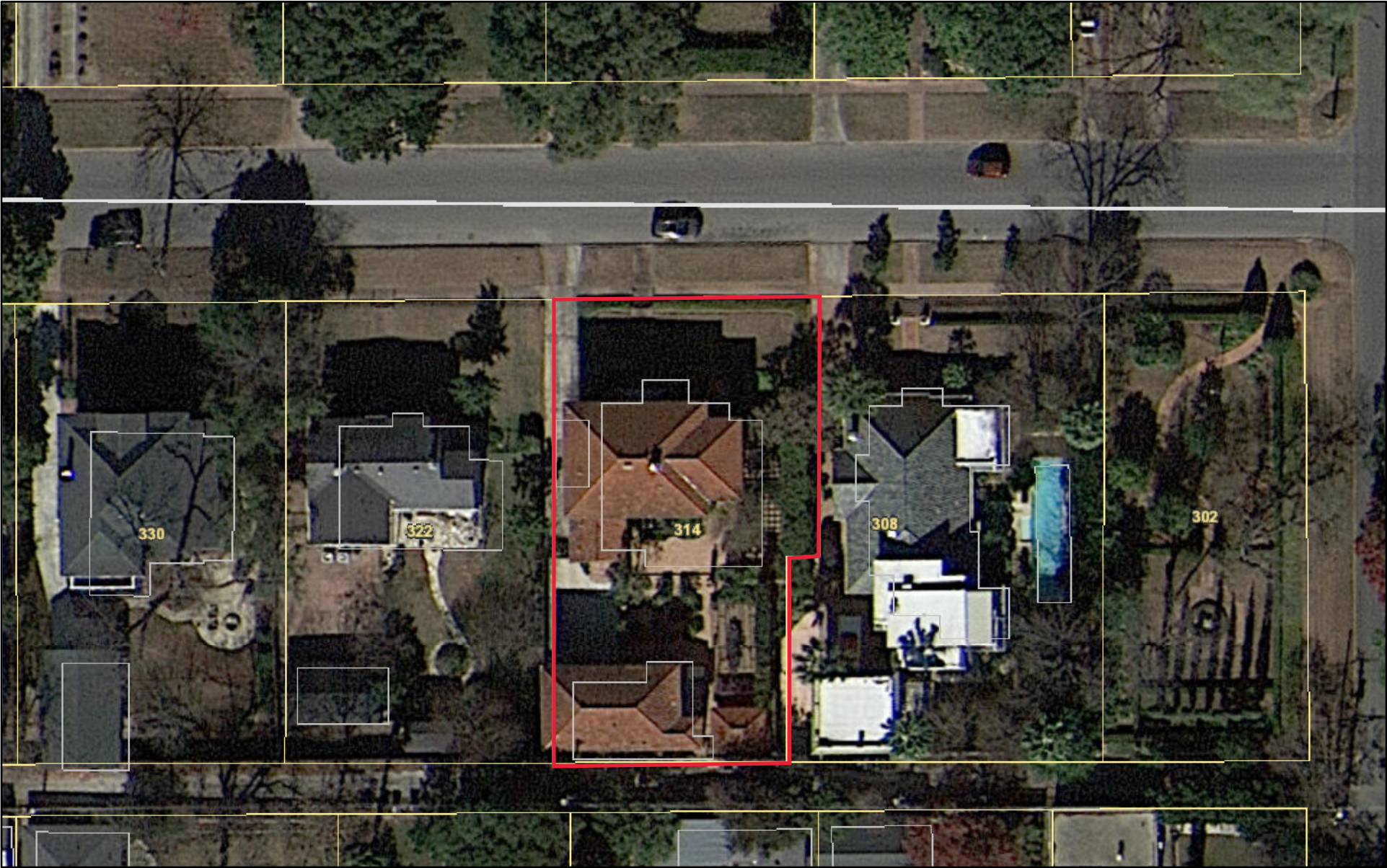
- a. The property located at 314 W Summit is a two-story, single-family Monterey-style structure constructed circa 1920 and makes its first appearance in the 1924-1925 City Directory and in the 1931 Sanborn Map. The structure features a stucco façade, a low-pitched hip roof with clay barrel tiles, and one-over-one windows. The property is contributing to the Monte Vista Historic District.

