

STAFF REPORT: 8/10/2022 MEETING

PREPARED BY: B. BUCKLEY

ADDRESS: 478 W. ALEXANDRINE

APPLICATION NO: #22-7960

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WILLIS-SELDEN

APPLICANT/ARCHITECT: MICHAEL LERNER (EPSILON BETA THETA TAU ASSOC.)

OWNER: EPSILON BETA HOUSING CORPORATION

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 7/29/2022

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 6/17/2022

SCOPE: REPLACE EXISTING FENCE

EXISTING CONDITIONS

478 W. Alexandrine St., also known as the Frederick Hubel House, was constructed as a single-family dwelling in 1885 according to the Willis-Selden Historic District documentation. The building was converted to apartments in the mid-20th century, and it now serves at the Epsilon Beta Chapter of Theta Tau fraternity house. The two-and-a-half story building exhibits Stick and Eastlake design influences. It features a rusticated stone foundation, front porch with elaborate carved wood trim, and brick half-timber construction at the second and attic stories. The building is asymmetrical in plan and has a complex roof form typical of Victorian mansions. A two-story, early-20th century addition projects from western elevation. The building occupies a spacious lot and has a large front yard. An early 20th century garage complex stood at the rear of the property but was demolished ca. 2000. The back of the property now serves as a parking area. The front lawn is enclosed with a chain link fence that was installed in the late 20th century.



Figure 1: HDC staff photo, July 29, 2022.



Figure 2: Existing fence at 478 W. Alexandrine. HDC staff Photo, July 29, 2022



Figure 3: Designation Photo, 2010, HDAB

PROPOSAL

The owner proposes to remove the existing 4-foot-tall chain link fence in the front yard and replace it with a 4-foot-tall aluminum fence with a black finish. The fence will span the front of the property and run north along the western edge of the parcel, and north along the driveway.

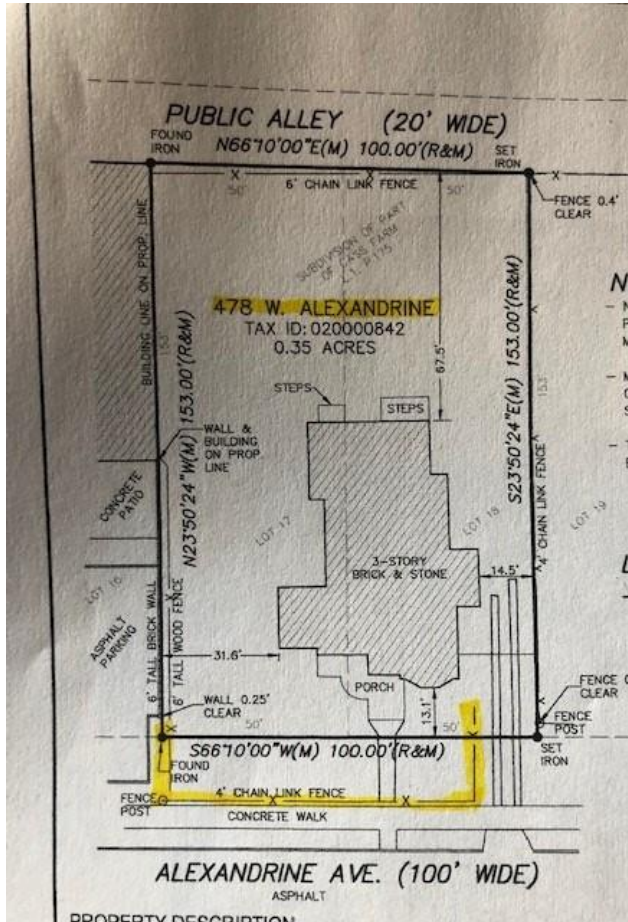


Figure 4: Proposed fence location.

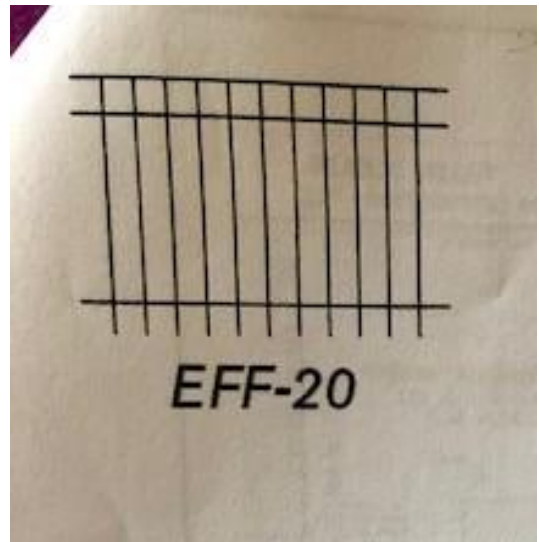


Figure 5: Proposed fence elevation.

STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- The Willis-Selden Historic District was designated in 2011.
- Sanborn maps and historic aerial photographs do not suggest the property had a front yard fence at the time of construction.
- The current chain link fence was present at the time of designation.
- The existing fence is neither historic age nor is it character defining feature of the property.
- As noted in the Elements of Design for the Willis Selden Historic District, *Walls of Continuity* section, "Fencing, often modern steel units that resemble historic cast or wrought iron fencing, exists at the front lot line of many properties and suggests an additional wall of continuity."

ISSUES

- Front yard fencing is prohibited in the Historic District Commission’s *Fence and Hedge Guidelines*, except for “districts where such fencing has been shown to be contextual in that district’s Element of Design.” In this instance the proposed fencing conforms to the Elements of Design for the district.
- Numerous examples of similar fencing along lot lines exist in the immediate area. The proposed fencing is more aesthetically compatible with historic architecture of the surrounding area than the extant chain link fence and has the potential to have a beneficial effect on the district’s sense of cohesiveness and continuity.



Figure 6: Views of black steel and aluminum fencing along 2nd Ave. and W. Alexandrine St. in the vicinity of the proposed project. HDC staff Photos, July 29, 2022

RECOMMENDATION

Section 21-2-78, Determination of Historic District Commission

HDC staff recommends that the Commission issue a *Certificate of Appropriateness* for the work as proposed because it will not destroy historic fabric or character defining features of the historic resource, adheres to the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation, and conforms to the Elements of Design for the Willis-Selden Historic District.