

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

September 06, 2017

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2017-441  
**ADDRESS:** 109 W FRENCH PLACE  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 1884 BLK LOT 1  
**ZONING:** C-2  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 1  
**DISTRICT:** Monte Vista Historic District  
**APPLICANT:** Jamie Galvan  
**OWNER:** Ventarra Realty  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Installation of fencing, landscaping, lighting

## REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to install a wrought iron fence measuring 4 feet in height along the W French Place streetscape to contain a resident dog park. The proposal includes landscaping and site lighting.

## 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.

### 6. Non-Residential and Mixed Use Streetscapes

#### A. STREET FURNITURE

- i. *Historic street furniture*—Preserve historic site furnishings, including benches, lighting, tree grates, and other features.

ii. *New furniture*—Use street furniture such as benches, trash receptors, tree grates, and tables that are simple in design and are compatible with the style and scale of adjacent buildings and outdoor spaces when historic furnishings do not exist.

#### B. STREET TREES

i. *Street trees*—Protect and maintain existing street trees. Replace damaged or dead trees with trees of a similar species, size, and growth habit.

#### C. PAVING

i. *Maintenance and alterations*—Repair stone, masonry, or glass block pavers using in-kind materials whenever possible. Utilize similar materials that are compatible with the original in terms of composition, texture, color, and detail, when in-kind replacement is not possible.

#### D. LIGHTING

i. *General*—See UDC Section 35-392 for detailed lighting standards (height, shielding, illumination of uses, etc.).

ii. *Maintenance and alterations*—Preserve historic street lights in place and maintain through regular cleaning and repair as needed.

iii. *Pedestrian lighting*—Use appropriately scaled lighting for pedestrian walkways, such as short poles or light posts (bollards).

iv. *Shielding*—Direct light downward and shield light fixtures using cut-off shields to limit light spill onto adjacent properties.

v. *Safety lighting*—Install motion sensors that turn lights on and off automatically when safety or security is a concern. Locate these lighting fixtures as discreetly as possible on historic structures and avoid adding more fixtures than necessary.

### FINDINGS:

- a. The structure located at 109 W French Place is a 3-story contemporary apartment complex constructed in 1968. The complex is non-contributing to the Monte Vista Historic District. The applicant is requesting approval to erect fencing to contain a resident dog park on the complex façade facing W French Place. The proposal includes landscaping and site lighting.
- b. FENCING: LOCATION – The applicant has proposed to install new fencing along the W French Place streetscape to enclose an area for a small dog park for residents. The apartment complex landscaping is elevated from the pedestrian sidewalk and bounded by a brick retaining wall. The fencing will be located in front of an exterior wall of the apartment complex and will encapsulate existing trees within its boundary. According to the Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements, the appropriateness of new fencing is based on the specific context and established character of a district. Staff finds the installation of fencing in this location acceptable given the existing fencing on the property, the non-contributing nature of the complex, and the minimal area of which it will cover.
- c. FENCING: MATERIALITY – According to the Historic Design Guidelines for Site Elements, new fences should use materials similar to fences in the district. New fences and walls should appear similar to those used historically within the district in terms of their scale, transparency, and character. The proposed fencing matches the existing wrought iron fencing found on the first floor of the apartment complex in design and configuration, and will be painted blue to match. Additionally, the San Antonio Academy, located directly across the street on Main Ave, features an iron fence surrounding the property. Staff finds the proposal consistent with the Guidelines.
- d. FENCING: HEIGHT – Fences should be limited to the 4 feet in height, according to Guideline 2.B.iii. Staff finds the proposal consistent with this Guideline.
- e. LANDSCAPING – The applicant has proposed to install new landscaping and shrubbery along the base of the new fencing. Staff finds the proposal generally consistent and appropriate for the site, but has not seen a list of specific species to be planted.
- f. SITE LIGHTING – The applicant has proposed to install two light poles within the fence boundary for illumination during morning and evening hours. According the Guidelines, appropriately scaled lighting should be installed for pedestrian walkways and areas, such as short poles or light posts. Staff finds the proposal consistent with the Guidelines.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

