

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

April 19, 2023

HDRC CASE NO: 2023-136
ADDRESS: 526 DONALDSON AVE
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 6821 BLK LOT W 25 FT OF 6 & E 25 FT OF 7
ZONING: R-6, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 7
DISTRICT: Monticello Park Historic District
APPLICANT: Raul Sampayo/Maid in America Cleaning Service
OWNER: CITY OF SAN ANTONIO
TYPE OF WORK: Front yard landscaping and hardscaping
APPLICATION RECEIVED: March 30, 2023
60-DAY REVIEW: Not applicable due to City Council Emergency Orders
CASE MANAGER: Claudia Espinosa

REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to modify the front yard landscaping by removing the front lawn and installing crushed granite with stone edging, two jelly-bean shaped rock beds filled with river rock, one two-foot bed of white rock along the front sidewalk and driveway, and native plants and cacti.

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.

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.

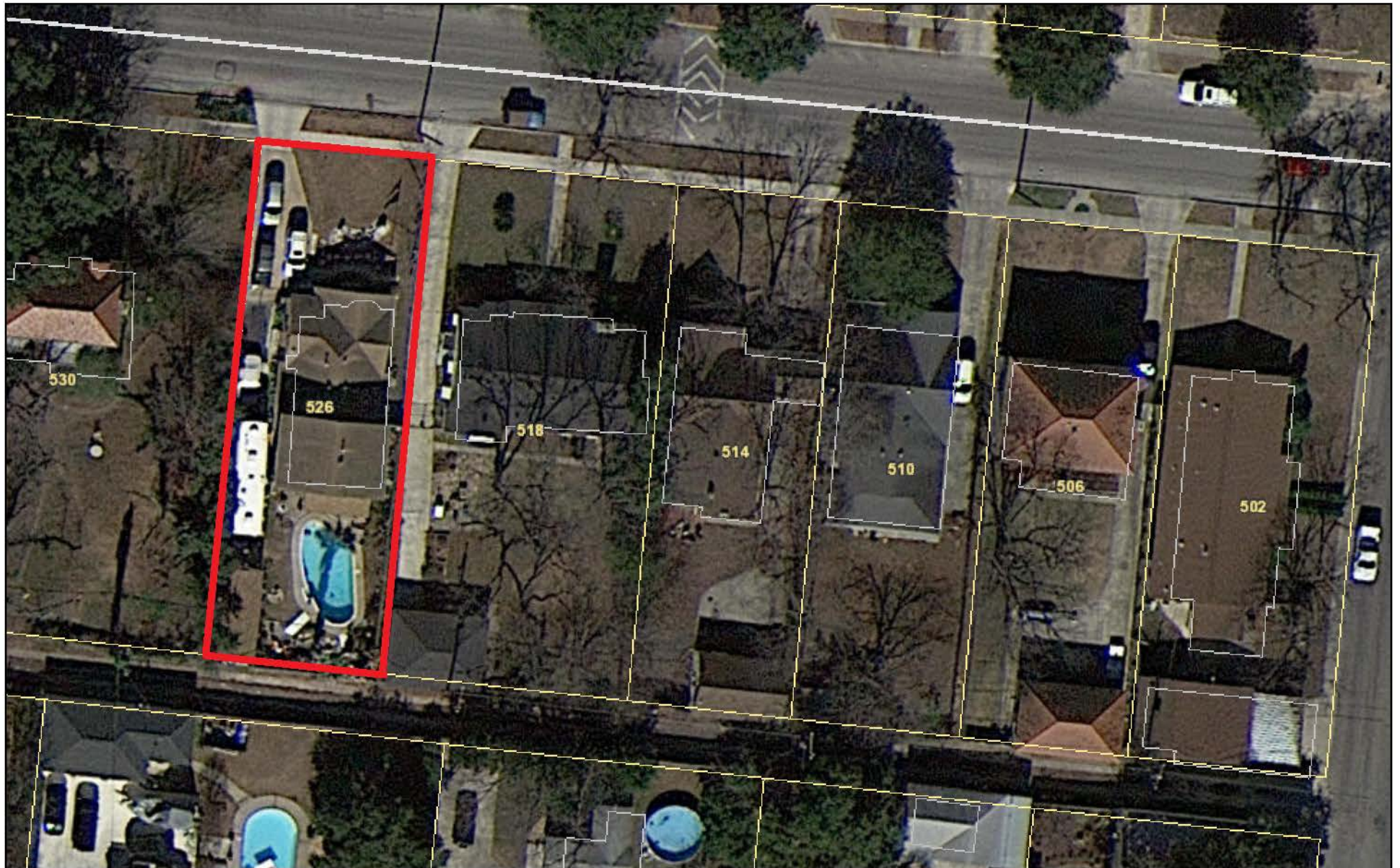
FINDINGS:

- a. The primary structure located at 526 Donaldson Ave is a single-story residential structure. The property makes its first appearance on the 1950 Sanborn Maps. The primary structure is a stone-clad, single-story residence with a shingled roof, and a two-story rear addition. The property is a contributing structure to the Monticello Park Historic District.
- b. CASE HISTORY – On March 28, 2023, staff received a report of the removal of the front yard landscaping. Staff conducted a site visit and noticed the front yard had been cleared of grass and two jellybean-shaped rock beds had been installed and filled with river rock. Staff spoke with the homeowners and issued a Notice of Investigation.
- c. LANDSCAPING MODIFICATIONS – The applicant has proposed to replace the front lawn with crushed granite and install two jellybean-shaped rock beds filled with river rock and catci and a two-foot bed of white rocks along the property line of the front yard. Per the Guidelines for Site Elements 3.B.ii, do not use rock mulch or gravel as a wholesale replacement for lawn area. If used, plantings should be incorporated into the design. Furthermore, the proposed rocks are of a larger diameter and size than is historically found in front yards. The proposal to include native plantings in the design would be appropriate provided that plantings make up at least 50% of the overall plan.

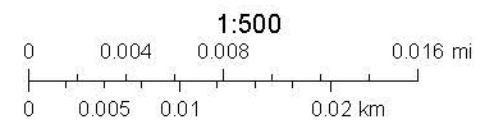
RECOMMENDATION:

Staff does not recommend approval of the landscaping modifications as submitted. The proposed rock mulch should feature a material that is consistent with the Guidelines and should be limited to small areas. Staff recommends that additional plantings be incorporated into the overall landscape design so that plantings make up at least 50 percent of the overall plan.

