

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

June 07, 2023

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2023-197  
**ADDRESS:** 414 E MULBERRY AVE  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 3089 BLK 5 LOT 3 & W 25 FT OF 4  
**ZONING:** R-4, H  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 1  
**DISTRICT:** Monte Vista Historic District  
**APPLICANT:** Curtis White/WHITE CURTIS D & LYDIA ALEGRIA  
**OWNER:** Curtis White/WHITE CURTIS D & LYDIA ALEGRIA  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Landscaping modifications  
**APPLICATION RECEIVED:** May 16, 2023  
**60-DAY REVIEW:** July 15, 2023  
**CASE MANAGER:** Claudia Espinosa

## REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to terrace the front yard utilizing large rocks as retaining walls. The proposal also includes landscaping to include grass on one portion of the yard and organic mulch on the other.

## 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 primary structure located at 414 E Mulberry is a 1 and 1/2-story, single-family structure constructed circa 1920 in the Craftsman style with Tudor Revival elements. The structure features a composition shingle cross gable roof with two (2) steeply pitched front gables, an eyebrow front porch awning, wood cladding,

divided lite and fixed windows, a deep-set asymmetrical front porch, and a porte-cochere. The property first appears on the 1938 Sanborn Map in a modified configuration. The property is contributing to the Monte Vista Historic District.

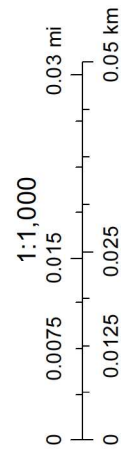
b. **COMPLETENESS REVIEW** – Based on the documentation provided, it is unclear how the proposed terracing will be accomplished. Staff has requested elevation drawings to show the transition between the walls, terracing, and landscaping, at this time, the applicant has not provided updated materials to reflect the request for staff to review.

c. **LANDSCAPING (TOPOGRAPHY)** – The applicant has indicated the installation of off-white rock for terracing in the front yard. Per the Guidelines for Site Elements 1.A.i, avoid significantly altering the topography of a property (i.e., extensive grading). Staff finds that the proposal largely preserves an open lawn, consistent with the development pattern for this area and is consistent with the guidelines. The proposed landscaping plan appears to retain plantings on a portion of the lawn but likely falls below the 50% planting requirement in the Guidelines.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff does not recommend this application to be complete and remains concerned about how the terracing will be accomplished based on the limited documentation provided. If the HDRC determines there is sufficient documentation for review and action on the request, then staff recommends approval of the overall plan with the stipulation that additional plantings be incorporated into the mulched portion of the lawn.

