

# HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

September 18, 2019

**HDRC CASE NO:** 2019-514  
**ADDRESS:** 901 MASON ST  
**LEGAL DESCRIPTION:** NCB 1267 BLK 3 LOT S 137.0 OF 9 & 10 & N 50.0 OF E 24.0 FT OF 9 ARB 9C, 10A, & 9B  
**ZONING:** O-2,H  
**CITY COUNCIL DIST.:** 2  
**DISTRICT:** Government Hill Historic District  
**APPLICANT:** Logan Fullmer /901 MASON LLC  
**OWNER:** Logan Fullmer/901 MASON LLC  
**TYPE OF WORK:** Landscape modifications  
**APPLICATION RECEIVED:** September 03, 2019  
**60-DAY REVIEW:** November 02, 2019  
**CASE MANAGER:** Stephanie Phillips  
**REQUEST:**

The applicant is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to perform various landscaping improvements, including the installation of planting beds, portions of el dorado gravel, and the installation of various grasses. The existing grass and dirt planting strip is proposed to be replaced with el dorado gravel.

## 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.

## 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.

## 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.

## 7. Off-Street Parking

### A. LOCATION

- i. *Preferred location*—Place parking areas for non-residential and mixed-use structures at the rear of the site, behind primary structures to hide them from the public right-of-way. On corner lots, place parking areas behind the primary structure and set them back as far as possible from the side streets. Parking areas to the side of the primary structure are acceptable when location behind the structure is not feasible. See UDC Section 35-310 for district-specific standards.
- ii. *Front*—Do not add off-street parking areas within the front yard setback as to not disrupt the continuity of the streetscape.
- iii. *Access*—Design off-street parking areas to be accessed from alleys or secondary streets rather than from principal streets whenever possible.

### B. DESIGN

- i. *Screening*—Screen off-street parking areas with a landscape buffer, wall, or ornamental fence two to four feet high—or a combination of these methods. Landscape buffers are preferred due to their ability to absorb carbon dioxide. See UDC Section 35-510 for buffer requirements.
- ii. *Materials*—Use permeable parking surfaces when possible to reduce run-off and flooding. See UDC Section 35-526(j) for specific standards.
- iii. *Parking structures*—Design new parking structures to be similar in scale, materials, and rhythm of the surrounding

historic district when new parking structures are necessary.

## **FINDINGS:**

- a. The primary structure located at 901 Mason St is a 2-story structure designed in the Italianate style with Renaissance and Neoclassical Revival influences. The structure was originally built as a single family residence and features a 2-story wraparound front porch with Corinthian columns, woodlap siding, and prominent bay windows. The structure is contributing to the Government Hill Historic District.
- b. LANDSCAPE MODIFICATIONS – The applicant has proposed to perform landscape modifications to the south and west lawns of the property along Mason and Spofford Streets. Plant beds will be installed along the primary structure and the area fronting the Mason St sidewalks will feature el dorado gravel beds, including the planting strip between the sidewalk and the street. Along the existing fence line, a variety of monkey grasses and mondo grasses will be planted within the gravel beds. No plantings are proposed for the planting strip. According to the Guidelines for Site Elements, lawns or plantings should not be fully removed. The park-like character of historic parkways and planted strips by preserving mature vegetation and retaining historic design elements. Damaged or dead plant materials should be replaced with species of a like size, growth habit, and ornamental characteristics. Staff generally finds the overall proposal appropriate, but finds that at least 50% native or xeric plantings should be incorporated into the planting strip to maintain the historic condition of greenery fronting the public right-of-way. Staff finds the continued use of mondo or monkey grasses in this area appropriate.

## **RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff recommends approval of the landscape modifications based on findings a through b with the following stipulation:

- i. That native or xeric plantings be incorporated into the planting strip to maintain the historic condition of greenery fronting the public right-of-way as noted in finding b. Staff finds 50% plantings and 50% gravel to be appropriate. An updated site plan is required to be submitted to staff that reflects these changes prior to receiving a Certificate of Appropriateness.