- b. CASE HISTORY – The applicant attended HDRC on April 3, 2024, to request a retaining wall that was approximately 2.5 ft in height. The Commission Action was to reduce the height of the retaining wall to a curbing modification and not exceed 8". A report of an 18" retaining wall was received on July 5, 2024, staff made contact with the applicant on July 8, 2024, to request additional information regarding the construction of a retaining wall. A site visit was conducted on July 11, 2024, to assess the construction of the wall. Staff spoke with the property owner and posted a Notice of Investigation. From the time of the Commission Action to the construction of the curbing modification, there was an error, and an 18" retaining wall was constructed instead. The applicant is attending HDRC to request approval of the retaining wall.
- c. RETAINING WALL – The applicant is requesting to remove the existing slope of the front yard and construct an 18" brick retaining wall at the front (north) property line. The Guidelines for Site Elements 1.A.i. note to avoid significantly altering the topography of a property (i.e., extensive grading). Do not alter character-defining features such as berms or sloped front lawns that help define the character of the public right-of-way. Maintain the established lawn to help prevent erosion. If turf is replaced over time, new plant materials in these areas should be low-growing and suitable for the prevention of erosion. The Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements 2.B.i. states that new walls should appear similar to those used historically within the district in terms of their scale, transparency, and character and that the design of the wall should respond to the design and materials of the house or main structure. Guideline 2.B.ii. for Site Elements states to avoid installing a wall where one did not historically exist, particularly within the front yard. Staff finds the installation of the proposed brick retaining wall is not consistent with the front yards located on the 300 block of West Summit. Staff finds that open lawns with berms and slopes are a character defining feature of the Monte Vista Historic District and are traditionally found on the 300 block of West Summit. This request is not consistent with the Guidelines

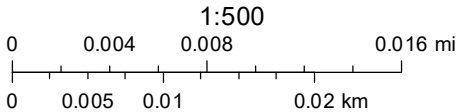
RECOMMENDATION:

Staff does not recommend approval of the construction of an 18" retaining wall based on findings b through c. If denied, the wall may be reduced to 8" in height as previously approved.

