

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

April 03, 2024

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2024-132  
**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:** Retaining wall installation  
**APPLICATION RECEIVED:** March 12, 2024  
**60-DAY REVIEW:** May 11, 2024  
**CASE MANAGER:** Claudia Espinosa

## REQUEST:

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

1. Modify the existing topography of the front yard by removing the slope.
2. Install a 2.5-foot-tall brick 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.

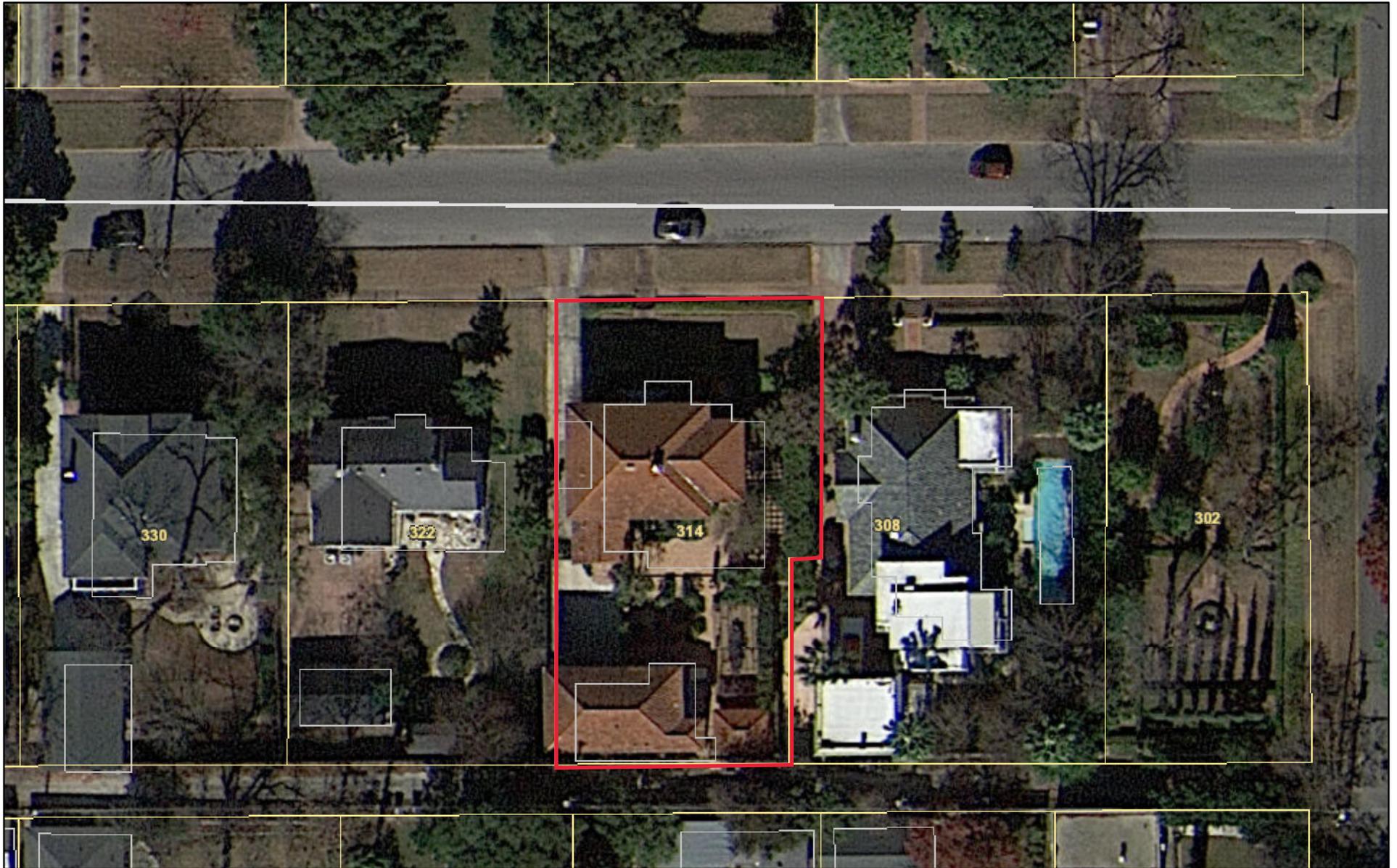
- b. TOPOGRAPHY – The applicant is requesting to remove the existing slope of the front yard. The Guidelines for Site Elements 1.A.i. note to avoid significantly altering the topography of a property (i.e., extensive grading). Do not alter character-defining features such as berms or sloped front lawns 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. Staff finds that open lawns with berms and slopes are a character defining feature of the Monte Vista Historic District and are found on the 300 block of West Summit. This request is not consistent with the Guidelines.
- c. RETAINING WALL – At this time, the applicant is requesting to install a 2.5-foot-tall brick retaining wall at the front (north) property line. The Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements 2.B.i. states that new fences and 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 fence or 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 fence or 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. This request is not consistent with the Guidelines.
- d. ADMINISTRATIVE APPROVAL – The applicant is requesting to make additional landscaping modifications to the front yard that do not require further review by the Historic and Design Review Commission.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

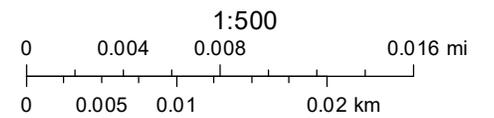
Item 1, staff does not recommend approval of the modifications to the topography based on finding b.

