

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

October 03, 2018

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2018-473  
**ADDRESS:** 403 E MYRTLE  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 1745 BLK 8 LOT E 47 FT OF S 88.62 FT OF 2  
**ZONING:** R-6 H  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 1  
**DISTRICT:** Tobin Hill Historic District  
**APPLICANT:** William Rhea  
**OWNER:** William Rhea  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Front yard xeriscaping  
**APPLICATION RECEIVED:** September 14, 2018  
**60-DAY REVIEW:** November 13, 2018  
**REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to xeriscape the front yard of 403 E Myrtle.

## 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.

### 4. Residential Streetscapes

#### A. PLANTING STRIPS

i. *Street trees*—Protect and encourage healthy street trees in planting strips. Replace damaged or dead trees with trees of a similar species, size, and growth habit as recommended by the City Arborist.

ii. *Lawns*—Maintain the use of traditional lawn in planting strips or low plantings where a consistent pattern has been retained along the block frontage. If mulch or gravel beds are used, low-growing plantings should be incorporated into the design.

iii. *Alternative materials*—Do not introduce impervious hardscape, raised planting beds, or other materials into planting strips where they were not historically found.

#### B. PARKWAYS AND PLANTED MEDIANS

i. *Historic plantings*—Maintain the park-like character of historic parkways and planted medians by preserving mature vegetation and retaining historic design elements. Replace damaged or dead plant materials with species of a like size, growth habit, and ornamental characteristics.

ii. *Hardscape*—Do not introduce new pavers, concrete, or other hardscape materials into parkways and planted medians where they were not historically found.

#### C. STREET ELEMENTS

i. *Site elements*—Preserve historic street lights, street markers, roundabouts, and other unique site elements found within the public right-of-way as street improvements and other public works projects are completed over time.

ii. *Historic paving materials*—Retain historic paving materials, such as brick pavers or colored paving, within the public right-of-way and repair in place with like materials.

### FINDINGS:

- a. The primary structure located at 403 E Myrtle is a 1-story single family home constructed circa 1930 in the Craftsman style. The home features a primary hipped roof with exposed rafter tails, four over four wood windows, and a gabled symmetrical front porch. The structure is contributing to the Tobin Hill Historic District.
- b. The applicant has proposed to xeriscape the front yard of the property. The proposal includes drought-tolerant plantings, including cacti, and various sized decorative rocks. The xeriscaping plan includes decomposed granite and some native groundcover between plantings. As submitted, the site plan does not indicate specific plan species or definitive planting locations. According to the Historic Design Guidelines, historic lawn or planting areas should never be reduced by more than 50% for the purpose of installing hardscaping, impervious, or pervious cover. As submitted, the proposed xeriscaping plan does not include at least 50% of landscaped coverage or native and drought-resistant plants. Staff finds that the applicant should incorporate additional plantings to cover at least 50% of the front yard to be consistent with the Guidelines.