City of San Antonio One Stop



March 28, 2024





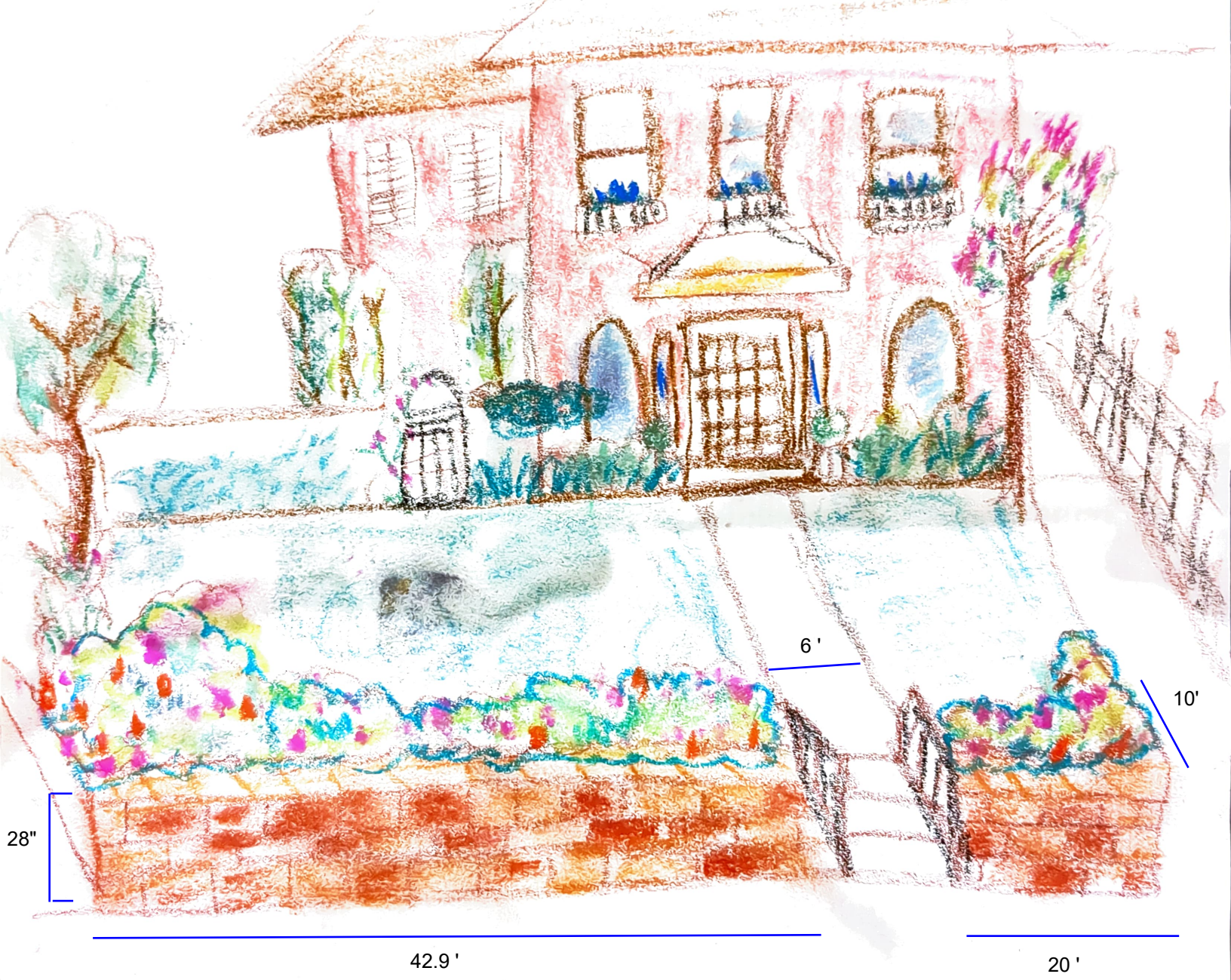


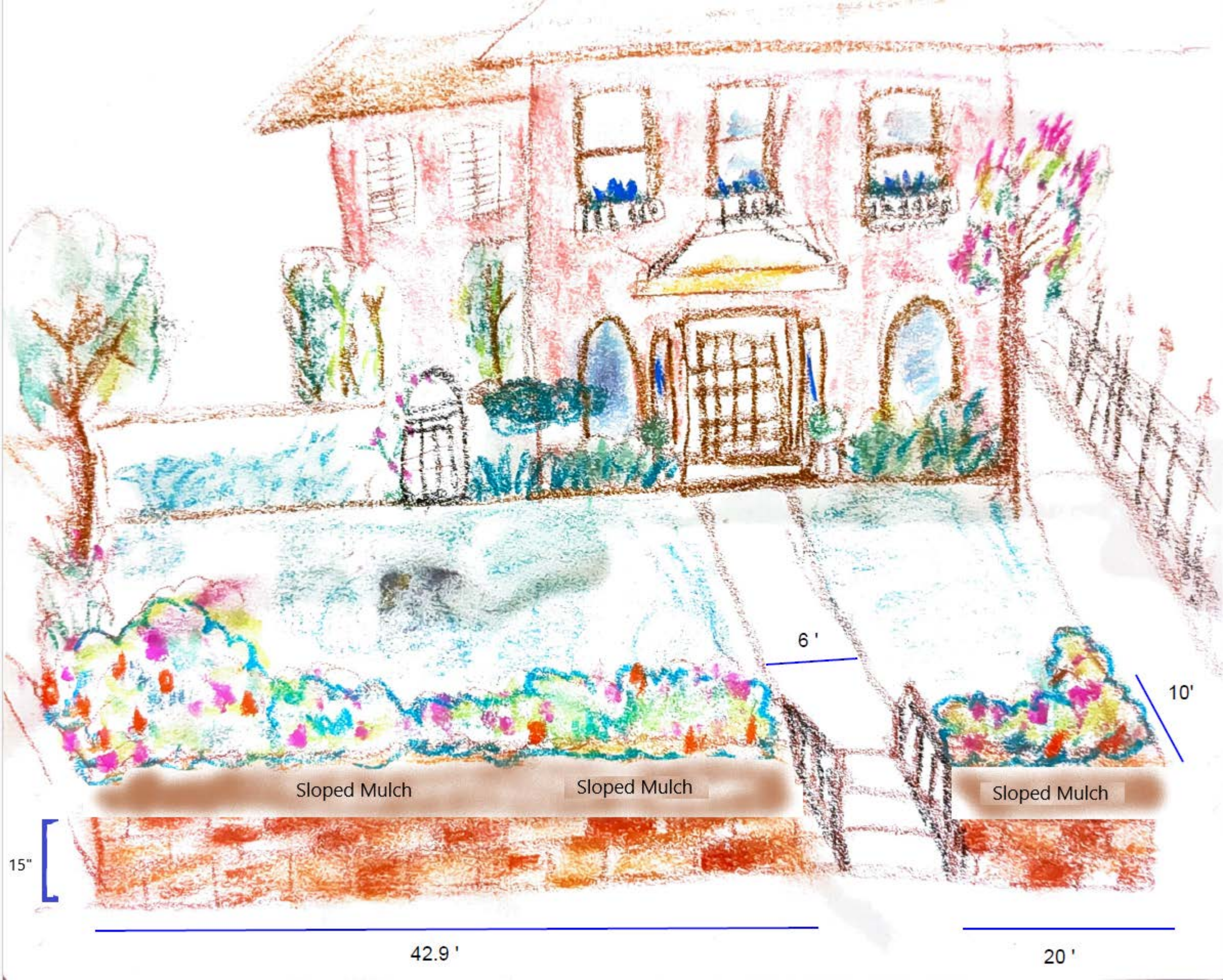












