

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

April 03, 2019

HDRC CASE NO: 2019-160
ADDRESS: 126 ARMOUR
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 6203 BLK 4 LOT 7
ZONING: R-4, H
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
DISTRICT: River Road Historic District
APPLICANT: Ian McNab Alicia Lovett
OWNER: Ian McNab Alicia Lovett
TYPE OF WORK: Landscaping/Xeriscaping front lawn
APPLICATION RECEIVED: March 22, 2019
60-DAY REVIEW: May 21, 2019
CASE MANAGER: Huy Pham
REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness for approval to xeriscape the front yard to feature:

- 1) Brazos blend crushed gravel
- 2) Plantings on flat grade including rosemary, santolina, red yucca, yucca, rock rose, and agave.
- 3) Plantings on front slope to feature rosemary shrubbery.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

5. Guidelines for Site Elements

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:

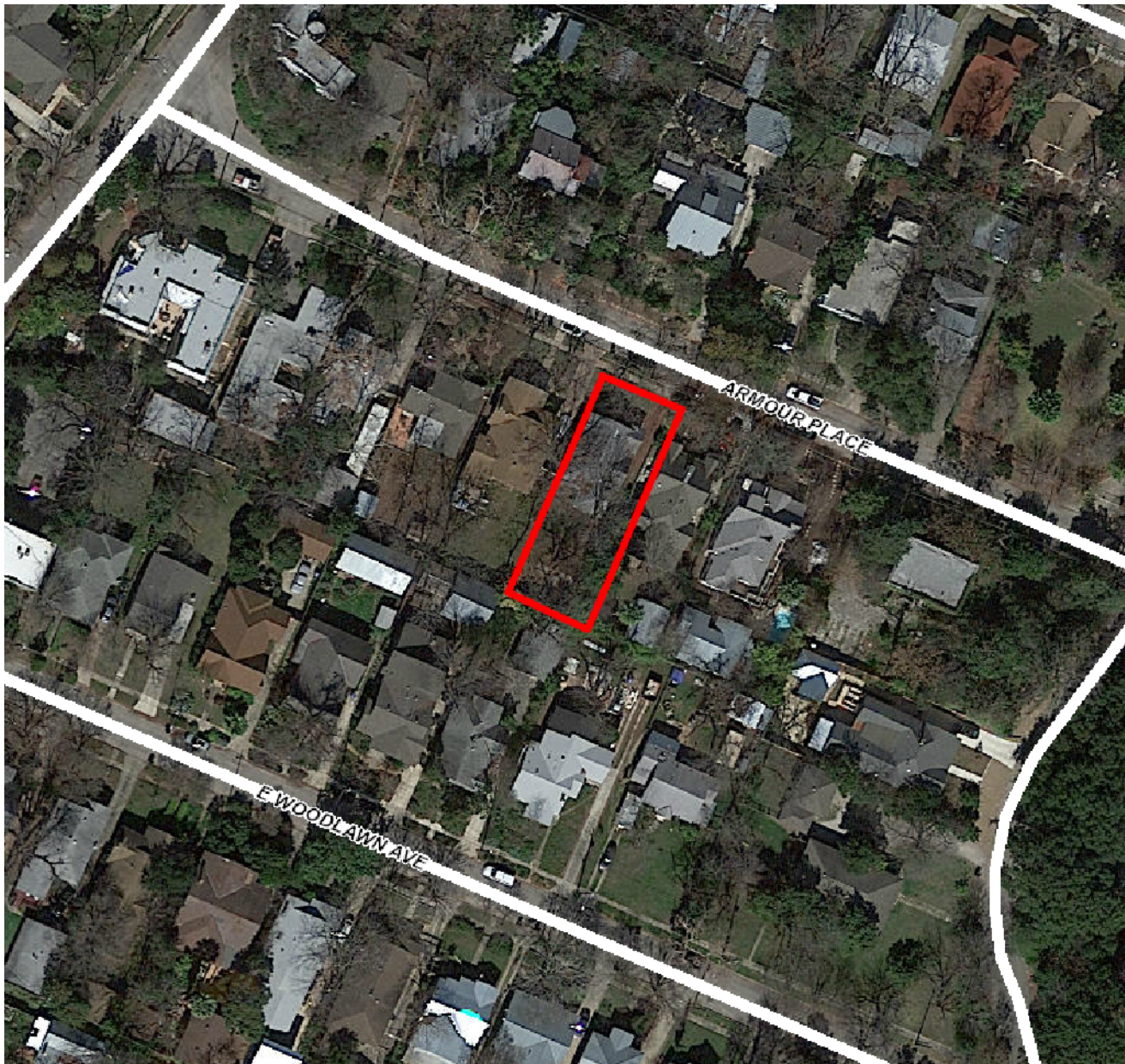
- a. The primary structure at 126 Armour was constructed in the Craftsman style and contributes to the River Road Historic District. The front yard features natural turf, one tree on the north side lawn, one tree in the planting strip, and a slope approaching the sidewalk accommodated by two steps onto the centered walkway.
- b. VIOLATION – On a site visit conducted on March 20, 2019, staff found that front lawn areas had been removed in preparation to lay impervious cover. The applicant/owner explained to staff that plantings would be introduced into the design and was cooperative to submit a request on March 22, 2019, to be heard at the next available hearing.
- c. NEW GRAVEL BEDS – The applicant has proposed to remove a majority of the natural turf, excluding the sloping portions along the sidewalk, and install crushed gravel beds with planting on top. Per the Guidelines for Site Elements 5.2.B.ii, 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. While the proposal includes large portions of lawn replacement with impervious cover, staff finds that the abundant inclusion of plantings mitigates the removal of lawn.
- d. NEW PLANTINGS – The applicant has proposed to install a variety of plantings including: santolina, red yucca, yucca, rock rose, agave, rose mary, and rosemary shrubbery. Per the Guidelines for Site Elements 5.3.A.iii and iv, plants should be selected to thrive in local conditions and reduce watering usage utilizing UDC Appendix E: San Antonio Recommended Plant List, and 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. Staff finds that the selection and amount of plantings is generally appropriate and that additional low ground cover and xeric plants should be incorporated where feasible.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval based on findings b through d.

