

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

May 02, 2018

HDRC CASE NO: 2018-196
ADDRESS: 121 BUFORD
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 1369 BLK 6 LOT S 81.3 FT OF 5
ZONING: R-4, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 2
DISTRICT: Dignowity Hill Historic District
APPLICANT: Chris Williams
OWNER: Chris Williams
TYPE OF WORK: Landscaping elements, hardscaping, installation of planters, landscaping walls, fencing
APPLICATION RECEIVED: April 18, 2018
60-DAY REVIEW: June 17, 2018

REQUEST:

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

1. Install a steel planter with wood trim below a front façade window (68" long × 12" wide × 26" tall).
2. Install a steel planter with wood trim adjacent to the front porch steps (80" long × 32" wide × 16" tall).
3. Install two (2) wood planters adjacent to the public right-of-way (36" wide × 24" tall – 20' and 10' long segments).
4. Replace the natural lawn with decomposed granite, low ground plantings, and concrete pavers.
5. Install a crushed granite walkway.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

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.

5. Sidewalks, Walkways, Driveways, and Curbing

A. SIDEWALKS AND WALKWAYS

i. *Maintenance*—Repair minor cracking, settling, or jamming along sidewalks to prevent uneven surfaces. Retain and repair historic sidewalk and walkway paving materials—often brick or concrete—in place.

ii. *Replacement materials*—Replace those portions of sidewalks or walkways that are deteriorated beyond repair. Every effort should be made to match existing sidewalk color and material.

iii. *Width and alignment*—Follow the historic alignment, configuration, and width of sidewalks and walkways. Alter the historic width or alignment only where absolutely necessary to accommodate the preservation of a significant tree.

iv. *Stamped concrete*—Preserve stamped street names, business insignias, or other historic elements of sidewalks and walkways when replacement is necessary.

v. *ADA compliance*—Limit removal of historic sidewalk materials to the immediate intersection when ramps are added to address ADA requirements.

B. DRIVEWAYS

i. *Driveway configuration*—Retain and repair in place historic driveway configurations, such as ribbon drives. Incorporate a similar driveway configuration—materials, width, and design—to that historically found on the site. Historic driveways are typically no wider than 10 feet. Pervious paving surfaces may be considered where replacement is necessary to increase stormwater infiltration.

ii. *Curb cuts and ramps*—Maintain the width and configuration of original curb cuts when replacing historic driveways. Avoid introducing new curb cuts where not historically found.

C. CURBING

- i. *Historic curbing*—Retain historic curbing wherever possible. Historic curbing in San Antonio is typically constructed of concrete with a curved or angular profile.
- ii. *Replacement curbing*—Replace curbing in-kind when deteriorated beyond repair. Where in-kind replacement is not be feasible, use a comparable substitute that duplicates the color, texture, durability, and profile of the original. Retaining walls and curbing should not be added to the sidewalk design unless absolutely necessary.

FINDINGS:

