

HISTORIC LANDMARK COMMISSION STAFF REPORT



Planning Division
Department of Community and
Economic Development

Front Yard Terracing
PLNHLC2014-00362
259 South 1200 East
Meeting Date: August 7, 2014

Applicant: Jeri Fowles,
property owner

Staff: Amy Thompson
amy.thompson@slcgov.com
(801)535-7281

Tax ID: 16-05-277-010

Current Zone: R-2

Master Plan Designation:
Low Density Residential

Council District:
District 4– Luke Garrott

Lot Size:
6,970 square feet

Current Use:
Single Family Residential

**Applicable Land Use
Regulations:**

- 21A.34.020(G)

Notification:

- Notice mailed 07/23/2014
- Sign posted 07/23/2014
- Posted to the Planning Division & Utah Public Meeting Notice websites 07/23/2014

Attachments:

- A. Site Plan
- B. Photographs
- C. Examples: Materials & Design

Request

This is a request by Jeri Fowles, the property owner, for approval to construct a terraced retaining wall in the front yard of the property located at 259 South 1200 East. The property is a single family residence located in the University Historic District and the R-2 (Single and Two-Family Residential) zoning district.

Staff Recommendation

Based on the analysis and findings of the staff report, it is the Planning Staff's opinion that the project generally does not meet the applicable standards and therefore, recommends the Historic Landmark Commission deny the request.

Staff intends to forward the application to Zoning Enforcement for unauthorized grade changes to the property.

Potential Motions

Consistent with Staff Recommendation: Based on the findings listed in the staff report, testimony and plans presented, I move that the Historic Landmark Commission deny the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for a Terraced Front Yard at 259 South 1200 East as requested.

Not Consistent with Staff Recommendation: Based on the testimony, plans presented and the following findings, I move that the Historic Landmark Commission grant the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow Front Yard Terracing at 259 South 1200 East as requested (Commissioner then states findings based on the Standards to support the motion):

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be used for a purpose that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment;
2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided;

	<ol style="list-style-type: none">3. All sites, structures and objects shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have no historical basis and which seek to create a false sense of history or architecture are not allowed;4. Alterations or additions that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved;5. Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved;6. Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever feasible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures or objects;7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible;8. Contemporary design for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archaeological material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment;9. Additions or alterations to structures and objects shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alterations were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible in massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment;10. Certain building materials are prohibited including the following:<ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Aluminum, asbestos, or vinyl cladding when applied directly to an original or historic material.11. Any new sign and any change in the appearance of any existing sign located on a landmark site or within the H historic preservation overlay district, which is visible from any public way or open space shall be consistent with the historic character of the landmark site or H historic preservation overlay district and shall comply with the standards outlined in chapter 21A.46 of this title.
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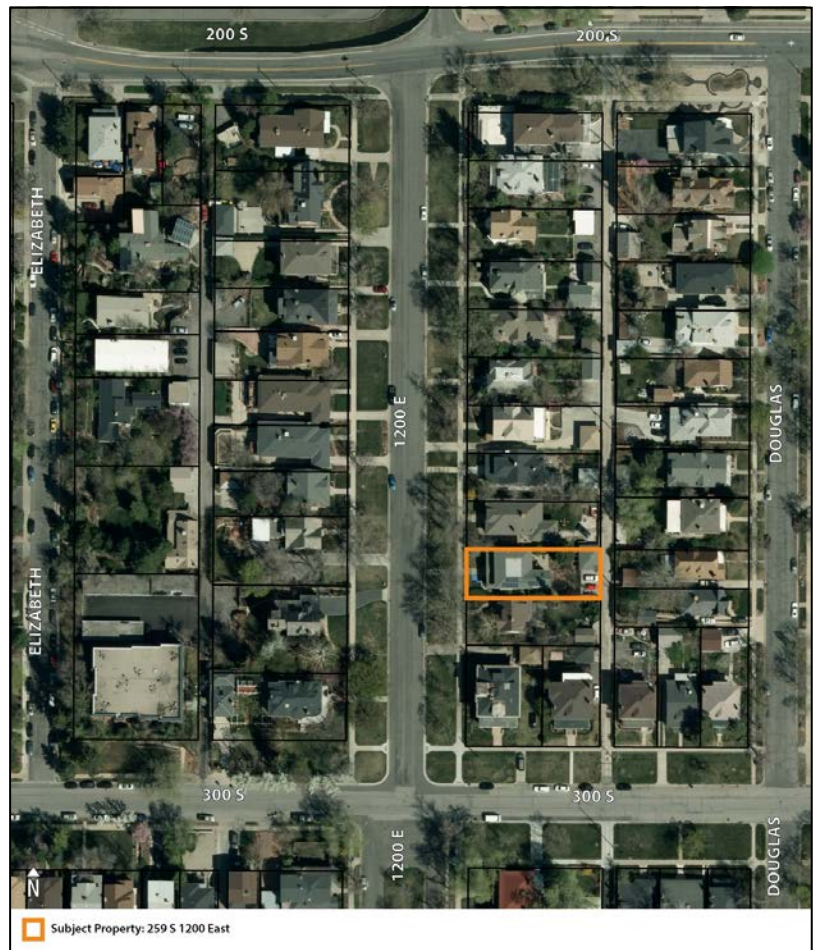
Photo of the subject property. Photo submitted with the application prior to unauthorized grading of the front yard.