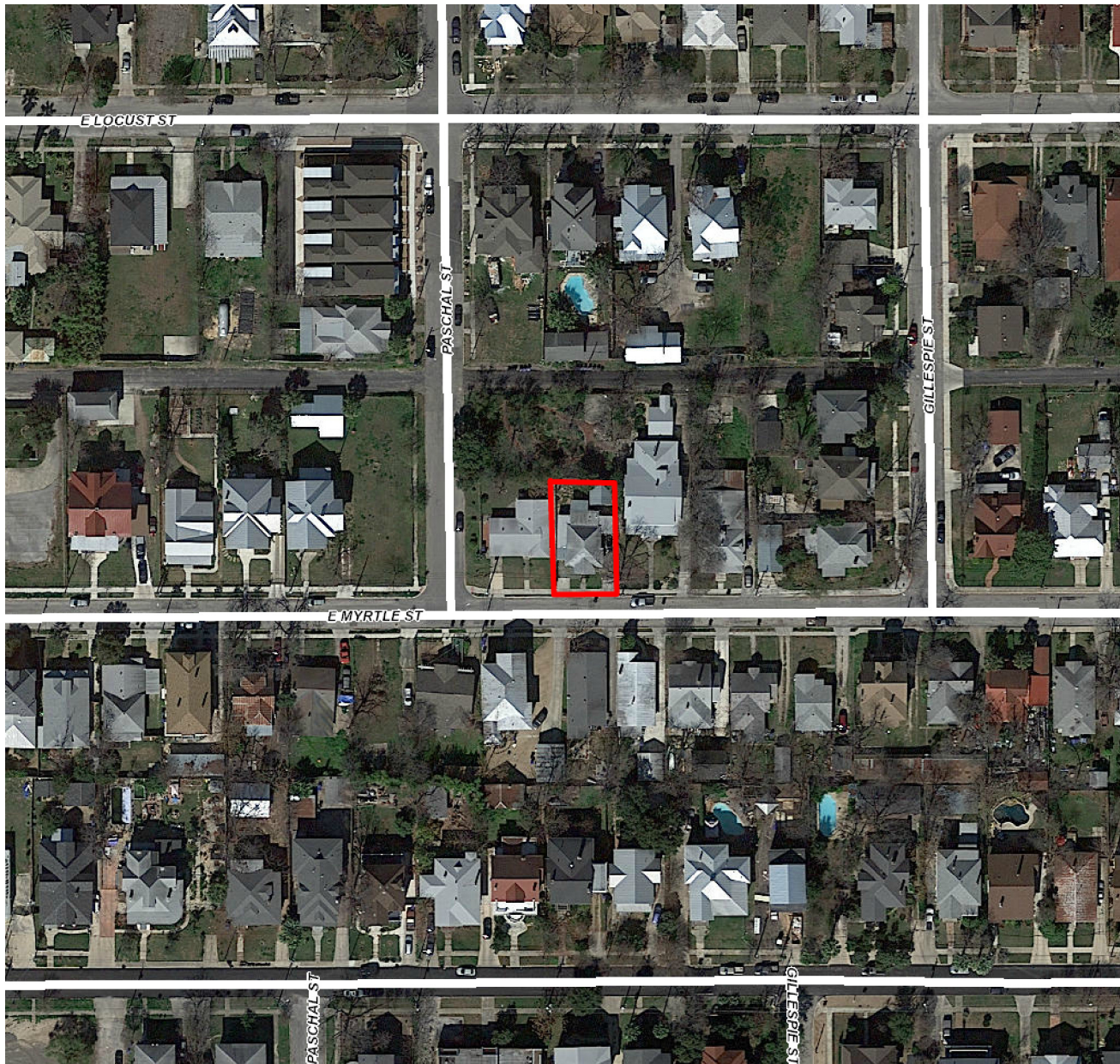
### RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of front yard xeriscaping based on finding b with the following stipulations:

- i. That the applicant incorporates a variety of native or drought-resistant plants that cover at least 50% of the front yard. Additional coverage is encouraged. The applicant is required to submit a final landscaping plan that indicates the location and species of all proposed plants to staff prior to receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness.

**CASE MANAGER:**

Stephanie Phillips



## Flex Viewer

Powered by ArcGIS Server

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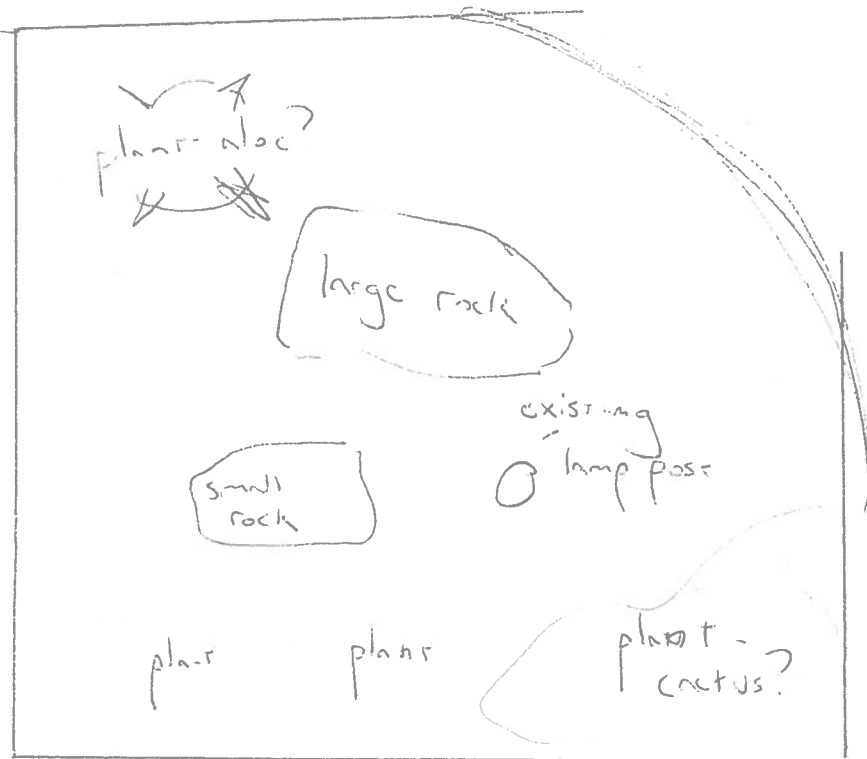