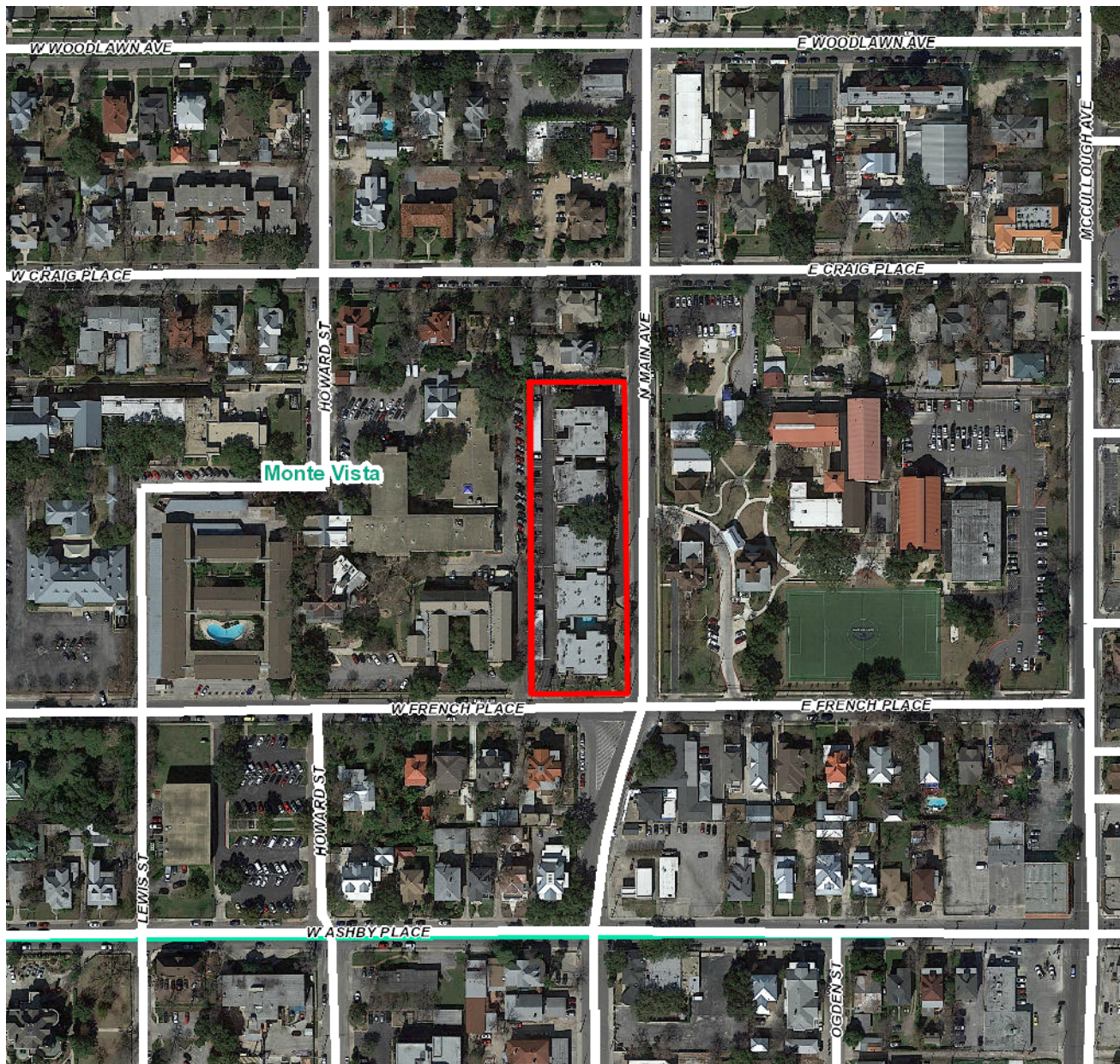
Staff recommends approval based on findings a through f with the following stipulations:

- i. That the applicant submits a final site plan that indicates the exact location of the proposed fence boundary, with dimensions indicated, to staff for review and approval.
- ii. That the applicant submits final landscaping species to staff for review and approval prior to receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness.
- iii. The final construction height of an approved fence may not exceed the maximum height as approved by the HDRC at any portion of the fence. Additionally, all fences must be permitted and meet the development standards outlined in UDC Section 35-514.