BACKGROUND

Context

The subject property is situated on the east side of 1200 East. The elevation of the site is on a steep slope that drops in elevation from the east to the west. The house on the subject property is a two-story box style home built in 1913 with a hip roof, brick exterior, and a full width front porch with a gable over the centered entrance. The subject property is a contributing structure according to the 1980 architectural survey of the University Historic District.

The area in which the University Neighborhood Historic District is located has been called the east bench because of the noticeable change in topography. The steeply cut roads and sloped yards along rows of trees lining sidewalk, and the setback and scale and of the houses are all connecting visual elements within the district which maintain the neighborhood's distinctive setting. Wide park strips and walkways combine with front yards to mediate between the varying levels of the house and street in much of the



University Historic District. Most residential properties have a progression of spaces leading from the public realm of the street, transitioning into a semi-public/semi-private area of the front yard. The east side of 1200 East has an established progression of entry elements, including wide park strips that contain a series of steps that provides a public entry point from the street to the sidewalk, and each property on the streetscape has a similar stairway that connects the front entry with the public sidewalk and could be interpreted as an extension of the public realm. (See streetscape photographs in Attachment B).

Project Description

The proposal includes grading of a portion of the front yard to create two level garden areas, construction of a new terraced retaining wall to contain the raised garden areas. The proposed terraced garden would be at a height in line with both sides of the existing stairway, and would run the length of the property line. The design of the retaining wall encompasses two interconnected levels that measure 3 feet (3') deep, and three terraced retaining walls—each retaining wall would have a height of 18 inches (18"). Next to the highest terraced wall on both sides of the stairway, a 24 inch (24") pillar with a cement cap is proposed. The retaining wall would be constructed of red concrete block material, matching the red brick of the historic house as closely as possible.

Current Status

Unauthorized construction related to this proposal has begun. In the area where the terraced retaining wall is proposed, the lawn has been removed and the front yard has been graded to create a series of level tiers for the proposed landscaping (see photos in Attachment B). The applicant was not aware that a Certificate of Appropriateness was required before beginning the work. An enforcement case has not been opened on the matter; however, if the petition is denied by the Historic Landmark Commission, the matter will be forwarded to Zoning Enforcement.

COMMENTS

Public Comment

No public comment regarding the application has been received as of the date of the preparation and distribution of this staff report.

