

200 East Bell Court  
Bell Court Historic District

Mary Jane and Jeff Smith, Owners  
John Michler, Applicant

### Scope of Work

Change location and design of sidewalks; construct pool, retaining wall and landscaping.

### Background

The new owners are requesting that the Board grant a Certificate of Appropriateness to:

1. Remove the existing 36” wide main entry concrete walk and stairs extending from the street to the steps of the front porch.
2. Remove the existing 30” wide concrete walks that extend from the steps of the front porch to the driveway (left side) .
3. Construct a 4’-0” wide by 5’-0” deep concrete walk at the foot of the front porch steps and extend 4’-0” wide curved walk over to the driveway and thence at same width down to the public walk.
4. Landscape removed walk areas with topsoil, plantings and lawn.
5. Replace retaining wall at front porch.
6. Construct a pool in rear yard.
7. Construct patio.
8. Rear retaining wall
9. Construct landscape plan.

The plan also calls for a 14’ by 8’ by 5’ deep plunge pool. There will be a low retaining wall and stone patio.

The applicants had received a COA to replace the driveway and to remove the brick retaining walls. The brick retaining walls were replaced in 2009.

Staff did issue a COA to replace the driveway and remove the brick retaining walls. However, staff discovered that work has commenced digging the pool in the rear yard and as well was removal of the front sidewalk have started prior to a Certificate of Appropriateness.

### Guidelines

#### III. GUIDELINES FOR SITE AND SETTING

In addition to buildings, elements of the surrounding site and setting contribute to the character of historic properties. These elements include both natural and manmade features such as trees, fields, gardens, fences, driveways, retaining walls and boundary definers. Historic site elements help to define a property’s historic character and appearance. Historic site and setting features should be preserved and maintained.

Guidelines cont'd

1. Mechanical Systems

**DESIGN PRINCIPLE:** Modern air conditioning and heating units often require condensers and other units to be placed on the site near buildings. Utility equipment should not be visually dominant or intrusive to the property. Heating and cooling units should be placed at the rear or sides of buildings. The placement of these units at the front of buildings is not appropriate and should be avoided. Screening of these units through shrubbery, fencing or lattice panels is highly recommended. It is also recommended that utility wires on the site be placed underground if possible.

Mechanical Systems:

- D. should be located where they are the least visible and intrusive.
- E. if visible on the sides of buildings, should be screened with shrubbery and/or fencing.
- F. such as electrical and gas meters and other mechanical equipment should be located on the rear or side of a building.

6. LANDSCAPE, LAND FEATURES, LAND FORMATIONS, VIEWSHEDS  
AND ARCHAEOLOGY

*DESIGN PRINCIPLE: Landscape, land features, land formations, view sheds and archaeology define many site elements in historic areas throughout Fayette County. These elements include resources above and below the ground surface. As a result, landscape and land features are more difficult to define than built features and elements. Landscape and land features can be either man-made or natural. These features include, but are not limited to: trees and shrubs, decorative gardens, utilitarian (functional) gardens, fields, documented historic topography, archaeological and cultural resources and other land features and land formations.*

Landscape, Land Features, Land Formations, Viewsheds and Archaeology:

- A. that are significant should be preserved and maintained.
- B. that are altered or introduced should be compatible to the site and with surrounding properties.
- C. should not be visually dominant, intrusive or suggest a false sense of history.

7. LANDSCAPE ELEMENTS – POOLS, HOT TUBS, GAZEBOS, PERGOLAS

*DESIGN PRINCIPLE: The installation of swimming pools, hot tubs, gazebos, pergolas, etc. should be limited to rear yards. Swimming pools should be screened from view by fencing or landscaping.*

Landscape Elements and Site Elements:

- A. should not be visually intrusive or suggest a false sense of history.
- B. open space should only be developed in scale, use and character with the site and the local historic district.

Findings

The removal of the existing concrete sidewalk from the front yard of this property and the installation of a curvilinear concrete walk leading to driveway and at grade landing along driveway is inappropriate and not within the Guidelines noted above. The front yards of these properties are a significant element of each site and the streetscape of the Bell Court Historic District. The predominant front yard pattern for this block of West Bell Court includes open green space, trees and walks running from the street to the entry steps, set perpendicular to the street. These walks were usually of standard concrete panel construction. The removal of the existing walk would be counter to Guidelines 14-1 and 14-3 which respectively state: “Significant historic paved surfaces should be retained/maintained.” and “Significant historic sidewalk, curb and street patterns, and paving materials should be retained/maintained.” The introduction of a new, curvilinear “imprinted” walk asymmetrical to the front of the dwelling would be out of character for the neighborhood in its design and location. For these reasons, the proposed new walk is counter to Guidelines 14-2 and 14-5, which state: “New paved surfaces or alterations to existing paved surfaces should be compatible with surrounding historic properties and principal and accessory structures.” and “New paved surfaces should not be visually dominant, intrusive, or suggest a false sense of history.”

Staff does not condone work being carried out without a Certificate of Appropriateness. The proposed work is within the Guidelines II.A.I.A (patio) Guidelines III.7.A. and III.7.B respectively state: “Landscape elements and site elements should not be visually intrusive or suggest a false sense of history” and “Landscape elements and site elements: open space should only be developed in scale, use and character with the site and the local historic district.” The proposal to re-landscape the yard with benches and patio surrounding the proposed pool is within the Guidelines.

Recommendation

Staff recommends denial of changes to the front yard as proposed

Staff recommends approval of the install of a pool, patio, retaining wall and landscaping with the following conditions.

1. If any changes are made that alter the information submitted, resubmit the changes to staff for review and approval prior to the start of the work.
2. Once reviewed by other LFUCG Divisions, any changes shall be returned to staff or Board for review and approval prior to the start of work.

Deadline for Board Action  
December 4, 2020