Item 2, staff does not recommend approval of the retaining wall installation based on finding c. Minimal curbing installed at the sidewalk to prevent erosion and may be eligible for administrative approval.

# City of San Antonio One Stop



March 28, 2024













Property of  
City of San Antonio

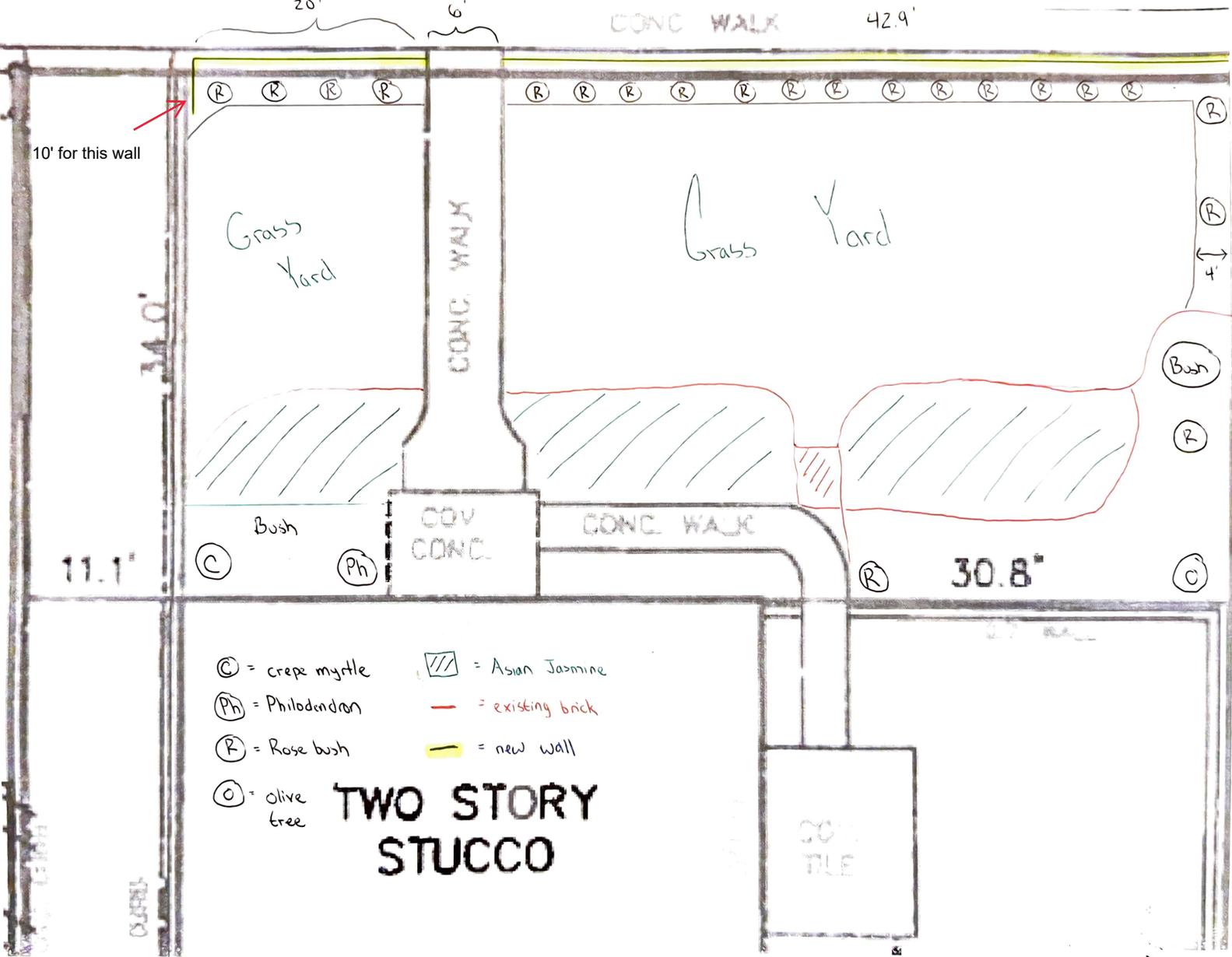
Property of  
City of San Antonio

Y6325175









CONC WALK

42.9'

20'

6'

10' for this wall

Grass Yard

Grass Yard

CONC. WALK

CONC. WALK

COV CONC.

30.8'

11.1'

- Ⓢ = crepe myrtle
- Ⓟh = Philodendron
- Ⓡ = Rose bush
- Ⓢ = olive tree

- = Asian Jasmine
- = existing brick
- = new wall

**TWO STORY STUCCO**

CONC. TILE

Bush

Ⓡ

4'

Ⓡ

Ⓡ

Ⓢ

COURT

Ⓡ