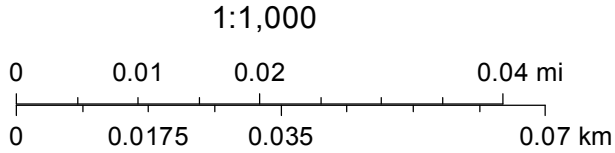


City of San Antonio One Stop



September 12, 2019

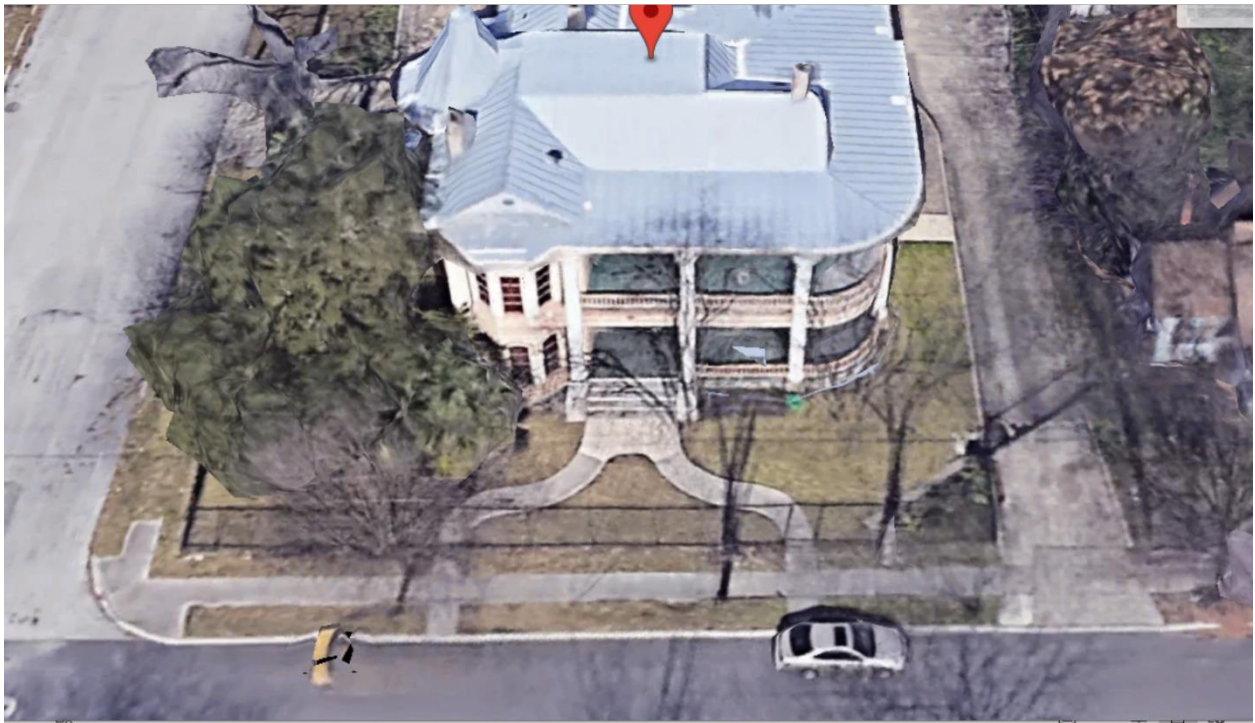
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CoSA



CURRENT SITE







## Landscape Proposal

**Situs:** 901 Mason St., San Antonio, Tx 78208

**Neighborhood:** Government Hill Historic District

**Property Owner:** 901 Mason, LLC

**Narrative.** The property situated at 901 Mason St is zoned and used as commercial office space (Zoning : O2). In an effort to increase the curb appeal and create a transition from the building to the street the proposed plan will employ new plants and materials in an attractive way that accents the building without detracting from it while blending into the fabric of the surrounding historic district and decreasing the pressure on local utility service providers and aquifers.

**Tree Preservation.** The proposed project would not harm or interfere with any existing trees on site.

**Current, Existing Materials.** Currently grass covers the lawn and exists in sparse patches from building to curb. Some rock beds to the rear and east of the building exist and to the best of common knowledge have existed for the prior ten years.

**Proposed Installation.** The proposed installation shall affect the south and west lawns of the property along Mason and Spofford Streets. The current ratio of pervious to impervious coverage will remain unchanged under the proposed installation. Existing grass will be revived by fertilization, water and additional seed/sod. Plant beds that shall be no deeper than thirty six inches and shall frame the base of the building and the main entry sidewalks. The beds shall be bound by four or six inch landscape trim. Proposed beds will include big blue monkey grass, mando grass, ferns and hosta plants to create a lush backdrop and under the plants shall be el dorado gravel beds for ease of maintenance and low impact on city water usage. The space between the boundary fence and the curb shall be filled with a brown organic earth tone colored el dorado gravel and several blue mando and monkey grass plants. See Example Sites and Site Plan below for detail.

