

STAFF REPORT

CONCERNING APPLICATION FOR A CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS

Date: August 8, 2018

Application Number: 2018-0725

Property Location: 627 Portage Avenue

Architectural Style/Date/Architect or Builder: Free-Classic / 1900

Property Owner: DSN IRA, LLC

Landmark or District Designation: Chapin Park Local (Ordinance #9574-05) and National Historic District

Rating: *Contributing*

DESCRIPTION OF STRUCTURE/SITE: Two and a half story irregular plan on a stone foundation. The 2005 survey card indicates that the structure may have originally been a Gabled-El that was then added-to. The roof is gabled and has returns. A full-width porch is partially enclosed with metal supports and railing at the entrance. There are a variety of 1/1 double-hung windows, as well as fixed attic lights. Assessor information indicates that a frame garage was built in 1943, that girders and posts in the base were added in 1946, and that an addition to the house was added in 1951 (including re-opening a portion of the porch).

ALTERATIONS: In addition to the modifications listed in the description, RME 2008-0514 allowed for the in-kind replacement of the roof shingles.

APPLICATION ITEMS: "Building fence on a side of building."

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED PROJECT: Applicant seeks a *retroactive* Certificate of Appropriateness for improvements on the structure:

1. The installation of a fence along the northwest edge of the property, providing privacy and security for the tenant. The fence is broken-up / interrupted by a hedge growing in the same area.
 - a. The fence does not run the length of the entire lot, but instead only provides the following barrier:
 - i. 6' H fence for a total of 26' in two sections separated by a hedge (13' 3 1/2" and 8' 1 1/2")
 - ii. A section of fence that transitions in height from 6' to 4' for a distance of 5' 2"
 - iii. A 4' H section of fence that runs for 8' 9" towards the street, following the contours of the front yard.
 - b. The fence is made from treated lumber,
 - c. The fence does not have any transparency, as it is constructed of boards affixed on both sides of the supporting posts and cross-beams, and is approximately 8" thick.
 - d. The posts are set in concrete.

This project was 'red-tagged' by the Building Department on July 25, 2018. The Building Department is waiting for our review before levying any fines, fees, or penalties upon the project.

SITE VISIT REPORT: N/A

STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES: CHAPIN PARK

I. THE ENVIRONMENT

A. The District Environment

The Chapin Park Local Historic District is a particularly fine residential area located close to downtown South Bend, the St. Joseph River, Memorial Hospital and Leeper Park. This section is meant to protect and guide appropriate maintenance of the common areas of the district (i.e. visual landscape and streetscapes).

Required

Brick streets contribute greatly to the character of the neighborhood. These streets have always been essentially passenger car thoroughfares. The appointments of the streets (i.e. lighting, curbs, horse hitches and monuments) should contribute as much as possible to their architectural, historic and residential character.

Retention and maintenance of existing brick streets in the district is required. Repair work to fill voids and gaps must utilize brick paver materials and acceptable installation methods whenever applicable. When utility work dictates the removal of street sections (pavers), the original materials will be reinstalled. Brick streets shall be patched with brick pavers. Concrete, asphalt, fillers and similar materials shall not be used.

All original streetlights shall be maintained, especially the George Cutter "Park View" streetlights designed by Cutter Company for this neighborhood. Present efforts by the Neighborhood Association and the Historic Preservation Commission to restore "Park View" streetlights to the district shall continue. Any change in lighting must receive approval of the Historic Preservation Commission.

New or different fencing requires a C of A and shall reflect the style and character of the individual property and the surrounding environment and properties.

Recommended

The current or historic character of lawns should be preserved. Front yard areas, common lawns and tree lawns should remain open. New or replacement trees should be compatible in variety with those presently growing. Vacant lots should be kept landscaped appropriately while vacant, and may be used for recreational or residential development.

When replacement of utility poles or power supply lines is necessary, consideration should be given to underground conduits or utility poles erected along rear property lines.