**CASE MANAGER:**

Stephanie Phillips





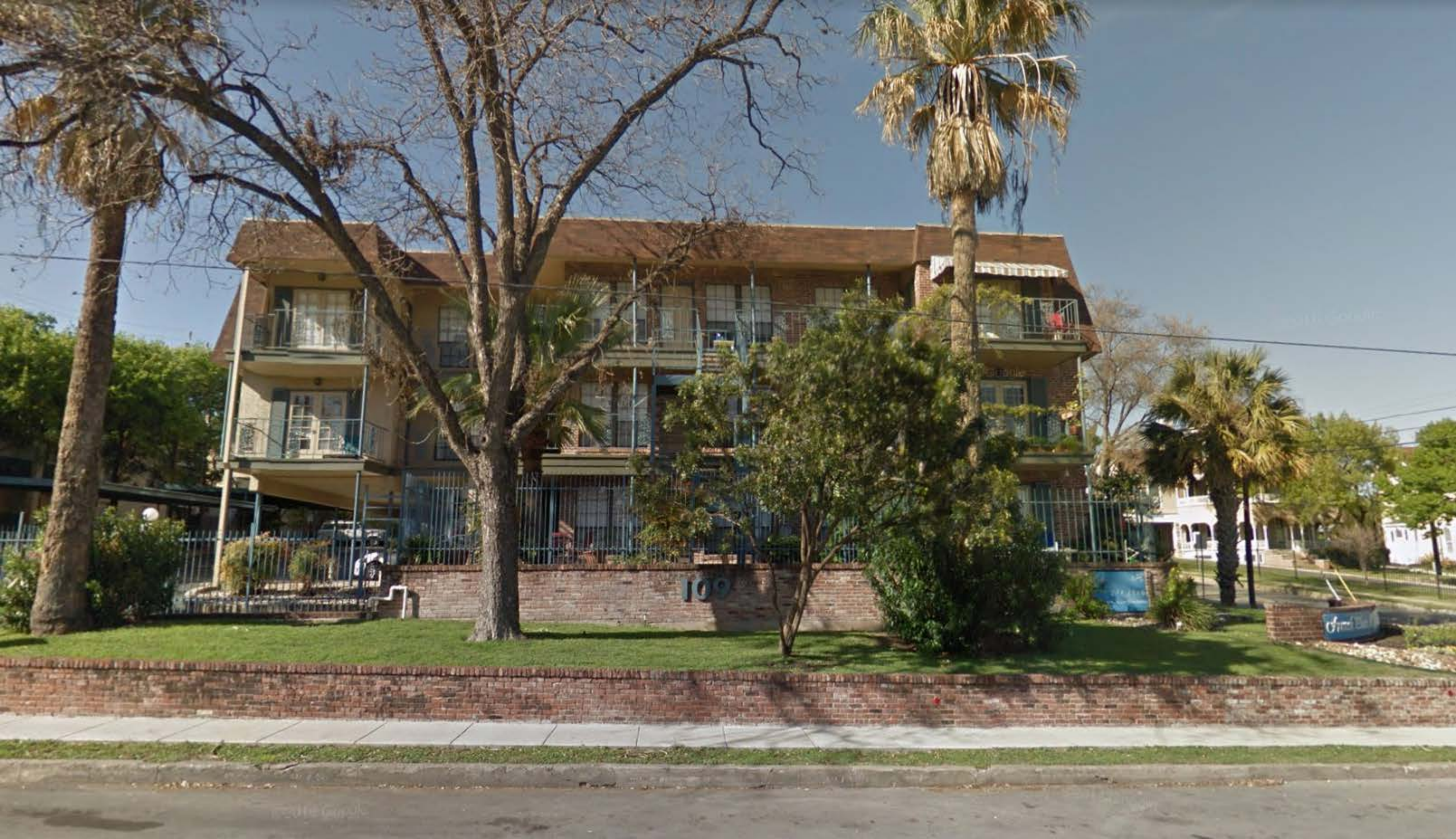
## Flex Viewer

Powered by ArcGIS Server

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109





109



French Place Apartments



