- a. The historic structure at 121 Buford was constructed circa 1920 in the Craftsman architectural style. The structure is a single-story, single-family residential structure that features a clipped gable roof, a front porch with two entry doors, and double-hung wood windows. Prior to site work without approval, the property's front yard once featured natural lawn, portions of chain-link fencing, and a concrete walkway meeting the sidewalk at the public right-of-way.
- b. VIOLATIONS – In January 2018, site work was performed on the property prior to approval. Each of the following items were heard and denied by the HDRC on February 7, 2018:
 1. Amend an administrative approval to allow a fence height of six feet, past the plane of the front façade.
 2. Removal of the sidewalk at the public right of way and to install black basalt gravel paving.
 3. Removal of natural lawn in the front and side yards and to install decomposed granite and low-ground cover.
 4. Install concrete pavers.
 5. Install a steel planter below front façade windows.
 6. Install a steel planter adjacent to the front porch and steps.
 7. Install a two foot tall gabion wall with a 6-inch tall steel planter.
 8. Install a six foot tall masonry solar screen with three, 6-inch tall planters
- c. COMPLIANCE – The applicant has noted the reduction of height of the 6-foot tall fence past the front façade plane of the house to comply with the previous issued administrative approval for rear and side fencing (addressing violation #1). The applicant will also remove the black basalt gravel paving functioning as off-street parking and reinstall the sidewalk at the public right-of-way (addressing violation #2). These items will not require HDRC action.
- d. UPDATED DESIGN – The following items were submitted by the applicant in pursuit of compliance and require action from the HDRC.
- e. STEEL PLANTER WITH WOOD TRIM (BELOW WINDOW) – The applicant has proposed to install a steel planter with wood trim below the front facade window. The planter will feature a dimension of 68 inches in length, 12 inches in width and 26 inches in height. Staff finds that the proposed material of the planter is generally consistent with the Guidelines for Site Elements 1.A.iii. An drawing or image of the planter design must be submitted to staff prior to the issuance of Certificate of Appropriateness.
- f. STEEL PLANTER WITH WOOD TRIM (PORCH) – The applicant has proposing to install a steel planter with wood trim adjacent to the front porch. The planter will feature a dimension of 80 in length, 32 inches in width and × 16 in height. Staff finds that the proposed material of the planter is generally consistent with the Guidelines for Site Elements 1.A.iii. An drawing or image of the planter design must be submitted to staff prior to the issuance of Certificate of Appropriateness.
- g. WOOD PLANTERS BY PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAY – The applicant has proposed to clad the existing rock and wire mesh planter (gabion wall) with wood to mimic the installation of a wood planter. The applicant has also proposed to remove the masonry solar screen to install a wood planter to match the proposed wood-clad gabion planter in dimension and design. The wood planters will feature a dimension of 36 inches in width, 24 inches in height and segments of 10 and 20 inches in length along the public right of way. The planters are intended to function as a buffer from the sidewalk and the front yard. Staff finds the proposal inconsistent with the Guidelines for Site Elements 1.A.iii. for New Elements and 2.B.i through v. The gabion wall and masonry solar screen should be completely removed. The applicant may request to install a front yard fence design that is consistent with the Guidelines in height, design, and material.
- h. XERISCAPING – The applicant has proposed to install decomposed granite, concrete pavers, and low ground plantings where the site once featured natural lawn. Staff finds that proposal generally consistent with the Guidelines for Site Elements provided that more low ground and xeric plants be introduced to the original design to mitigate the wholesale removal of natural lawn.
- i. WALKWAY – The applicant has proposed to install a crushed granite walkway between the sidewalk and the front porch. The walkway originally featured poured concrete before it was replaced with decomposed granite and rectangular concrete pavers. While a crushed granite walkway would be an improvement from the current

walkway featuring concrete pavers in a contemporary manner, staff finds that a simple poured concrete walkway based on the photographic evidence is more consistent with the Guidelines which note that every effort should be made to match the existing sidewalk color and material.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of items 1 and 2 based on findings e and f with the stipulations that a final drawing or image of the planter design be submitted to staff prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

Staff does not recommend approval of item 3, the wood planters adjacent to the public right of way, based on finding g. Staff recommends the total removal of the inappropriate installations.

