

**HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW
COMPLIANCE AND TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD
June 21, 2024**

HDRC CASE NO: 2024-204
ADDRESS: 128 W FRENCH PL
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 1885 BLK LOT N IRR 143.57 FT A5
ZONING: R-4, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
DISTRICT: Monte Vista Historic District
APPLICANT: Laura Pommer
OWNER: Laura Pommer
TYPE OF WORK: Driveway gate and front yard fence installation
APPLICATION RECEIVED: May 30, 2024
60-DAY REVIEW: July 29, 2024

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to:

1. Construct a 4' tall wood driveway gate flush with the existing fence line parallel to W French Place to match the existing fence style.
2. Construct a 4' tall wood picket fence along the east property line to match the existing fence style.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

Historic Design Guidelines, Chapter 5, Guidelines for Site Elements

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.

Policy Document: Fences in Historic Districts

When new fences are appropriate to the site-specific conditions of the property, applicants must also ensure that the style, height, and configuration of the fence is also appropriate per the Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements and the Unified Development Code 35-514.

- **REAR/PRIVACY FENCE** – Rear yard privacy fences should be no taller than 6 feet in height and feature wood construction. Historic evidence may support installing stone, masonry, or stucco walls. They should be set back from the front façade of the building, rather than aligning them with the front façade of the structure, to reduce their visual prominence.
- **FRONT FENCE** – Front yard fences should match in height of neighboring fences or be limited to 4 feet in height and be compatible with the heights of adjacent historic fences. Historic evidence may support installing stone, masonry, or stucco walls and fence bases.
- **FENCE STYLES** – While maintaining respect to individual architecture styles and historic districts, the most common appropriate fence type includes (a) black wrought iron, (b) painted wood picket, and (c) garden-loop.
- **NONCONFORMING FENCES** – Chain-link, barbed wire, corrugated metal, and make-shift fences should be avoided. Grandfathered items may be replaced with appropriate fencing, but should not be reconstructed or expanded upon.
- **PEDESTRIAN GATES** – Pedestrian gates should be located at the intersection of the property’s walkway and the public sidewalk. Pedestrian gates should relate to the design of the fence while maintaining a 4-foot height limit.
- **VEHICLE GATES** – Vehicle gates should be set behind the front façade plane of the house and not span across the front of the driveway. A Front vehicle gate may be considered if the site features an atypical condition including: (a) a wraparound porch, (b) a narrow driveway less than 10 feet wide, and/or (c) front driveways abutting rear yards or commercial properties. Electrical, mechanical, or solar collector equipment should be concealed and minimally visible if used.

FINDINGS:

- a. The primary structure at 128 W French Pl is a single-family residence constructed in the Folk Victorian style circa 1900 and makes its first appearance on the 1904 Sanborn map. The home features wood siding, four-over-four wood windows, and a standing seam metal roof. The property is contributing to the Monte Vista Historic District.
- b. **ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL** – The applicant is requesting approval to remove a portion of the front yard fence as represented by the submitted site plan. This scope of work is eligible for administrative approval and does not require CTAB review.
- c. **CASE HISTORY** – On December 20, 2023, the Historic and Design Review Commission (HDRC) approved the applicant’s request to install a wood open picket front yard fence. The applicant’s present request is to adjust the location of the fence and install a driveway gate. Staff has included the HDRC approved fence site plan and the proposed modifications.
- d. **DRIVEWAY GATE CONSTRUCTION** – The applicant is requesting to construct a 4’ tall wood driveway gate flush with the existing fence line parallel to W French Place to match the existing fence style. The Fences in Historic Districts policy document states vehicle gates should be set behind the front façade plane of the house and not span across the front driveway. A front vehicle gate may be considered if the site features an atypical condition. Staff finds the driveway gate construction generally appropriate.
- e. **FRONT YARD FENCE INSTALLATION** – The applicant is requesting to construct a 4’ tall wood picket fence along the east property line to match the existing fence style. The Fences in Historic Districts policy document states front yard fences should match in height of neighboring fences or be limited to 4 feet in height and be compatible with the heights of adjacent historic fences. Staff finds the installation of the 4’ tall wood picket fence generally appropriate.

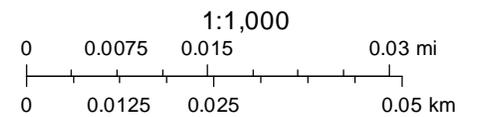
RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of items 1 and 2, based on findings a through e. If approved by the CTAB, the applicant is required to obtain a permit from Development Services Department and the fence and gate must not exceed four feet in height.

City of San Antonio One Stop



June 13, 2024



128 W French Pl.
Proposed Fence Improvement
5/29/2024

Laura Pommer–Homeowner
3038179181

Summary

My home at 128 W French Pl., San Antonio TX, in the historic Monte Vista neighborhood has seen significant improvements, in accordance with historic regulations, over the past several years.

The most recent have been re-landscaping, adding a driveway, a patio, and a fence around the west portion of the front yard and side yard.. This improvement was approved by HRDC on 12/20/2023 with a revision on 1/4/2024. HDRC case 2023-445.

At this point, we would like to update the 48” picket fence by extending the fence across the driveway to the east property line via a gate, then along the east property line to the pre-existing privacy fence that spans from the property line to the house.

During the review process for the request to build the 48” picket fence around the west side of the driveway and front yard, the fence was considered historically appropriate given evidence of a similar fence in several paintings by Julian Onderdonk that appeared to span the width of the lot.

Historic Yard Fence: 128 W French Pl.

Two paintings document the presence of a picket fence around the property. One painting was by Julian Onderdonk himself.

Despite the desired “open” nature of the Monte Vista neighborhood, a picket fence would, in fact, be accurate to the history of the home itself, as the first home in Monte Vista.

The first painting documents the view of the old Chandler Estate, which is now a part of the Christ Episcopal church on W French Pl.



Imaged by Heritage Auctions, HA.com

This painting, by Julian Onderdonk, shows a similar fence along the same portion of Howard and W. French Pl, apparently facing north toward Chandler Estate



Proposed Fence Extension



Approximate proposed fence location
Includes gate spanning driveway

Fence along the west side of the
driveway to house will be removed.

Site Plan: Fence Extension

Revised Planned Improvements:

- 48" picket fence along the east side of the lot that connects to the pre-existing fence via a gate across the driveway that opens to West French Place.

