

## HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW

COMMISSION August 19, 2015

Agenda Item No: 14

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2015-301  
**ADDRESS:** 303 W ROSEWOOD AVE  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 6532 BLK 12 LOT 20 THRU 22 & E 9 IN OF 19  
**ZONING:** R5 H  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 1  
**DISTRICT:** Monte Vista Historic District  
**APPLICANT:** James Stewart/Hays Co. Organic  
**OWNER:** Jeff Turpin  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Retaining wall  
**REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to extend the existing stone retaining wall to contain slumping dirt from sloping yard on the front and sides of the property. The applicant has proposed connecting two portions of the existing retaining wall with a new retaining wall constructed to match existing materials and dimensions.

### 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.

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

##### 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.

#### **FINDINGS:**

- a. The proposed retaining wall will be made of white limestone, mortared in the “faux dry stack” style and contain similar shaped and sized rocks approximately 1 rock wide by 3-4 rocks tall. This is consistent with the Guidelines for New Fences and Walls 5.B.i, 5.B.iii and 5.B.v..
- b. According to the Guidelines for Site Elements 5.A.i., sloped front lawns are a character defining feature of the street, block and district and should avoid significant alterations (i.e., extensive grading). Sloped front lawns are found throughout the Monte Vista Historic District and are prevalent along Rosewood Avenue. Introduction of a limestone retaining wall will interrupt the visual continuity of the street frontage and is not consistent with the Guidelines.
- c. According to the Guidelines for Site Elements 5.A.iii., introduction of new elements should have minimal impact on the topography and when possible should work with, rather than change, the character defining topography. The applicant has proposed to backfill space behind retaining wall to create a flat lawn. This is not consistent with the Guidelines.
- d. The property has an existing 30’ in length dry stacked limestone retaining wall located along the property’s west side facing Belknap Street. The applicant proposes to connect the existing dry stacked limestone wall with a new 15” high by 12” wide “faux dry stack” limestone retaining wall. The proposed retaining wall will extend along Belknap Street and along Rosewood Avenue. According to Guideline 5.B.ii. on Location, fence or walls should avoid installation in a location where one did not historically exist, particularly in the front yard. This is not consistent with the Guidelines.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff does not recommend approval based on findings b through d.

#### **CASE MANAGER:**

Adam Ronan





# Flex Viewer

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Landscape Plan  
For: Jeff Turpin  
303 W. Rosewood  
San Antonio, TX 78212

#### Monte Vista Historic District

We are requesting approval to continue an existing retaining wall in the front lawn of 303 W. Rosewood.

There now exists a drystack retaining wall of approximately 30' in length on the west side of the front lawn, facing Belknap St. (as shown in Picture 2)

We plan to extend this 15" high X 12" wide retaining wall around the rest of the front lawn. (as shown in Picture 3)

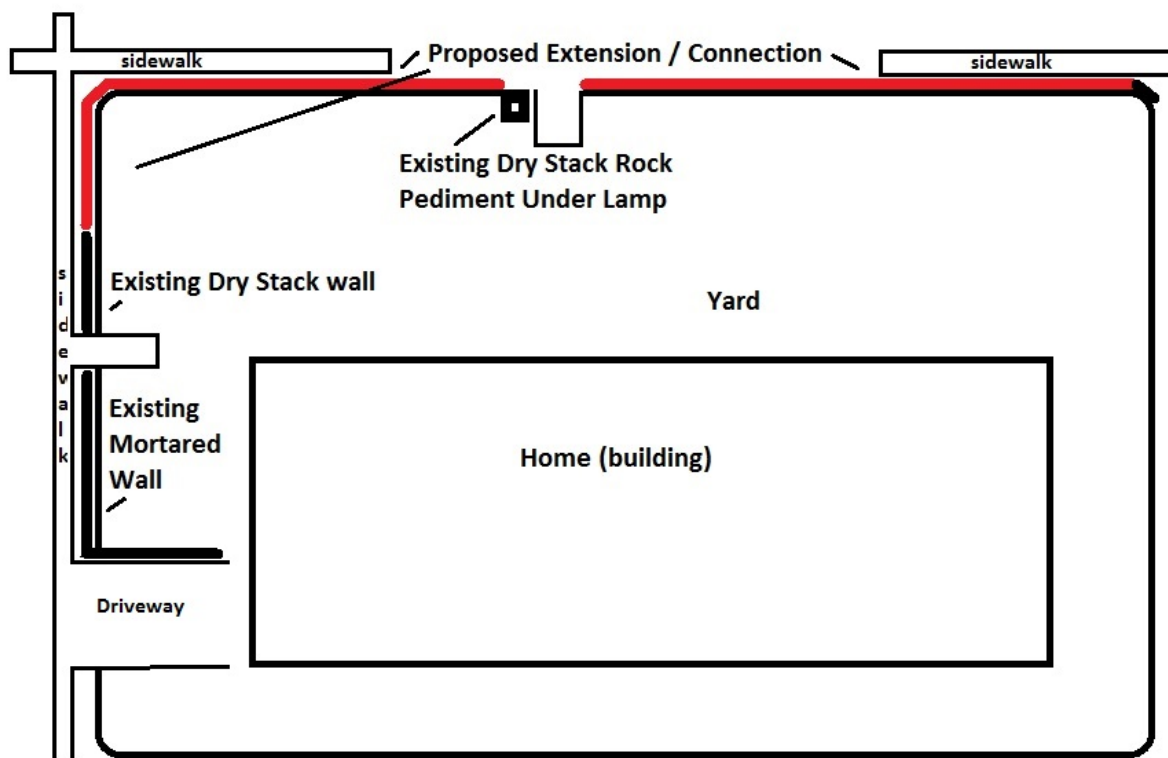
The steep slope, heavy shade conditions, torrential weather, and occasional use leaves this lawn vulnerable to erosion, and difficult to maintain. (as seen in Picture 4)

This wall will eliminate all potential for future erosion from the front lawn. Many neighbors in the Monte Vista Historic District have, historically, used this same method for eliminating erosion, establishing lush lawns and landscape beds, and increasing the overall aesthetic of both the homesite, and the neighborhood as a whole. (as seen in pictures 5, \*all pictures taken within .3 miles of residence)

Installing this limestone retaining wall will stay true to the historic landscape elements currently established on the lot, and increase the overall aesthetic of the home.

#### Materials and Design:

- We will use a white limestone, mortared in the "faux dry-stack" style. The wall will be sturdy, and solid through the use of mortar, though have the aesthetic of a dry-stack (non-mortared) retaining wall. (similar style to Picture 6)
- Wall will be 15" tall X 12" deep, rocks will be of similar shape and size, wall will be 1 rock wide X 3-4 rocks tall.
- Soil will be backfilled behind wall to create a flat lawn.
- Sod will be installed where slope existed.



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