

ADDRESS: 3628-3644 LINCOLN

APPLICATION NO: #HDC-2024-00388

HISTORIC DISTRICT: WOODBRIDGE FARM

APPLICANT: WILLIAM BARBOUR-KEIR (MARK JOHNSON ARCHITECTS)

OWNER: HOLLIS HOLDINGS LLC

DATE OF STAFF SITE VISIT: 7/25/2024

DATE OF PROVISIONALLY COMPLETE APPLICATION: 7/23/2024

SCOPE: ERECT FENCE AND ALTER LANDSCAPING

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The project area consists of the parcel addressed as 3644 Lincoln, which includes a house and detached garage to the rear, and ~~3468~~ 3628 Lincon, a vacant parcel that is adjacent to/ south of 3644 Lincoln. The house located at 3644 Lincoln, erected ca. 1870, is Italianate in style. The house features a two-story, central hipped roof mass, with a lower two-story, hipped roof wing to the rear. A one-story flat roof wing was appended to the building's south elevation some time between 1879 and 1921, while a rear one-story, gabled-roof wing, located at the rear wall, was erected sometime before 1879. The roof's prominent overhanging eaves retain original jigsawn wood brackets at the front facade. Exterior walls are primarily red brick although stone (painted light green) is located at the front façade's base. Stone is also present at window sills, the front façade's window hoods at the second and third stories, and the front façade's first story projecting bay windows. Windows and doors are currently covered with plywood.

The garage located at 3644 Lincoln is one-story in height and was erected from cinder blocks ca. 1920. The building is rectangular in plan and features a gabled roof. It is likely that the current wood drop siding was installed at the front and wall and gable end in the 1930-1940.

The parcel addressed as ~~3428~~ 3628 Lincoln is a vacant lot that is adjacent to/south of 3644 Lincoln. A 6'-0" tall, chain-link temporary/construction fence encloses both lots.



3628-3644 Lincoln, facing southeast. Current conditions. Vacant lot extends to the right in this image. Staff photo taken on 7/29/2024



3628-3644 Lincoln, facing northeast. Current conditions. Staff photo taken on 7/29/2024



3628-3644 Lincoln, facing northwest toward rear of lots. Current conditions. Staff photo taken on 7/29/2024

PROPOSAL

Per the submitted project documents, the applicant is seeking the Commission's approval to erect a new fence and retaining wall to enclose both parcels (3628 and 3644 Lincoln). Specifically, the submitted drawings indicate that the fence will be erected per the following:

- At the front/west property line, stepped back 2'-11 3/4" from the edge of the sidewalk, erect a 5'-6" high fence. The fence will consist of decorative iron or steel pickets which will be mounted atop a 1'-7" high masonry base (which will be covered with brick facing the yard/east and stone facing the sidewalk/west. A "stone" coping will cap the base. A brick and stone pier (height not yet specified) will be located at the south end of the fence to connect with the fencing/berm that is proposed for installation at the side/south property line
- At the side/south property line, install a wall, topped with a fence which will rise to a 7'-0" total height. Specifically, the wall will consist of a 3'-6"-high rough textured concrete block base (dry stacked, Unilock block, color brown) topped by 3'-6" high, aluminum fencing. A landscaped (species not currently identified) earthen berm will slope 5'-3 3/4" northward to terminate at 1'-7" tall masonry retaining wall (clad with brick at the yard facing/north surface).
- At the rear/east property line, erect a wood (cedar) privacy fence with rolling gate. Note that the drawing indicates that the fence/gate will be 6'-0" tall. However, the applicant has verbally stated that he wishes the fence to measure 7'-0" in height.



3628-3644 Lincoln, aerial view which depicts the proposed fencing. Submitted by applicant

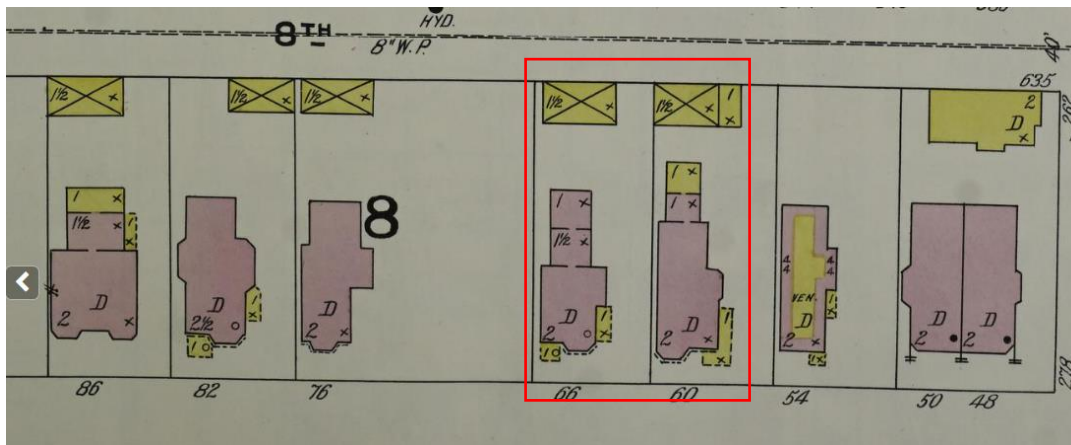
STAFF OBSERVATIONS AND RESEARCH

- Woodbridge Farm was designated as a local historic district in 1991
- The Woodbridge Farm historic district sits within a larger National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic district, known as the Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District. The Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District was listed in the NRHP in 1980 [National Archives NextGen Catalog](#).