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

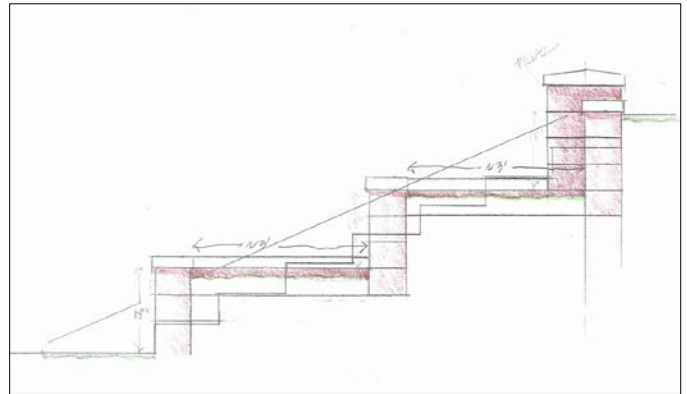


Figure 1: Elevation drawing of the proposed terraced retaining wall

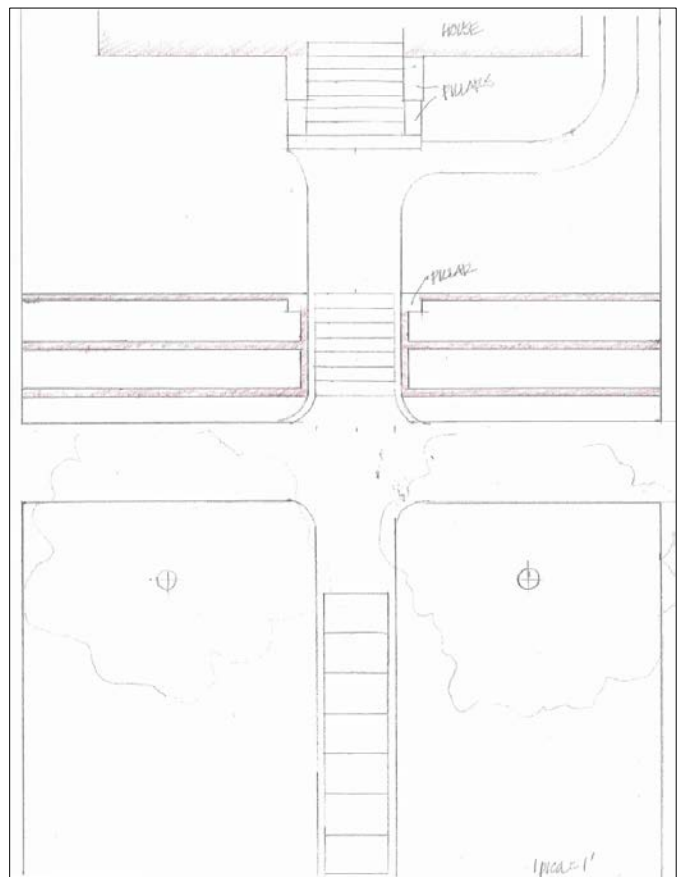


Figure 2: Site plan showing the location of the proposed terraced retaining wall.

Standards of Review

21A.34.020.G Historic Preservation Overlay District: Standards for Certificate of Appropriateness for Altering of a Landmark Site or Contributing Structure: In considering an application for a Certificate of Appropriateness for alteration of a landmark site or contributing structure, the Historic Landmark Commission shall find that the project substantially complies with all of the general standards that pertain to the application and that the decision is in the best interest of the City.

Standard 1: A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be used for a purpose that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment;

Analysis: The use of the structure will remain single family residential. No change is proposed.

Finding: The standard is met.

Standard 2: The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided;

A Preservation Handbook for Historic Residential Properties & Districts in Salt Lake City

Design Objective 1.1 Historically significant site features should be preserved

Design Objective 1.6 The historic grading pattern and design of the site should be preserved

Design Objective 1.11 Respect a common historic walkway pattern in form, design and materials wherever possible.