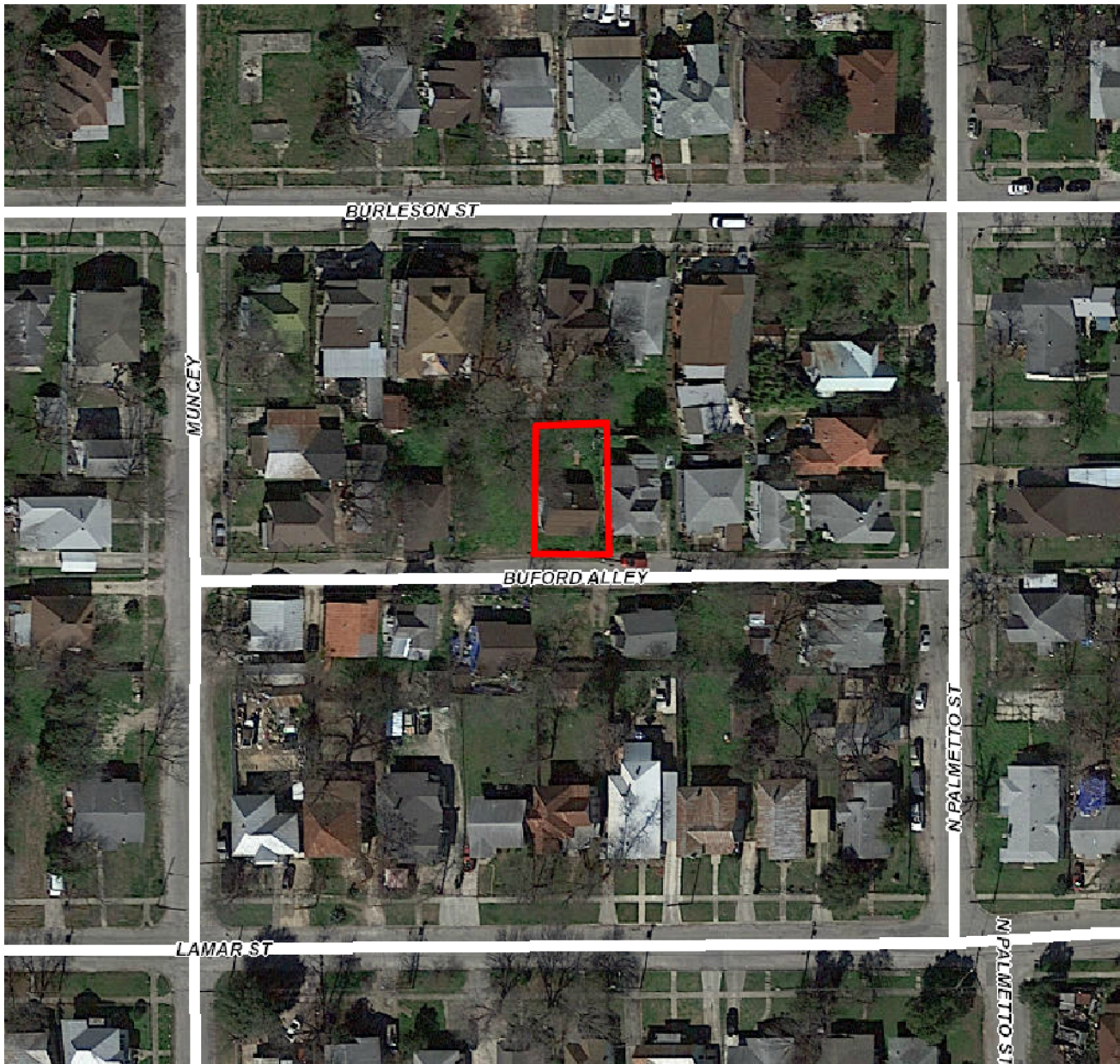
Staff recommends approval of items 4 and 5 based on findings h and i with the stipulation that the walkway feature simple poured concrete and final site plan be submitted to staff prior to the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness.

CASE MANAGER:

Huy Pham

CASE COMMENT:

The applicant will reduce height of the 6-foot fence past the front façade plane of the house to comply with the previously issued administrative approval for rear and side fencing. The applicant will also remove the black basalt gravel paving functioning as off-street parking to reinstall the sidewalk in the public right-of-way. These items will not require a decision from the HDRC.