Sloped Mulch

Sloped Mulch

Sloped Mulch

6'

10'

42.9'

20'

15"



Mulch

Mulch

Mulch

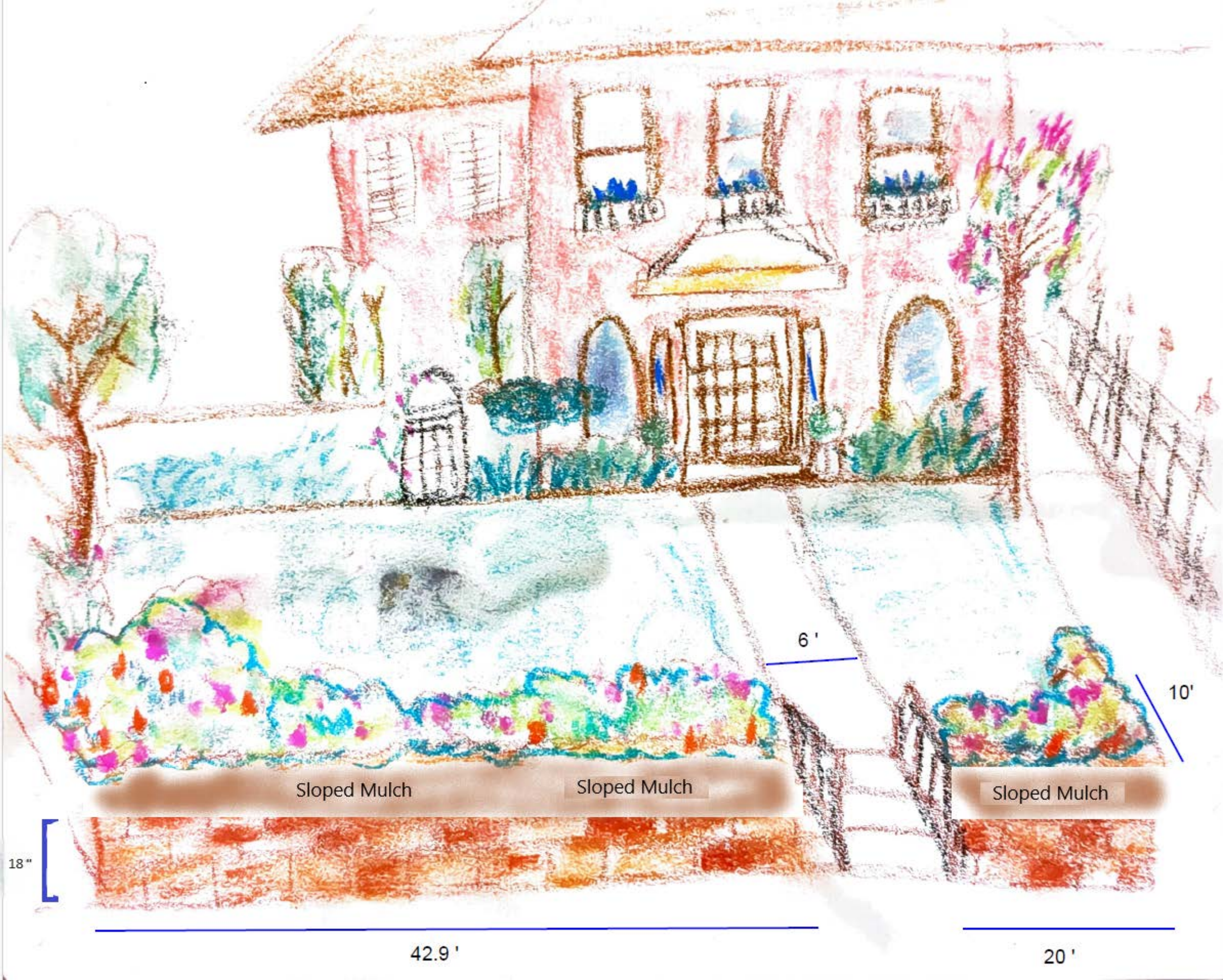
8"