Design Objective 1.13 Historically significant planting designs should be preserved.

Analysis: In addition to the historic structures, the University Historic District is enhanced by visual components that are important in the cohesive streetscapes, including tree-lined sidewalks, uniform setbacks, and a substantial variation in topography. Yards incline steeply along the east side of 1200 East reflecting the original topography that dictated the sloped building sites. This historic grading provides a unifying visual cohesiveness to the streetscape and is character defining. This historic grading pattern is an important characteristic of the University Historic District that should be retained.

The introduction of the proposed retaining wall, and cutting of the front yard area into a series of stepped terraces would modify the historic grading, as it is seen from the street, and negatively affect the historic character of the individual site and also its context. The proposed alterations would disrupt the established streetscape pattern of walkway progressions and would adversely affect the historic spatial relationship and character. The proposal is inappropriate.

Finding: The proposal does not meet the objectives of this standard. The proposed retaining wall and grading of the front yard would change the historic character of the property and negatively affect the streetscape. The proposal would cause a visual disruption of the progression of walkways and established entry elements. This proposal is in conflict with this standard.

Standard 3: All sites, structures and objects shall be recognized as products of their own time. Alterations that have not a historical basis and which seek to create a false sense of history or architecture are not allowed;

Analysis: The proposal is a more traditional expression of a retaining wall that uses red concrete block material for the construction. It's unlikely this type of construction would be confused with the original form of the site and its neighboring relationships because it is seriously altering the established spaces and disrupting the established historic grading along the streetscape.

Finding: The standard is met.

Standard 4: Alterations or additions that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Analysis: This standard does not relate to this proposal. The terraced retaining wall is a proposed alteration that has not acquired historic significance in its own right.

Finding: The standard is not applicable.

Standard 5: Distinctive features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved;

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Design Objective 1.13 Historically significant planting designs should be preserved.

Analysis: In as far as this standard relates to site features, the common relationship of the open space created by the wide park strips sloping front lawn areas within the street block characterizes this and neighboring properties and is a distinctive site feature of this property and its context. The steep grade of the properties on the east side of 1200 East contribute to a historic pattern of related sloping of the front yard area of each property, in turn helping to create a visual continuity along the street frontage. Yards in the University Historic District are generally landscaped in a simple manner with in the front portion of the sloped yard area where stairs lead up to the semi-private area of the yard.

By altering the grade of this front yard behind a new retaining wall, the proposal would disrupt the open landscape relationship and sense of common public and private space shared by the many houses along the street frontage. This sloping yard rather than terraced yards is a historic and common characteristic of the University Historic District. The proposed alterations would adversely affect this character-defining feature thus compromising the overall historic character of the surrounding streetscape and district.

Finding: The proposal does not meet this standard. Changing the historic grading pattern as proposed would diminish distinctive site features of this property and of the historic district's streetscape.

Standard 6: Deteriorated architectural features shall be repaired rather than replaced wherever feasible. In the event replacement is necessary, the new material should match the material being replaced in composition, design, texture and other visual qualities. Repair or replacement of missing architectural features should be based on accurate duplications of features, substantiated by historic, physical or pictorial evidence rather than on conjectural designs or the availability of different architectural elements from other structures or objects;

Analysis: The proposal does not include replacement or repair of deteriorated architectural or existing features. This standard does not relate to this proposal.

Finding: The standard is not applicable.

Standard 7: Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible;

Analysis: The proposal does not include treatments of existing historic materials. This standard does not relate to this proposal.

Finding: The standard is not applicable.

Standard 8: Contemporary designs for alterations and additions to existing properties shall not be discouraged when such alterations and additions do not destroy significant cultural, historical, architectural or archaeological material, and such design is compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment;

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Design Objective 1.1 Historically significant site features should be preserved

Design Objective 1.10 Consider a new retaining wall in the context of its immediate setting and the established relationship of landscaping within the streetscape.

Design Objective 1.11 Respect a common historic walkway pattern in form, design and materials wherever possible.

Design Objective 1.13 Historically significant planting designs should be preserved.

Analysis: In as far as this standard relates to site features, the proposed alterations introduce an incompatible landscaping element to the immediate setting and relationship of landscaping within the streetscape. The materials and design do not readily or appropriately relate to the character of the property and might emphasize a degree of departure from the shared relationship to neighboring properties, and overall streetscape. The retaining wall would not be compatible with materials or character of the property or the streetscape. It is the addition of the terraced retaining wall, in itself rather than its design, which would adversely affect the harmony and relationship of the private open space along the street frontage.

Finding: For the reasons set out above, the proposal would not conflict with the first two objectives of this standard, but would in staff's opinion, be inconsistent with the last objective which relates to character of property and neighborhood. The proposal is incompatible with the character of the property and would adversely affect the overall historic context of the streetscape. This standard is not met.

Standard 9: Additions or alterations to structures and objects shall be done in such a manner that if such additions or alteration were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the structure would be unimpaired. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible in massing, size, scale and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment;

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Design Objective 1.1 Historically significant site features should be preserved

Design Objective 1.6 The historic grading pattern and design of the site should be preserved

Analysis: Although the proposed alterations could be reversed and the form and grade of the front garden space, and relationship between the private yard and the public sidewalk and park strip, could be reinstated, the proposal is not compatible with the historic integrity of the property and the environment. The historic grading of the property is a key character defining feature on the streetscape, and the proposal does not protect the historic integrity of the property and the environment.

Finding: The proposal is not consistent with the objectives of this standard. The proposed grade changes to the front yard area do not protect the historic integrity of the properties defining key characteristics.

Standard 10: Certain building materials are prohibited including the following: Vinyl or aluminum cladding when applied directly to an original or historic material;

Analysis: The proposal does not include the use of vinyl or aluminum cladding applied to original or historic material.

Finding: The standard is not applicable.