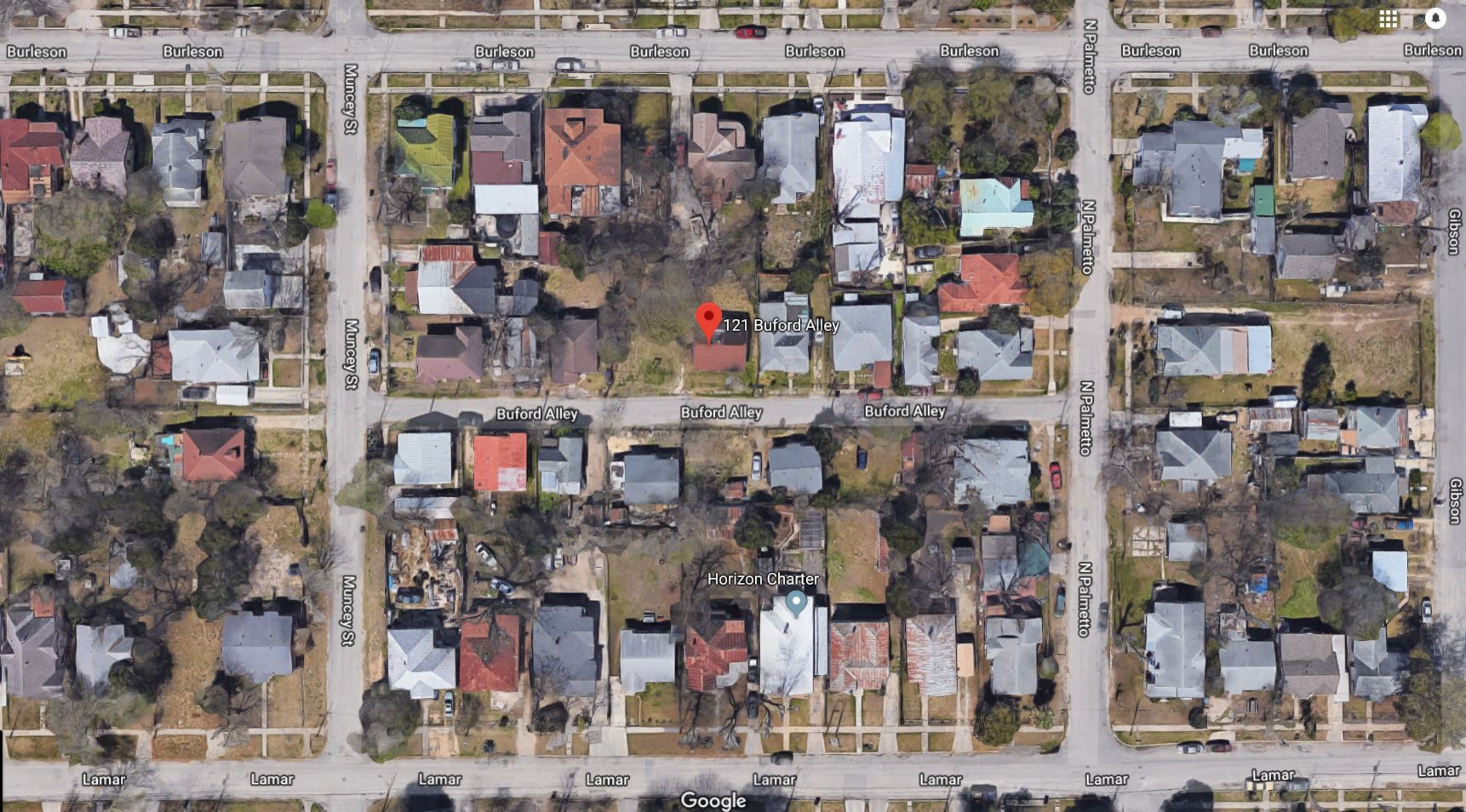


121 Buford

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Printed: Jan 24, 2018

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121 Buford Alley

Horizon Charter



121 Buford Alley

Google

123 Buford Alley

San Antonio, Texas



Google, Inc.



Street View - May 2014



2014

Google

123 Buford Alley

San Antonio, Texas



Google, Inc.



Street View - Apr 2016



2016

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2017



2018

Exhibit 2: Original design with notes addressing non-compliant findings:

#5 and #6. Wood trim to be added to planters (window and porch)

#8. Gabion wall will be replaced with wood planter of same dimensions

#2. City called to install sidewalk

#7. Low ground concrete planter from original plan was not installed (not pictured)