42.9'

20'

6'

10'



Sloped Mulch

Sloped Mulch

Sloped Mulch

6'

10'

42.9'

20'

18"





Reapplication for 18-Inch Retaining Wall at 314 W Summit: Addressing Soil Stabilization, Water Conservation, and Historical Integrity

Dear Committee Members of the Historic Design and Review Committee,

I've been a resident at 314 W Summit for over seven years and have always appreciated the charm of Monte Vista. However, recent years have brought significant climate changes that have adversely affected our front yard, particularly the Asian Jasmine bed. With increased freezes, extreme droughts, and soaring temperatures, the condition of the yard has become unsustainable.

The purpose of the retaining wall is to stabilize the soil and eliminate the slope, thus improving moisture retention. I initially requested a 30-inch wall to fully address the slope and alleviate yard maintenance issues. The plan was to construct the wall using a concrete foundation for durability and support, and cinderblock with a brick façade. During the interior renovation of our home, we preserved the original bricks from a removed wall and incorporated them into the façade, preserving the historical integrity of the property.

Despite my efforts, my initial application for a 30-inch retaining wall was denied by HDRC. A follow-up application for an 8-inch wall was submitted and accepted.

We removed the existing plants and placed new rose bushes with drip irrigation. The wall foundation was installed, and the first blocks and bricks were set.

While under construction, my wife and I were traveling and were not present for the final stages of the wall construction. Upon returning in the early hours of July 8th, we did not have a chance to review the status of the wall. However, I was contacted on July 9th by HDRC design review team staff regarding the height of the wall. I contacted my contractor, who confirmed that the wall is now 18 inches in height.

He explained that at 8 inches, the wall was unable to contain the soil. The slope of the land was too great, and the soil was constantly eroding into the sidewalk. There is a greater than 2.5-foot differentiation between the sidewalk and the lawn in addition to the grading of the street.

I communicated this to HDRC immediately upon gathering the information and receiving the email. The response was a stop order, and work has been discontinued.

I am resubmitting an application to allow for the 18 inches that have been constructed. This construction not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of our property and neighborhood but also contributes to water conservation efforts in our community. I believe, and my contractor agrees, that 8 inches would not suffice to retain the soil and would lead to constant soil erosion onto the sidewalk.

By utilizing brick from our home, we are adhering to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards by conserving existing historic materials while retaining the historic character of the property. In keeping with general principles for site elements, we are complementing the home by matching existing brick landscaping.

It is worth noting that there is support from our surrounding neighbors and an existing 24-inch wall directly across the street. Additionally, there are several walls of similar height or greater less than two blocks from our home. During our HDRC meeting, it was argued that there was only one other property on our street with a retaining wall, but just one block north on King's Street or one block south on Agarita Street, there are several.