### Scope of Work.

<b>Schedule.</b>	The proposed project is estimated to require about thirty (30) days of construction.
<b>Scope.</b>	Revive the existing grass, install new plant beds along the building base and entry sidewalk and install rock beds between the boundary fence and curb.
<b>Budget.</b>	The estimated cost to complete the project is approximately thirty five hundred dollars (\$3,500.00).



## PLANT INDEX

Big blue monkey grass



Mondo grass



El Dorado gravel and Klondike  
Cobble



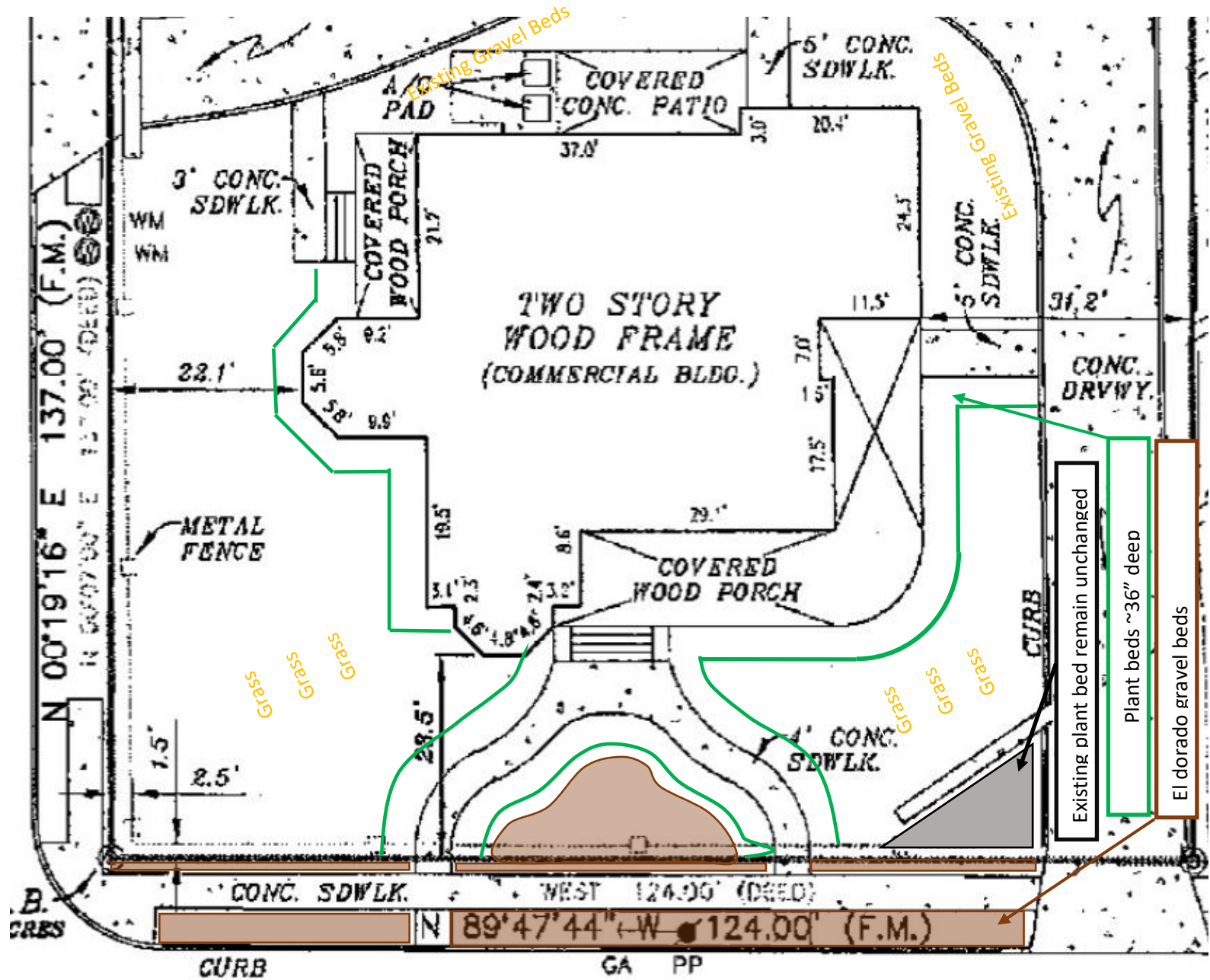
Ferns



Hosta



PROPOSED SITE PLAN





### EXAMPLE SITES WITH SIMILAR MATERIALS

The below example depicts a variety of leafy green plants in beds edged with landscape trim situated at the base of the building and along the main entry flatwork. Beds shall be no deeper than thirty six inches (36") and shall be located along the front and sides of the building.