CASE COMMENT:

VIOLATION – On a site visit conducted on March 20, 2019, staff found that front lawn areas had been removed in preparation to lay impervious cover. The applicant/owner explained to staff that plantings would be introduced into the design and was cooperative to submit a request on March 22, 2019, to be heard at the next available hearing.



126 Armour

Powered by ArcGIS Server

Printed: May 29, 2018

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126 Armour Pl
San Antonio, Texas

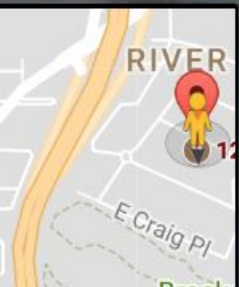
Google, Inc.

Street View - Apr 2011



Currently shown: Apr 2011

2011 2016



Google

123 Armour Pl

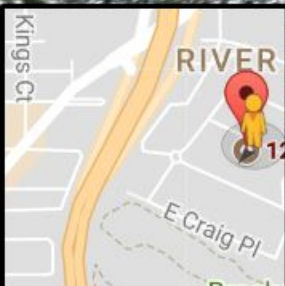
San Antonio, Texas



Google, Inc.



Street View - Mar 2016



Google



126 Armour Place: Written Narrative

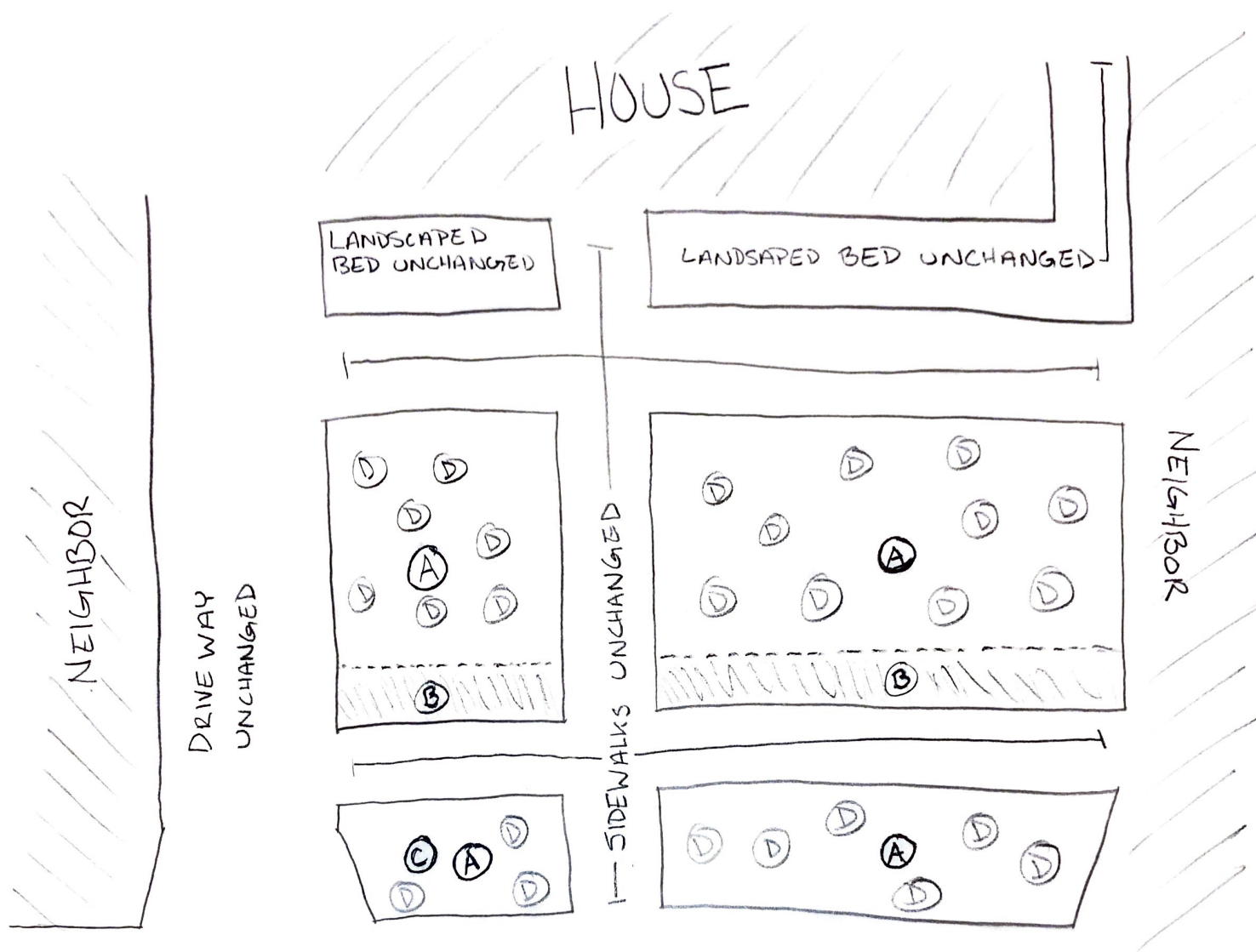
We are seeking approval to replace the dead front lawn we received when we purchased our house in the summer of 2018 with new front lawn landscaping. The goal for our proposed landscape plan is to install a more draught tolerant lawn with reduced water needs for minimum impact. Aesthetically, the goal is to more closely match the informal xeric lawns already existing in our River Road neighborhood.

Our plan proposes to replace the dead sod with permeable materials only. There is no plan to add irrigation, sprinklers, or additional watering source. The main permeable material would be a 3/8th's pea-sized gravel in the color "Brazos blend," a natural and locally-sourced material. Within the small gravel we propose to plant a variety of native, low water, draught-resistant plants dispersed throughout the gravel. The proposed native plants include rosemary, santolina, red yucca, yucca, rock rose, and agave. We propose to keep the natural slope in our front lawn and plant rosemary bushes in dirt/mulch on the slope. None of our plans include any raised beds, and the current beds closest to the house would remain as is.