House

porch

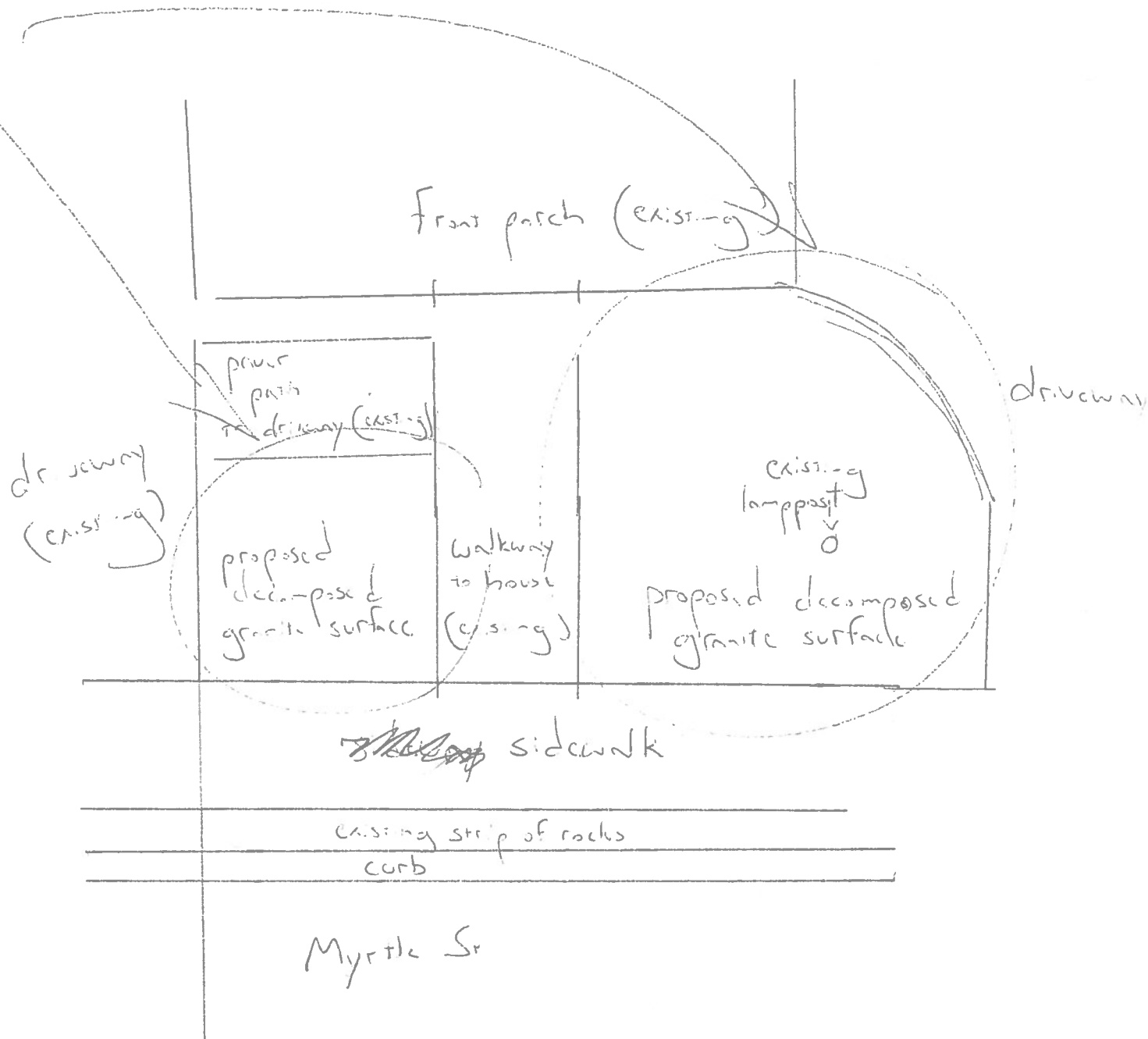
Existing  
Path

Drive  
way



street

proposed  
alteration  
area







NEIGHBORHOOD EXAMPLE





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