Prohibited

Existing relationships of building and their environments shall not be destroyed by widening existing streets, applying asphalt or other bituminous coverings or by introducing new streets or parking lots. Signs, streetlights, benches, new plant materials, fencing, walkways and paving materials which are out of scale or inappropriate to the neighborhood may not be used. **The erection of high walls or barriers, which would alter the relationship of the houses, shall be prohibited.** Utility poles with high intensity overhead lights shall not be used on main thoroughfares.

B. BUILDING SITE, LANDSCAPING & ACCESSORIES

This section focuses on individual properties and amenities. Building sites tend to be irregularly shaped, of varying topography and with different setbacks with regard to plots. Alleys are generally behind houses. Landscape accessories like fences are unique to each structure. Chapin Place presents a unique situation within the district. Applications from properties that have property lines on Chapin Park will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Required

Fencing, walkways, outbuildings, private yard lights, signs (i.e. house numbers) and benches (visible from the street) as well as trees located in a yard or tree lawn which reflect the property's history and development shall be retained.

A tree located in such areas shall only be removed if the removal is required due to storm damage, disease, threatened damage to a structure or for such other reason acceptable to the Historic Preservation Commission. Storm damage or diseased trees should then be replaced with an approved species at the same or approximate location wherever possible.

Fencing visible from the street in front of the structure shall be open (meaning spaces between the pickets) and consistent with the historic character of a structure enclosed.

Recommended

New site work should be based upon actual knowledge of the past appearance of the property found in photographs, drawings and newspapers. New site work should also be appropriate to existing surrounding site elements in scale, type and appearance. Front yard areas should remain open. (See above for information regarding fences.) Trees in close proximity to a building may cause structural damage.

Owners are encouraged to remove these trees and replace (or replant) them at a more appropriate location as soon as planting season permits and upon approval of a C of A.

Prohibited

No changes may be made to the appearance of the site by removing trees, fencing, walkways, outbuildings or other elements before evaluating their importance to the property's history and development. Front yard areas shall not be transformed into parking lots nor paved nor blacktopped, nor enclosed by solid fences, chain link, nor industrial / commercial style fences.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

First, the Chapin Park Standards and Guidelines are explicit that “*fencing visible from the street in front of the structure shall be open (meaning spaces between the pickets) and consistent with the historic character of a structure enclosed*” (emphasis added). While this particular application is for a stretch of fence along the border or edge of the property, the project fence *is* visible from the street. Further, the Standards and Guidelines state that “*the erection of high walls or barriers, which would alter the relationship of the houses, shall be prohibited*” (emphasis added).

Second, both the Historic Preservation Commission (through its administration of the ordinance that created the Chapin Park Local Historic District) and the Building Department require that appropriate paperwork and permitting be received before projects like fence work should be started. Were the Historic Preservation Commission – or the Building Department – to have been consulted before the initiation of this project, the design and format of the fence could have been in compliance with both Historic and local Building Department requirements.

Staff would recommend that the fence – certainly the portion closer to the street from the set-back line – be removed and replaced with an ‘open’ format (for example, metal or wood picket fence).

Written by
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Historic Preservation Specialist
Approved by
Elicia Feasel
Historic Preservation Administrator

Site Visit – Photos



Figure 1 – 627 Portage from the street, looking west. The fence is to the right, on the other side of the hedge.



Figure 2 – The subject fence, looking southeast along Portage Avenue.



Figure 3 – The fence, looking to the northwest along Portage Avenue. Firehouse #6 is visible in the distance.



Figure 4 - The fence, looking towards the street, showing depth and proximity to the main structure.



Figure 5 -- Showing the construction and width (8") of the fence.



Figure 6 - Showing the height (6') of the fence.



Figure 7 -- Showing the height of the shorter (4') fence portion.



Neighbor property



subject property

7'9 1/2"

4'

7'6 1/2"



SOUTH BEND

subject property

PORTAGE

018-1018-

018-1018-0722

15

018-0724

48

50

018-1018-0723

018-1018-0722

018-1018-0721

50

018-1018-0720

50

1 in = 20 feet

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Date: 8/1/2018



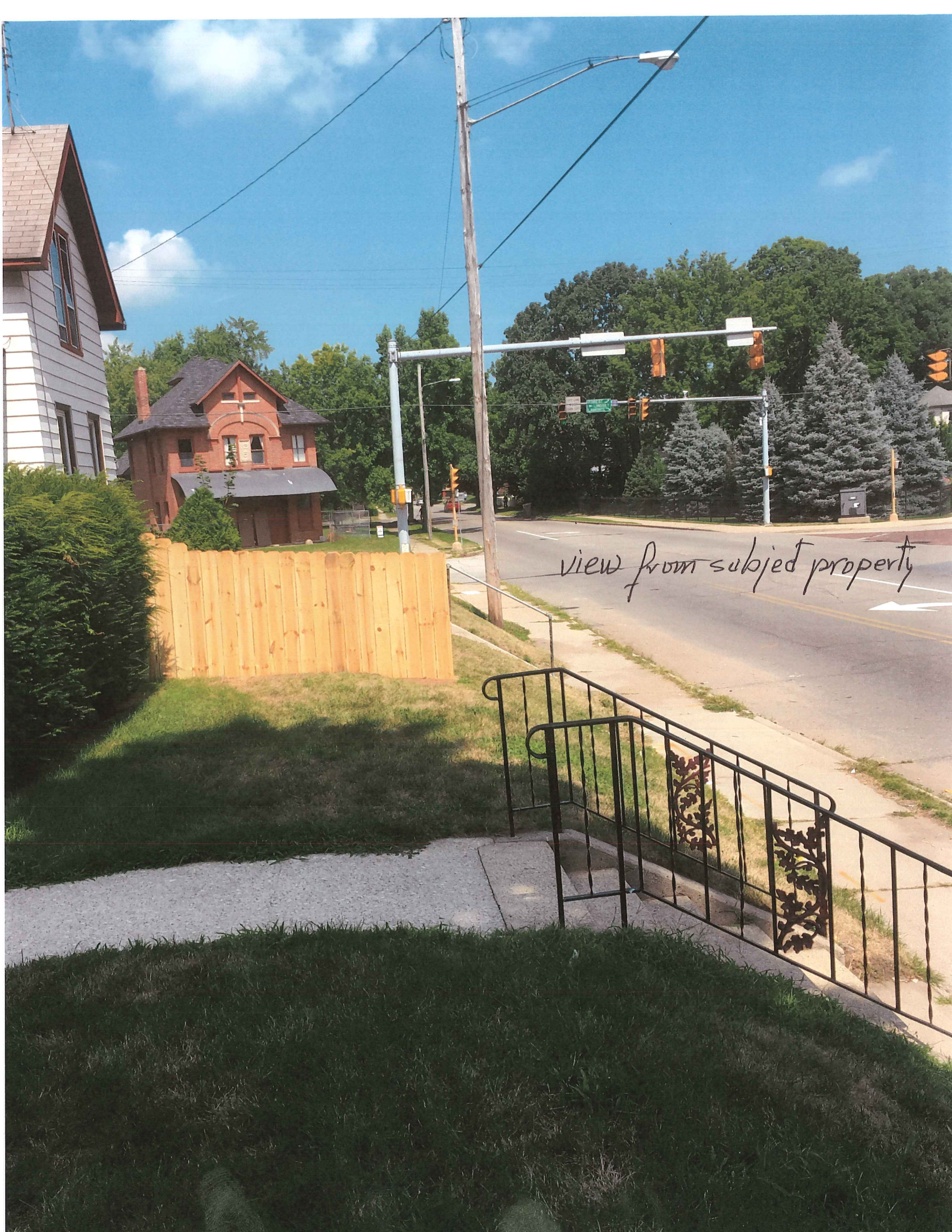
neighbor property



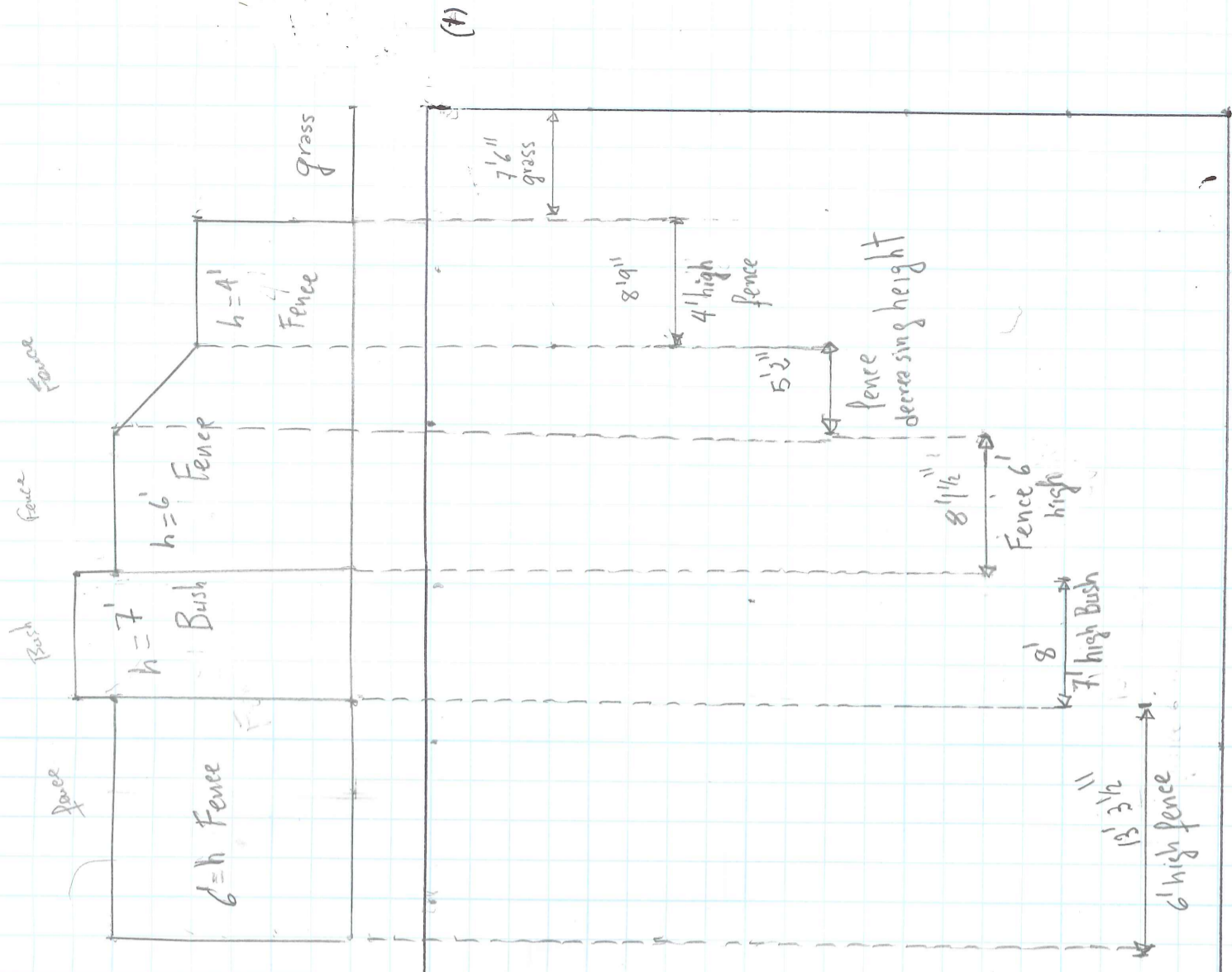
view from subject property



View from
subject property



view from subjed property



(1) Fence is 4" inside property line