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414 E. Mulberry

4/4/23

North Room

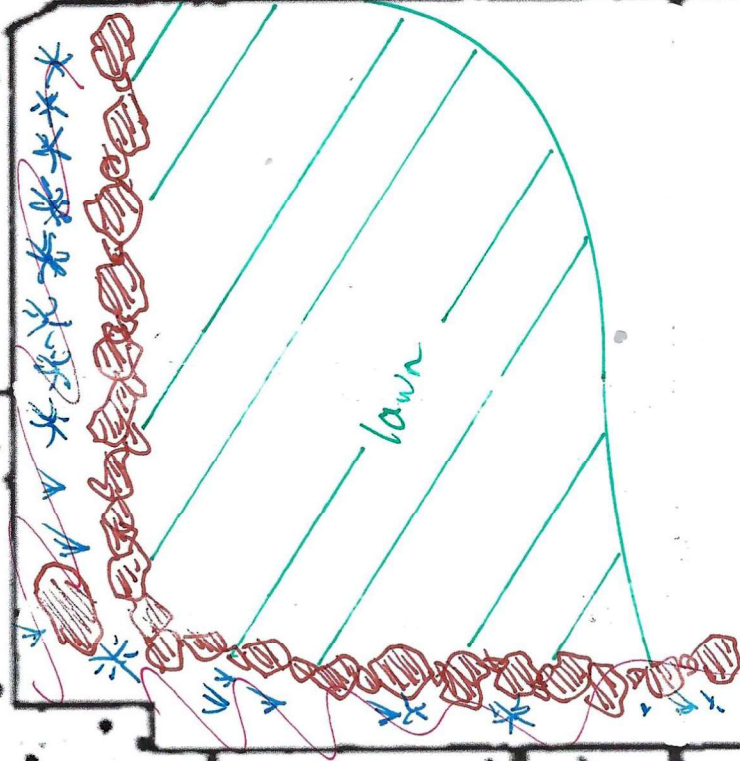
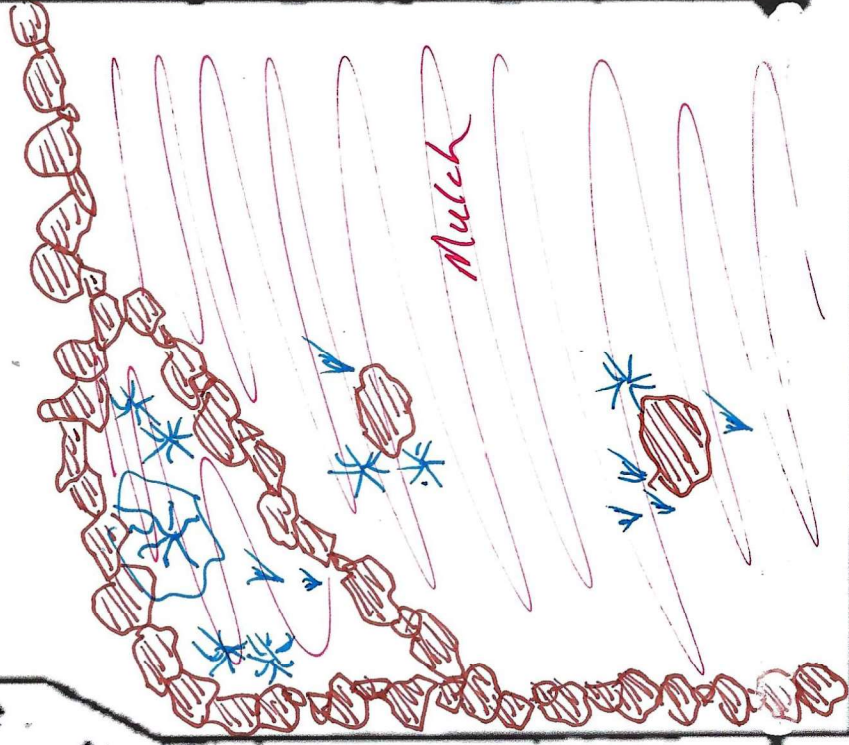
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## Proposal

April 24, 2023

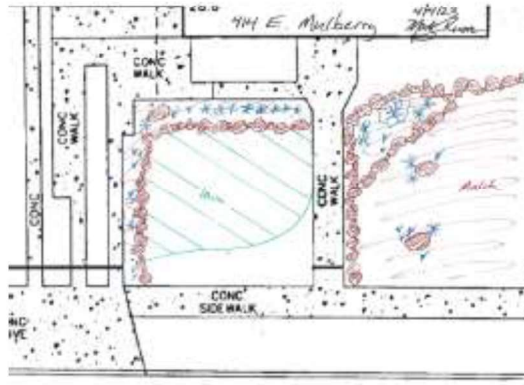
**Lydia Alegria & Kurt White**

[Lalegria.white@gmail.com](mailto:Lalegria.white@gmail.com)

414 E Mullberry  
San Antonio, TX

210.602.8940

### Front Yard



Excavate and move around lots of dirt, recontouring	\$335.00
Purchase off-white rock for terracing, creating multi levels within the yard	850.00
Assemble these walls and terraces	1,100.00
On the left side, bring in good organic soil for under the new grass	295.00
Install Zoysia or St Augustine grass, approx. 400 sq ft. (in an irregular shape you approve of)	545.00
Install metal edging to surround the grass	450.00
Plant labor...filtered light loving plants on the fard right with other sun loving in the other areas	465.00
Xeric plants budget	600.00
Plants like: lirope, society garlic, philadendron, foxtail fern, agapanthus, thryallis, etc	
Plants upgrade.....include cacti and succulents (an assortment of agave & yucca)	300.00
Bring in mulch for all of the exposed soils areas	660.00
Drip irrigation...we recommend you hire SA Rainmaker 210.599.0012	0.00
Haul away all debris	340.00
<b>Total</b>	<b><u>\$5,940.00</u></b>

**Terms: \$4,440.00 down with the balance of \$1,500.00 due at completion**

*A 3% convenience fee will be added to all payments made with credit or debit cards.*

**Marty Ruona**

**RHINAMIC WORKFORCE, LLC** 151 Huxley Drive San Antonio, TX 78218 210.863.5657  
**CUSTOMER FOCUSED DESIGN SOLUTIONS** [marty@rhinamic.com](mailto:marty@rhinamic.com)

**DISCLOSURES:** This proposal does not include permits. Rhinamic Workforce is not responsible for damage to underground utilities, (i.e., cable or electrical lines, irrigation, pipes, etc). Verbal indications of utility location are not a sufficient representation of locality. We will install healthy plants, with no warrantee.

Authorized signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