There are no proposed changes to the trees or existing structure. There are no proposed changes to the topography, fences, walls, streetscape, sidewalks, drive way or curbs.

126 Armour Place: Site Plan

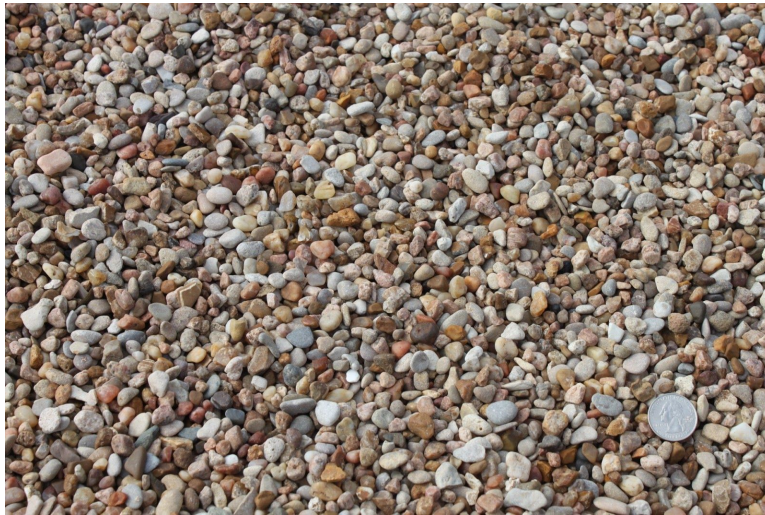
- (1) **Topography:** Our proposed landscape plan does not include any changes to the topography. The slope in the front yard would remain and there would be no change in gradation.
- (2) **Fences and Walls:** There is currently no fence anywhere in our yard. Our proposed landscape plan does not include any walls or any addition of a front yard fence or a fence aligned with or near our front façade.
- (3) **Landscape Design:** Instead of re-sodding the dead lawn we received when we purchased our house, our proposed landscape plan would not require us to install a sprinkler or irrigation system to keep it alive throughout the summers and droughts. Our proposed landscape changes would be consistent with the informal xeric plantings of the River Road neighborhood.
 - a. We do not propose to use any impervious materials
 - b. We propose areas of pervious hardscape and dirt/mulch. There would be no raised beds. Materials for our lawn would only include elements native to the area:
 - i. Pervious hardscape: Pea gravel in “brazos blend” at 3/8ths inch with various low plantings within the design
 - ii. Low Plantings: A varied palette of native, low water, xeric plants within the pervious hardscape i.e. red yuccas, agave Americana etc.
 - iii. Dirt/Mulch with planted rosemary prostrate bushes
 - c. No element of landscaping would obscure the existing structure from visibility.
 - d. There would be no changes to the trees.
- (4) **Residential Streetscape:** There would be no concrete used, no changes to the sidewalk, no additions of planting strips, and no re-paving.
- (5) **Sidewalks, Walkways, Driveways, and Curbing:** See previous.
- (6) **Non-Residential/Mixed Streetscape:** Not applicable.
- (7) **Off-Street Parking:** Not applicable.
- (8) **ADA Compliance:** Not applicable.



- A: THESE SECTIONS ARE FILLED W/ 3/8" PEA GRAVEL
- B: THE SMALL SLOPE WILL BE LANDSCAPED W/ ROSEMARY
- C: EXISTING TREE WILL REMAIN
- D: NATIVE, APPROVED, XERISCAPE COMPLIANT PLANTS
THROUGHOUT GRAVEL BEDS (ROSEMARY, AGAVE, YUCCAS, ETC.)

Materials:

$\frac{3}{8}$ " Brazos Blend Gravel



Rosemary, prostrate (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)



Santolina



Rock Rose



Red Yucca



Yucca:



Agave:

