

293 South Ashland Avenue
South Ashland/Central Avenue Historic District

Zach and Nellie Ramsey, Applicant/owner

Scope of Work

Install front yard fence

Background

The applicant/owner are requesting Certificate of Appropriateness to install a front yard fence. This property is located on the corner of East High Street and South Ashland Avenue and is considered to have two front yards under the LFUCG zoning regulations. The majority of yard for this property is located in the front yard with very little back yard.

The applicant has submitted a plan proposing for a 4' high wood picket fence. The owners were informed that, per Building Inspection, the code requires front yard fences to be located 20' back from the back edge of the curb along South Ashland Avenue. The fence would be set back off of high street a minimal 3' from the sidewalk. The applicant's plan does not call for connecting the fence to the existing hedge row but will connect to the northeast corner of the house. On the south side the fence will encompass the porch.

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.

1. FENCES

DESIGN PRINCIPLE: Fences were typically constructed of wood, cast or wrought iron, brick, stone or woven wire. Lexington has a number of historic metal fences. Historic fences should be preserved and maintained. The construction of new fences based upon historic designs and materials is also appropriate. Cast iron or woven wire is preferable for 19th and early 20th century buildings. Wood fences are also allowed; however, it is important to keep the fence as transparent as possible so as not to obscure the view of the historic building.

Fences:

- (III.1.) A. of cast iron, stone, metal, wire, or brick that are original to the property should be preserved and maintained or if missing, may be reconstructed based on physical or pictorial evidence.
- B. of cast iron may be added to properties with buildings constructed to the early 20th century. Cast iron fences are not appropriate for buildings built after 1920

Guidelines cont'd.

- C. of wood pickets are appropriate for front yards. Wood fences in front yards should be no taller than three feet, have pickets no wider than four inches and set no farther apart than three inches. Woven wire fences in front yards should also not be more than three feet tall.
- D. of wood boards for privacy should be located in rear yards and generally be no taller than six feet (most pre-fabricated wood fence sections are 8' wide by 6' high). Privacy fences of this height should be at least half-way back from the front of the building to the back walls on the side of the house. Privacy fences of flat boards in a single row are more historically correct than shadowbox (alternating boards) designs but both designs are acceptable. Fences with flat tops, "dog ear" or Gothic (pointed tops) designs are all acceptable. "Stockade" designs are discouraged. Fences of PVC, vinyl or synthetic material are not permitted.
- E. of free-standing brick or concrete walls are not appropriate in front yards but are acceptable at rear yards and side yards.
- F. of stone should be repaired/restored with the same material and mortar mix as the historic stone fence. If it is a dry-stacked stone wall, it should remain so. Please be aware that stone fences in Fayette County within the public right-of-way are protected by the Stone Wall Preservation Ordinance Section 14-83 (see following section, Walls) and require permits through the DHP.

6. Landscape, land features, land formations, view sheds 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.
- D. should not be created by the demolition of existing structures.
- E. of open space should only be developed in scale and character with the neighborhood or designated historic landmark.
- F. of vistas and approaches should be preserved and maintained.
- G. trees with trunks greater than 10 inches in diameter should not be removed unless diseased or unsafe.
- H. new construction or rehabilitation activity should work around trees with trunks greater than 10 inches in diameter.

Guidelines cont'd.

- I. the determination of archaeological/cultural resource significance is recommended before site work begins. If archaeological or cultural significance is determined, this should guide proposed alterations, new construction or demolition.
- J. trees topping (also called stubbed, heading or dehorning) is not permitted unless removal or cutting branches are diseased or unsafe.

Findings

Staff finds the proposal to construct a front yard fence at this ca. 1905 Colonial Revival/ Queen Anne style structure to be inappropriate and not in accordance with the Guidelines. South Ashland Avenue and Ashland Park were developed with open yards and no fencing. Guidelines for Site a states, "... site and setting contribute to the character of historic properties and.... help to define a property's historic character and appearance." Guideline III.6. E and F. "...of open space should only be developed in scale and character with the neighborhood or designated historic landmark" and "of vistas and approaches should be preserved and maintained."

The pattern of development that creates the historic character of South Ashland Avenue are large front yards with open landscaping and walkways/ driveways leading to the individual residences with no front yard boundary definers. The allowance of fencing at this corner would set a precedence and create a false sense of history. Guideline III.6.F. states, "Landscape, land features, land formations, view sheds and archaeology of vistas and approaches should be retained/maintained" and "Landscape elements and site elements should not be visually intrusive or suggest a false sense of history."

As proposed, the "open" land feature of the site would be altered and a new site element introduced that would be visually intrusive and suggest a false sense of history. South Ashland Avenue and Ashland Park were developed with open spaces with no front fences or gates and should remain open.

Recommendation

Staff recommends disapproval as submitted

Deadline for Board Action

October 15, 2021