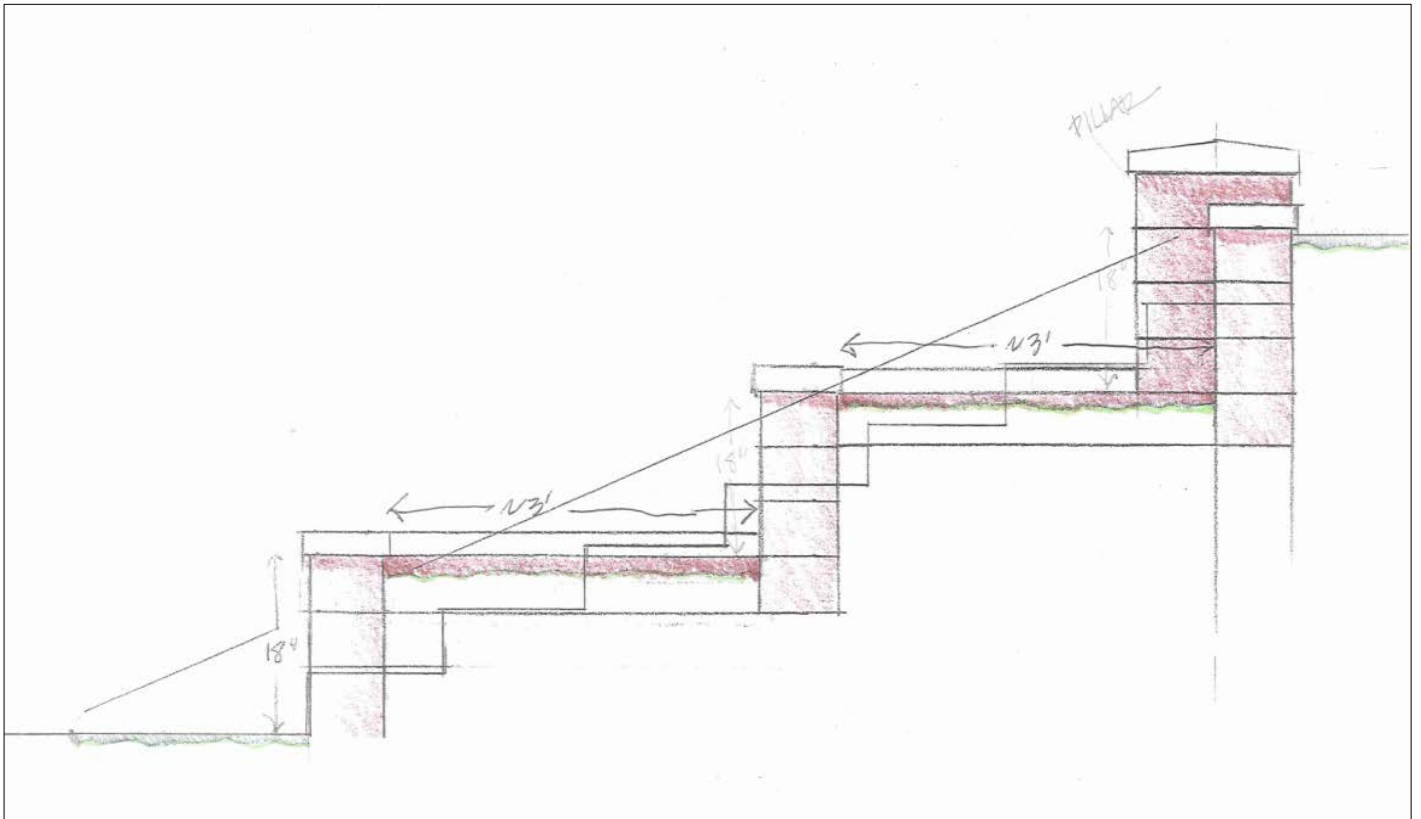
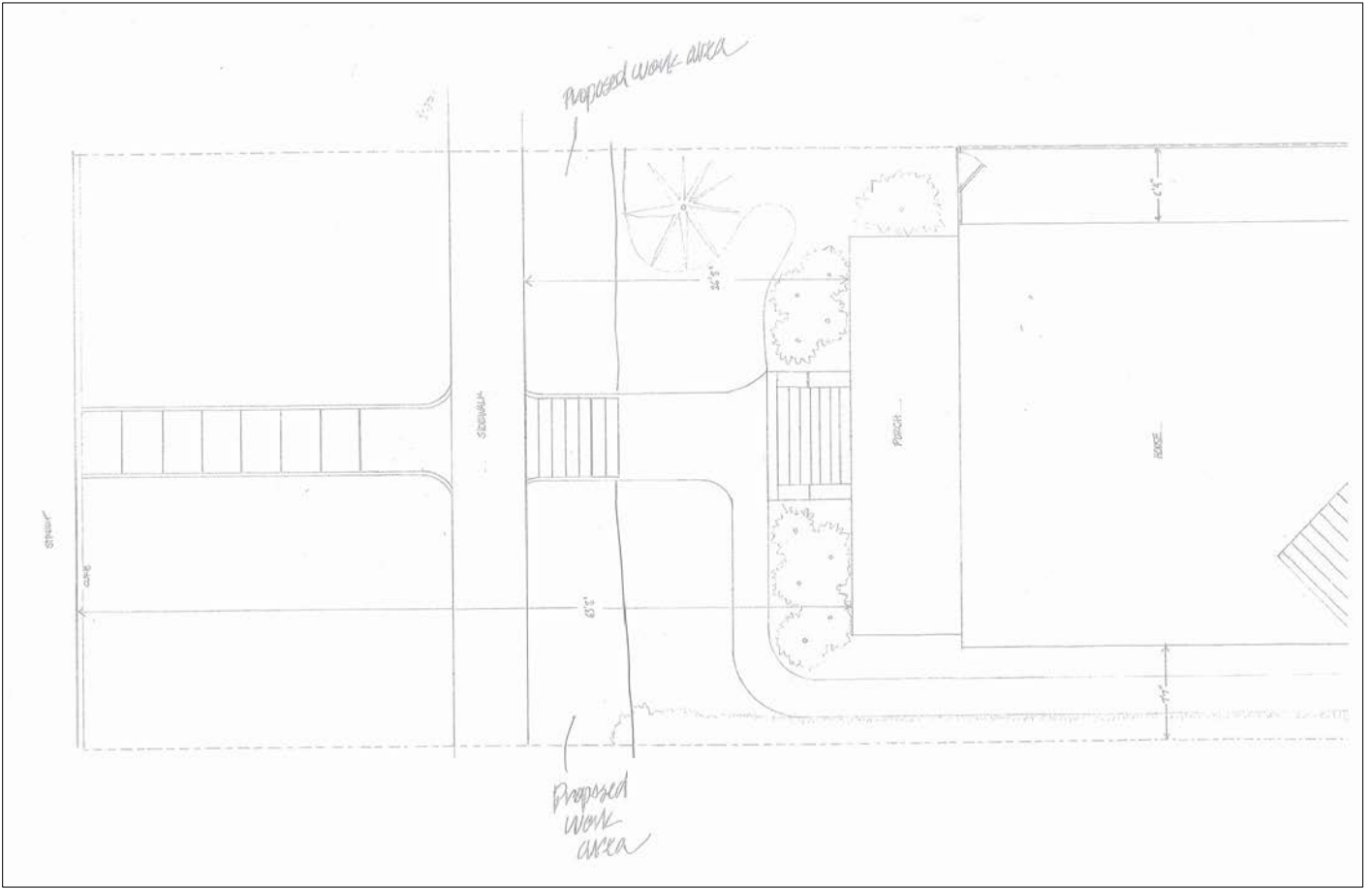
Standard 11: Any new sign and any change in the appearance of any existing sign located on a landmark site or within the H historic preservation overlay district, which is visible from any public way or open space shall be consistent with the historic character of the landmark site or H historic preservation overlay district and shall comply with the standards outlined in part IV, Chapter 21A.46 of this title;