#3. More plants to be added to side yard

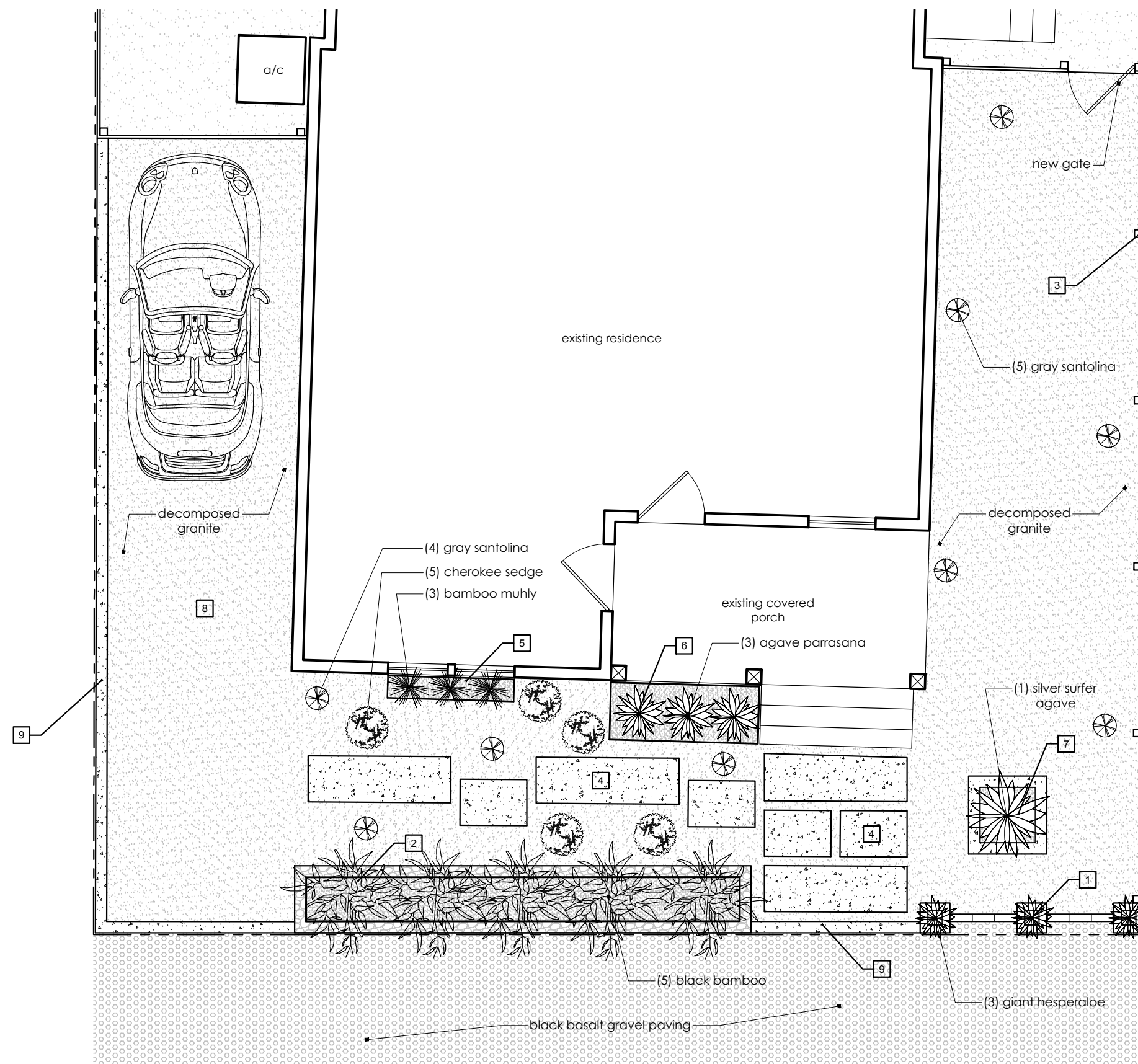
#1. Side fence reduce to 4 ft

#4. Pavers to be replaced with crushed granite walkway

#9. Solar screen to be removed and replaced with wood planter of same height and depth of #8

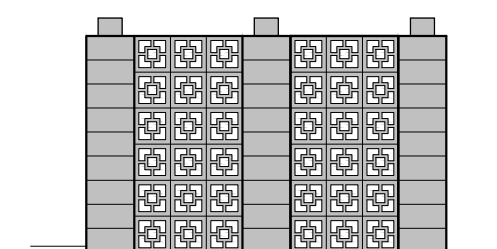
1. List of non-compliant findings and proposed remedies:

Non Compliant Findings		Proposed Remedies	
1	6-foot tall fencing beyond the rear plane of front porch		Reduce the fencing to 4-foot tall beyond rear plane of front porch
2	Removal of sidewalk and natural lawn for installation of black basalt gravel parking		City will be called to have new sidewalk installed
3	Wholesale removal of lawn for installation of decomposed granite and plantings		Additional plantings will be introduced to the side of house to add more green to the landscape
4	Concrete pavers		Pavers will be removed and replaced with a decomposed granite walkway
5	Steel planter beneath window		Wood trim will be introduced to the steel planter
6	Steel planter adjacent to porch		Wood trim will be introduced to the steel planter
7	Low ground concrete planter		This item was not installed
8	Gabion wall		Will be replaced with wood planter of the same dimensions
9	Solar screen		Will be replaced with a wood planter of same height and depth of #8