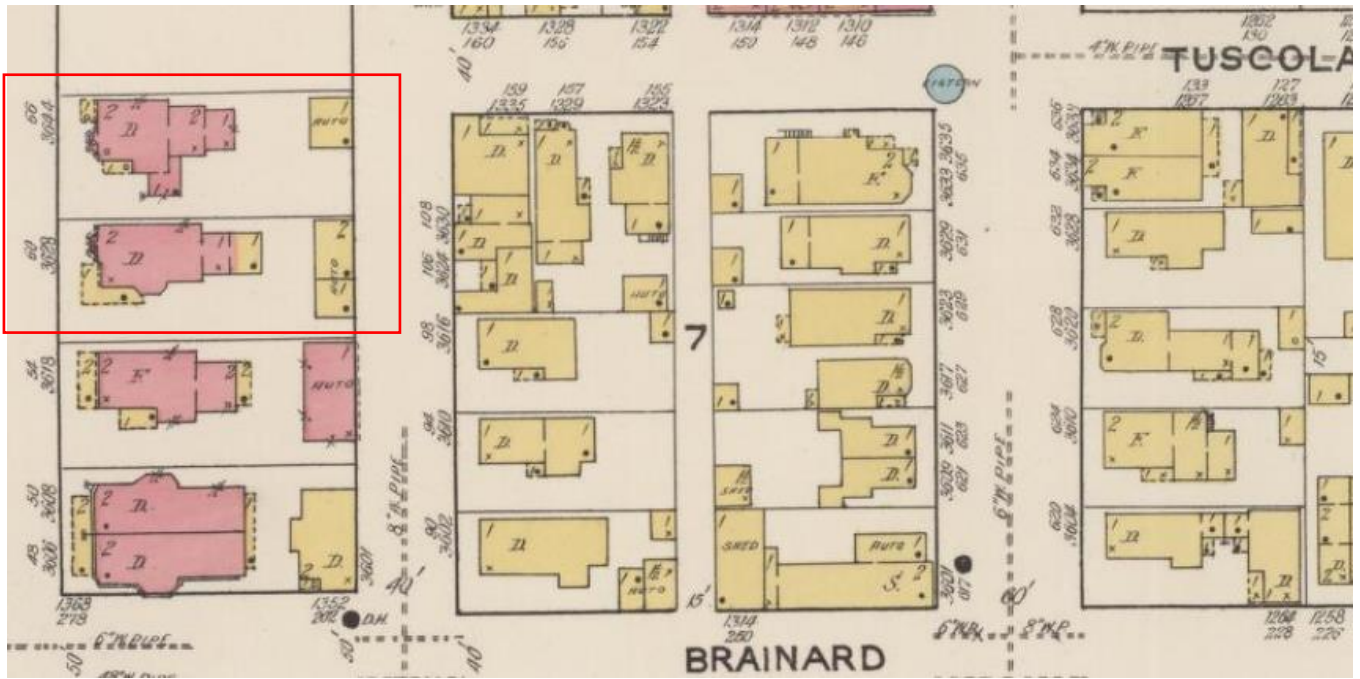


3644 Lincoln. NRHP nomination photo taken in 1979

- A review of Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps (dating from 1897, 1920, and 1951), we well as the NRHP nomination for the Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District (completed in 1980) indicated that a two-story dwelling with a 1 ½-story outbuilding to the rear was located at 3628 Lincoln. By 1921, the two-story house remained while a two-story garage had replaced the 1 ½-story outbuilding. By 1980, all buildings at 3628 Lincoln had been demolished/the property was a vacant parcel.



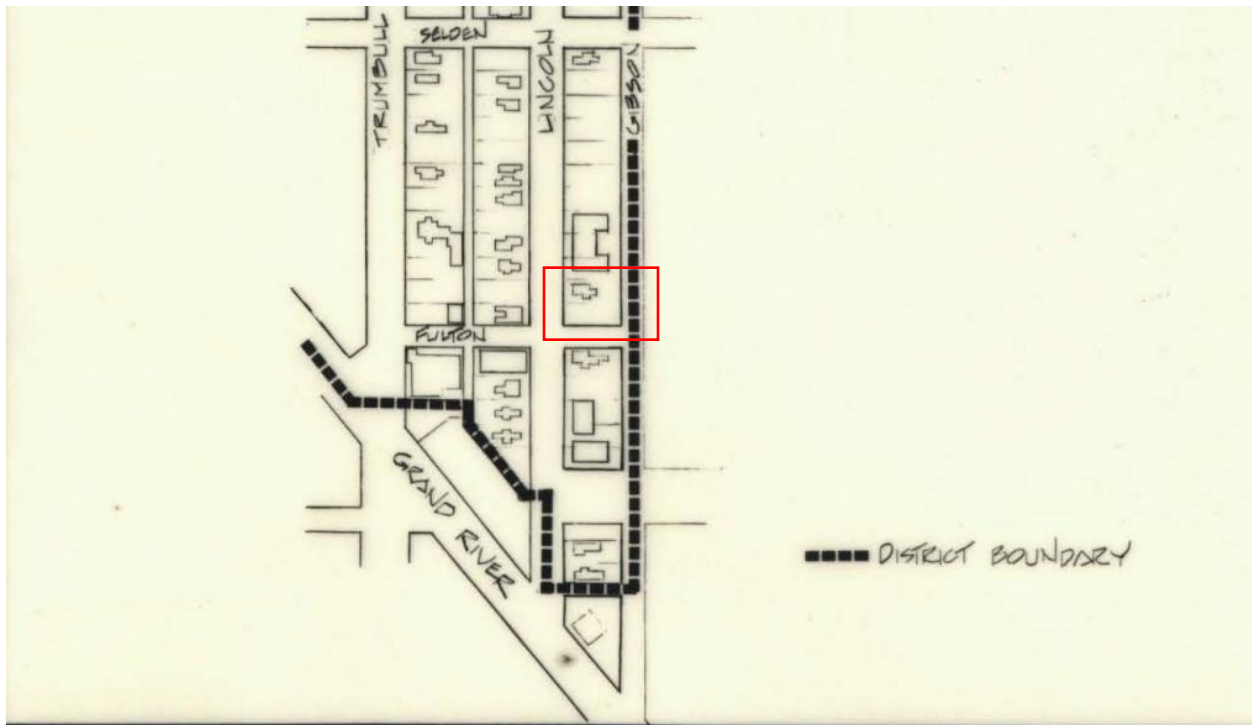
3499 3644 Lincoln (left/addressed as 66) and 3428 3628 Lincoln (right/addressed as 60), 1897. Sanborn Fire Insurance map



3499 3644 Lincoln (north) and 3428 3628 Lincoln (south), 1920. Sanborn Fire Insurance map

