

**STAFF REPORT
for
JULY 1, 2020 HRC MEETING**

Case #: COA2020-069
Staff: Heather M. Bratland

Applicant: Patrick Welsh, T2pm

LOCATION

District: West End Historic Overlay District #170
Street: 851-855 West Fifth Street
Building: Site of the J.J. Easley House
Status: Contributing
Local Historic
Landmark#: n/a

REQUEST(S)

- Master landscape plan

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

1. *Fill and grading of the site to create a gradual downslope from West Fifth Street to Pilot View Street, which sits approximately thirteen (13) feet lower*
2. *Construction of a drainage swale filled with stone and landscape boulders*
3. *Installation of a granite retaining wall and granite seatwalls on the downslope, facing north to Pilot View Street*
4. *Installation of pervious pavers in the plaza at the base of the seating area*
5. *Installation of a 42" high fence*
6. *Installation of landscape lighting*
7. *Planting of evergreen and deciduous trees, shrubs, groundcover, and perennials*

STAFF FINDINGS

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

- 1) The existing downslope from West Fifth Street to Pilot View Street will be filled and regraded to create a smooth safe surface for use of the space. Nevertheless, the overall site topography will not be altered. Mature trees will be retained. With the creation of a drainage swale and the use of pervious pavers, the ability of the property to remove excess water will be improved, increasing soil stability and the potential of the space to support the growth of vegetation. Stone and landscape boulders are appropriate ground covers for West End. (*Vegetation*, Guidelines 1, 2, 3 and 10)
- 2) The granite seatwalls and retaining wall at the western property line will not impact any historic fabric. The walls are compatible with the site in setback, size, and scale. Stone is a preferred material for new walls. (*Walls*, Guidelines 4 and 5)

- 3) The plaza will be paved with square pavers that have water permeable joints. The pavers will be set within an area defined by an 8" wide band of concrete. Pavers are an appropriate material for patios. (*Decks and Patios*, Guideline 5)
- 4) A 42" high steel picket fence with steel and granite posts will surround the amphitheater on all sides except where it abuts the existing addition to the church. The fence will have a double gate that can be accessed from the West Fifth Street sidewalk, and a single gate at the plaza. The new fence will not impact any historic fabric. It is compatible with the site in setback, size, and scale. The design of the fence is compatible with the style and character of the church and is appropriate for an institutional building in West End. Steel is a preferred fence material. (*New Fences in Highly Visible Areas from Street Level*, Guidelines 1, 2, 4, and 6)
- 5) Four posts with overhead string lighting will light the plaza. String lighting was invented in 1884 and was fairly affordable by 1914. The string lighting is compatible with the human scale and historic character of the West End. The footlights in the granite steps are in an unobtrusive location, as are the directional lights aimed at the trees. Lighting three trees in the new amphitheater will not detract from overall historic character of the site or streetscape. (*Lighting*, Guidelines 3, 4, and 6)
- 6) The following trees have been selected for installation: river birch, American sycamore, willow oak, eastern red cedar, eastern redbud, Carolina cherry laurel, and Nellie Stevens holly. The following shrubs have been selected: gardenia, inkberry, Otto Luyken laurel, George Tabor azalea. The following grasses, groundcovers, and perennials have been selected: silver sceptre sedge, pink muhlygrass, dwarf fountain grass, mooncreeper cotoneaster, big blue lily turf, blue pacific shore juniper, purple coneflower, bloody cranesbill, and catmint. All of the selected trees are native to North Carolina or commonly found in the state. The scales of the materials are appropriate for the site and the specific locations selected for each plant type. (*Vegetation*, Guideline 4)

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Based on the preceding findings, staff recommends that the Commission approve COA2020-069 at the site of the J.J. Easley House, located at 851-855 West Fifth Street, within the West End Historic Overlay District (PIN 6825-97-0223.00), 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.