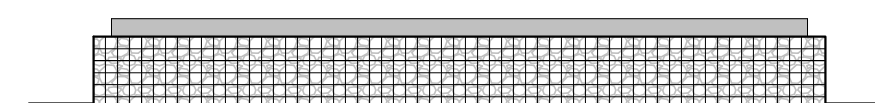


legend

1. solar screen
 - 6'-0" ht x 10'-0" wide (+/-) masonry wall
 - (3) cmu columns, (painted) with 6" steel reveal
 - (2) perforated masonry panels, (painted)
2. gabion wall with integral planter
 - 24" ht x 36" wide x x 20'-4" long steel cage w/large diameter river rock (walls are 6" wide)
 - 24" wide X 19'-4" long integral steel planter with 6" reveal above gabion
3. cedar fence
 - 6'-0" ht smooth cedar fence
 - 3" square tubular steel posts
 - horizontal panels alternating 1x4 & 1x6
 - (1) 36" width gate
4. stepping pads
 - 2' x 3' alternating with 2' x 6' segmented concrete pavers w/5" decomposed granite joints
5. custom steel planter "a"
 - 68" long x 12" deep x 36" tall
6. custom steel planter "b"
 - 80" long x 32" deep x 16" tall
7. custom concrete and steel planter "c"
 - 30" x 30" x 6" ht. steel planter
 - 6" wide concrete skirt
8. parking
 - decomposed granite
9. concrete curb
 - 6" wide concrete curb



solar screen elevation

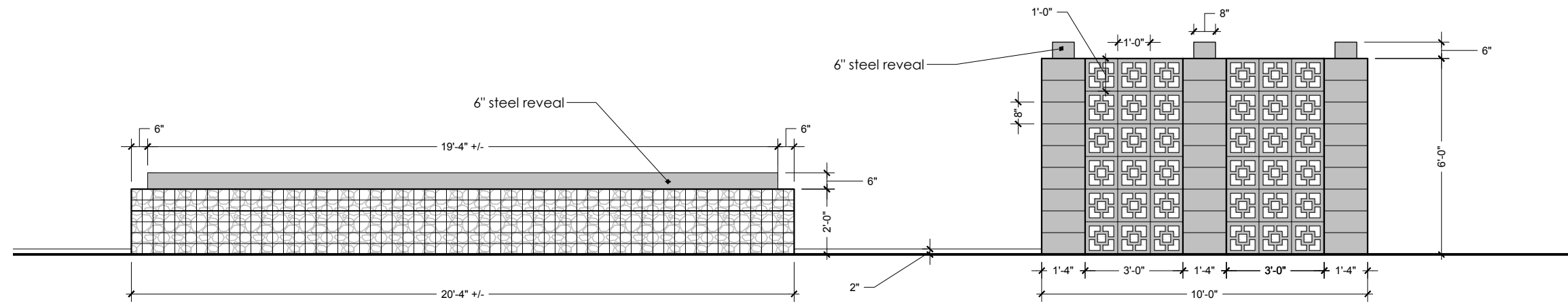


gabion wall elevation

previous request

buford alley
entry garden plan

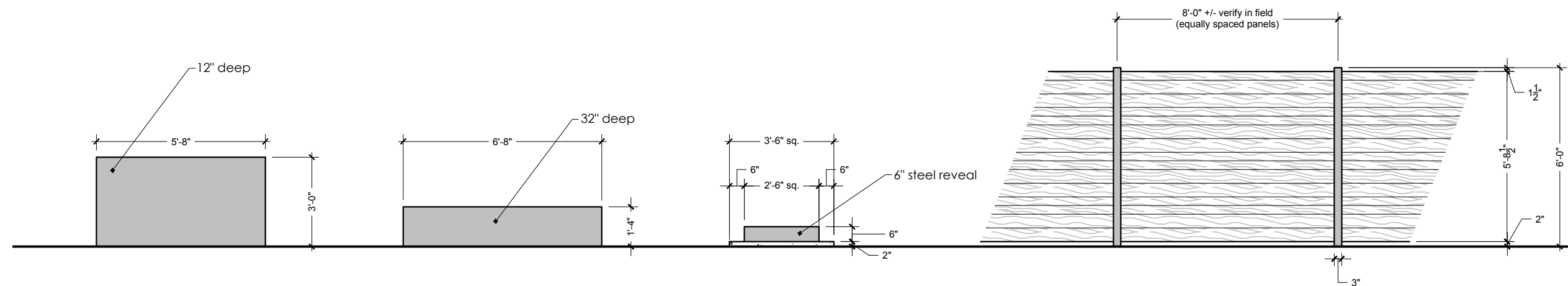




gabbion wall

entry elevation
scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

solar screen



custom steel planter type "a"
scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

custom steel planter type "b"
scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

custom steel planter type "c"
scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

typical fence panel
scale: 1/4" = 1'-0"

previous request

SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