Furthermore, the current height of 18 inches is still a large reduction from the initial request of 30 inches and retains a slope from the interior wall to the level of the lawn. We are attempting to work with the Historic & Design Review Committee to both accomplish water conservation and enhance the neighborhood. This reduced wall height will achieve soil and moisture retention while maintaining a slope to adhere to the description of Monte Vista's sloping front yards.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Grant Garbo". The signature is stylized with a large initial "G" and a cursive "Garbo".

Grant Garbo



Investigation Report

Property

Address	314 W Summit
District/Overlay	Monte Vista

Site Visit

Date	07/11/2024
Time	02:34 PM (-5 GMT)
Context	citizen report, drive-by
Present Staff	Claudia Espinosa
Present Individuals	Family/Tenant, Homeowner
Types of Work Observed	Site Elements
Amount of Work Completed	Completed
Description of work	Construction of an 18inch retaining wall.
Description of interaction	Staff received a report of the construction of a retaining wall that is outside the scope of work as approved by the HDRC. Staff was able to speak with Kim about the construction of the retaining wall and the COA & HDRC process. Staff posted the Notice of Investigation.

Action Taken

Violation Type	Beyond scope of Certificate of Appropriateness (Code 35-451h)
OHP Action	Spoke with property owner, Spoke with neighbor/family/tenant
Will post-work application fee apply?	To be determined

Documentation



Investigation Report

Photographs





Investigation Report





Investigation Report





Investigation Report





Investigation Report





Investigation Report



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:50 PM
314 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States



Investigation Report



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:53 PM
314 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States



Investigation Report





Investigation Report





Investigation Report





Investigation Report





Investigation Report



07/11/2024 04:30 PM



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:07 PM
314 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:11 PM
314 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:24 PM
314 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:29 PM
314 W Summit Ave
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Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:42 PM
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Jul 11, 2024 at 2:37:53 PM
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JUL 11, 2024 at 2:37:57 PM
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Jul 11, 2024 at 2:38:14 PM
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United States



Jul 11, 2024 at 2:38:18 PM
314 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States



314



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
100 W. Houston St. San Antonio, Texas 78205
7:45am - 4:30pm, Monday - Friday
(210) 207-0500, reports@historicpreservation.org



NOTICE OF INVESTIGATION

ADDRESS 314 W. Summit [BCAD] OWNER: Grant Garbo

An investigation of this property has been performed by the Office of Historic Preservation and the following violations have been identified:

☐ Code 25-608 (a): Work without Certificate of Appropriateness (COA)

☒ Code 25-608 (b): Work beyond Scope of Approval: Construction of a Retaining wall

☐ Code 25-612: Demolition by Neglect

STOP WORK: Yes | Not Applicable

Please contact the Office of Historic Preservation within 48 hours of the inspection date: 7/11/2024

A re-inspection by staff may occur without prior notice; photographs have been recorded for evidence.

Continued failure to comply with the laws of the City of San Antonio and the State of Texas will subject you to criminal and civil prosecutions, to the payment of civil penalties and will be prosecuted accordingly. Violations of these laws are also subject to civil prosecution in state district court by the City of San Antonio. Penalties for violations of these laws include: (a) a criminal conviction on your record; (b) criminal fines; (c) court costs; (d) civil penalties in the range of \$1,000.00 per day; (e) the cost of any damage to the property; (f) the cost of any damage to the property; (g) the cost of any damage to the property; (h) the cost of any damage to the property; (i) the cost of any damage to the property; (j) the cost of any damage to the property; (k) the cost of any damage to the property; (l) the cost of any damage to the property; (m) the cost of any damage to the property; (n) the cost of any damage to the property; (o) the cost of any damage to the property; (p) the cost of any damage to the property; (q) the cost of any damage to the property; (r) the cost of any damage to the property; (s) the cost of any damage to the property; (t) the cost of any damage to the property; (u) the cost of any damage to the property; (v) the cost of any damage to the property; (w) the cost of any damage to the property; (x) the cost of any damage to the property; (y) the cost of any damage to the property; (z) the cost of any damage to the property.

Jul 11, 2024 at 2:38:45 PM

315 W Summit Ave
San Antonio TX 78212
United States