Analysis: Signage is not part of this proposal.

Finding: The standard is not applicable.

ATTACHMENT A

Site Plan



ATTACHMENT B

Photographs



East View of the subject property from 1200 East. Photo submitted with the application prior to unauthorized grading of the front yard. Proposed terraced retaining wall would be located in the front yard area at the base of the stairs and step up to a point in line with the top of the staircase. Two pillars with cement caps are proposed to match the design of the front porch as closely as possible.



East View of the subject property from 1200 East.



East View of the subject property from 1200 East. Recent photo of the subject property shows unauthorized grading of the front garden area.



View of the Subject Property and Neighboring Properties on 1200 East.



Pedestrian View of the Subject Property Looking North. Photo depicts a close up view of the historic walkway pattern on 1200 East.



Pedestrian View of the Streetscape Looking South. Close up of the streetscape shows the historic grading pattern and established progression of site features.



East View of the Streetscape on 1200 East. Wide park strips and tree lined walkways combine with front yards to mediate between the varying levels of the house and street in much of the District.



Established Progression of Entry Elements. The east side of 1200 East has an established progression of entry elements, including wide park strips that contain a series of steps that provides a public entry point from the street to the sidewalk, and a stairway that connects the front entry with the public sidewalk. These connecting visual elements help maintain the character of the streetscape.

ATTACHMENT C
Example Materials



Example of Red Concrete Block Material: Applicant provided the above examples of proposed red concrete blocking material. The red brick of the historic house can be seen in the background.