

**STAFF REPORT**  
**for**  
**FEBRUARY 6, 2019 HRC MEETING**

**Case #:** COA2019-006  
**Staff:** Heather M. Bratland

**Applicant:** Michael Fradin  
**Owner:** Michael Fradin

**LOCATION**

District: West End Historic Overlay District, #389  
Building: J.N. Still House, Contributing  
Street: 915 West End Boulevard  
Local Historic  
Landmark#: N/A

**REQUEST(S)**

- Installation of hardscape elements and ground cover at the side yard

**APPLICABLE SECTIONS OF DESIGN REVIEW GUIDELINES**

*West End Historic Overlay District Design Review Guidelines*  
**(Please refer to the applicable sections of the *Guidelines*, as detailed in the staff comments.)**

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION/ELEMENTS**

*Please refer to the information provided with the application.*

**STAFF COMMENTS**

The property at 915 West End Boulevard is described, in the West End Historic Overlay District Report, as a two-story, frame, Colonial Revival house – the oldest house on West End Boulevard south of Summit Street. The house remained in the ownership of the Still family until 1973. The 1966 aerial photograph of the site shows that the side yard was largely undeveloped and included a few large trees. Currently, the side yard retains those large trees and is otherwise largely natural with scrubby vegetation and little ground cover.

The application requests approval for the following items:

- 1) Excavation and resetting of an existing line of boulders to follow the contour of the existing topography;
- 2) Removal of existing railroad tie edging;
- 3) Construction of a 3'-high retaining wall with Belgard Celtic blocks, to match the existing modern retaining wall at the driveway;
- 4) Installation of new stone steps navigating the slope from the rear yard down to the side yard;
- 5) Construction of an 18' x 25' concrete patio/basketball court at the southwest corner of the yard, to be tinted to match the existing driveway;
- 6) Construction of a 4'-wide, concrete walkway looping through the side yard, to follow existing topography and to be tinted to match the existing driveway;
- 7) Removal of existing stumps;
- 8) Improving an existing 3'-wide drainage swale with a French drain and river rock; and
- 9) Creation of a lawn.

## **STAFF FINDINGS**

Commission staff finds that the work is not incongruous with the character of the West End Historic Overlay District because:

- 1) The existing side yard sits 5' to 10' below the rear yard. Currently, the yard slopes down with very little structure or ground cover to support the dirt and prevent erosion. Excavation and resetting of the existing line of boulders will create a hard edge to aid in preservation of the existing topography. (*Walls*, West End Guideline 1; *Vegetation*, West End Guideline 3)
- 2) Removal of the railroad tie edging will not diminish the historic character of the site. The new 3'-high, Belgard retaining wall in that area, at the rear of the side yard, will be curved away from the existing line of the railroad ties to protect the roots of mature trees. Its curved shape, scale, and size are compatible with the site and consistent with the character of retaining walls on the property and elsewhere in the West End. The use of modern landscaping block is only considered inappropriate in areas of high visibility, which this part of the yard is not. (*Walls*, West End Guidelines 4 and 5; *Vegetation*, West End Guidelines 3 and 9)
- 3) The new stone steps will allow safe passage down the slope into the lower, side yard. The material, location, dimension, and scale of the steps are compatible with features that contribute to the character of the West End. (*Walkways, Steps, and Railings*, West End Guideline 7)
- 4) The 18' x 25' concrete patio/basketball court is located in a low spot in the yard, at the furthest point from the street, minimizing its visibility. Concrete is an appropriate paving material for patios in the West End, and it will be tinted to reduce its white appearance. (*Decks and Patios*, West End Guideline 5)
- 5) The 4'-wide concrete walkway will follow the existing topography of the site. Its curvilinear path weaves through existing mature trees and will surround the new lawn area. Concrete is a preferred material for walkways, and it will be tinted to reduce its white appearance. The new walkway is compatible in location, configuration, scale, and materials with the overall historic character of the West End. (*Walkways, Steps, and Railings*, West End Guidelines 7, 9, and 11)
- 6) The removal of stumps and addition of river rock over a French drain and grass as ground covers are appropriate treatments for yards in the West End. (*Vegetation*, West End Guidelines 7 and 10)

## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission approve COA2019-006 at the J.N. Still House located at 915 West End Boulevard, within the West End Historic Overlay District (PIN#: 6825-75-0361.00), with the following conditions:

- 1) The applicant shall receive, prior to commencement of the work, all other required permits or permissions from governmental agencies;
- 2) Commission staff shall review and approve any revisions or deviations to any portion of the as-submitted work, that qualifies as a minor work, prior to commencement of that portion of the project; and
- 3) The applicant shall submit the *Certificate of Appropriateness Request for Certification of Completed Work* and photo documentation of the completed project to HRC staff within ten (10) days of its completion.