City of San Antonio One Stop



April 10, 2023















526 Donaldson,
San Antonio, TX 7820

Driveway

House

East
Side
of
House

Driveway

Tree

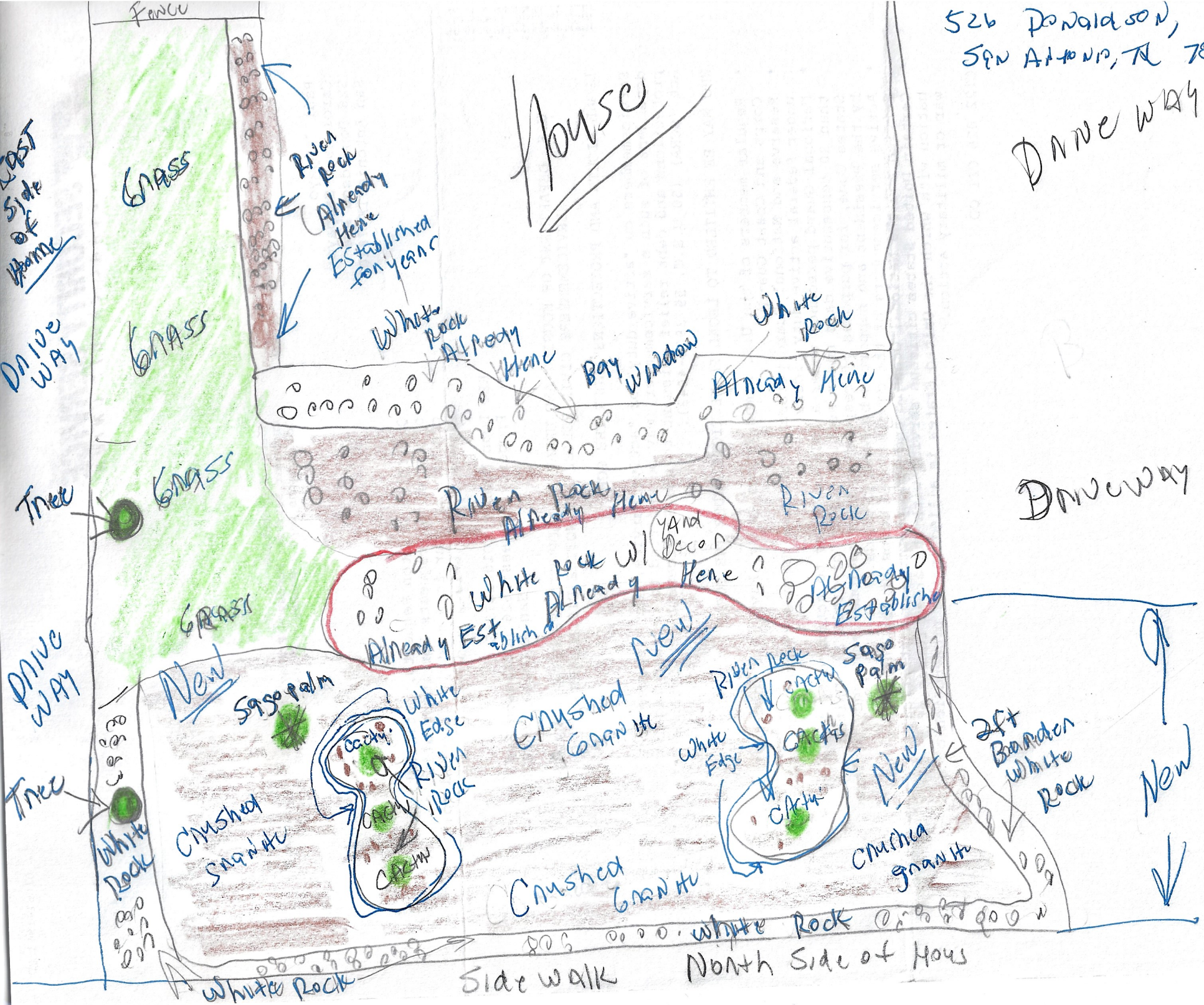
Driveway

Tree

Driveway

New

New



526 DONALDSON AVE FRONT YARD LANDSCAPE PLAN





Investigation Report

Property

Address	526 Donaldson Ave, San Antonio, Texas, 78201
District/Overlay	Monticello Park
Owner Information	SAMPAYO RAUL & CAROLINA

Site Visit

Date	03/28/2023
Time	04:13 PM (-5 GMT)
Context	citizen report, follow-up
Present Staff	Claudia Espinosa, Bryan Morales
Present Individuals	Homeowner
Types of Work Observed	Site Elements
Amount of Work Completed	Completed
Description of work	Removal of front yard landscaping and replacement with two round stone beds with rocks inside the stone beds.
Description of interaction	Bryan Morales spoke with the homeowners to explain the report and the process of submitting a COA for the site work. The homeowner received the Stop Work Order and stated they will be working with staff to bring the front yard into compliance.

Action Taken

Violation Type	No Certificate of Appropriateness (Code 35-451a)
OHP Action	Spoke with property owner, Posted "Notice of Investigation"
Will post-work application fee apply?	No

Documentation



Investigation Report

Photographs



03/29/2023 09:42 AM

Mar 28, 2023 at 4:13:32 PM
523 Donaldson Ave
San Antonio TX 78201
United States





OBJECTS IN MIRROR ARE
CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR