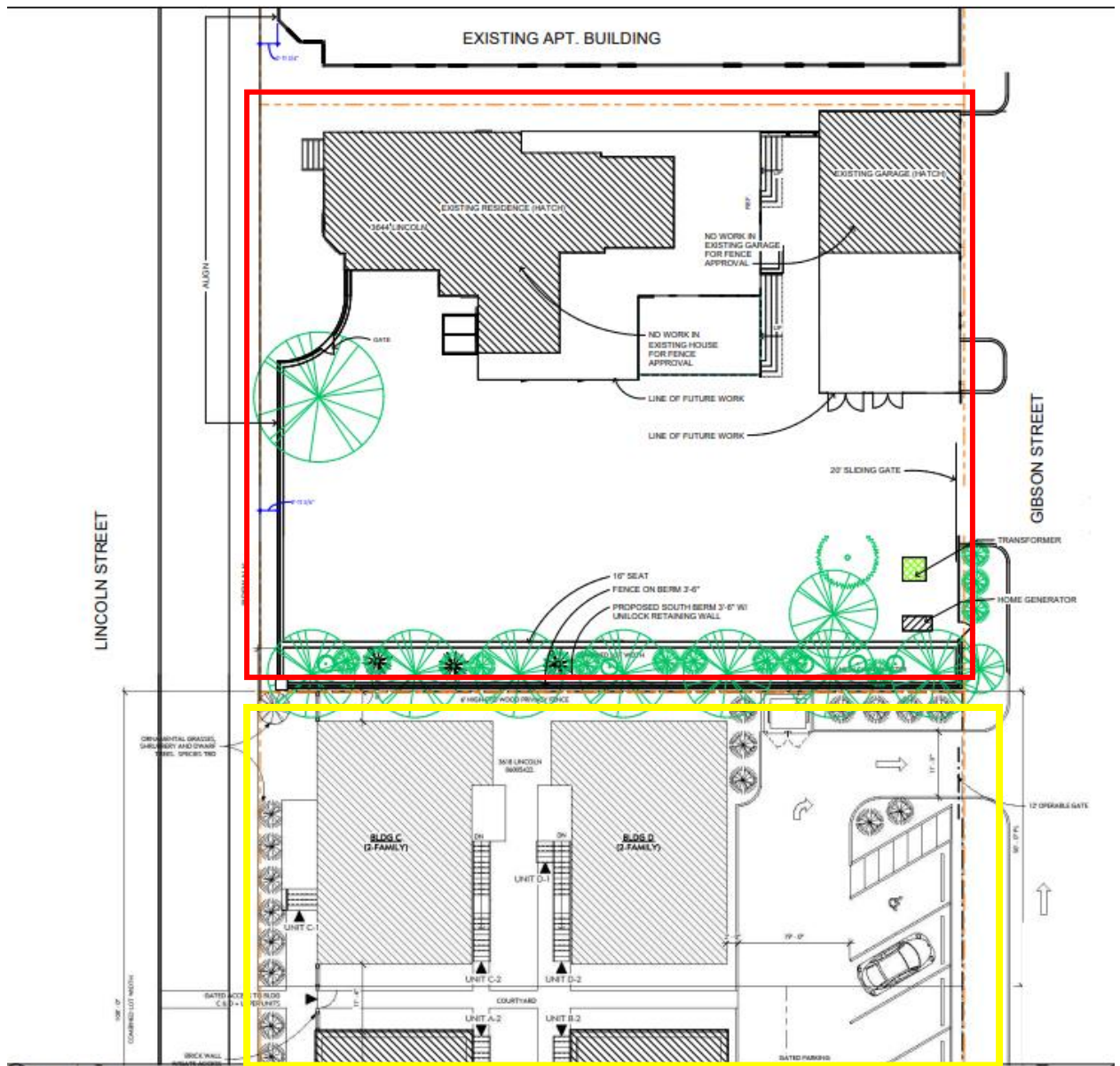


3499 3644 Lincoln (north) and 3428 3628 Lincoln (south), 1951. Sanborn Fire Insurance map



3466 3644 Lincoln, 1980. NRHP nomination boundary map. Note that the buildings at 3628 Lincoln have been demolished by this point.

- A ca. 2018 fire at the property damaged the building’s historic windows and exterior doors. As the window and door openings are currently boarded up from the exterior, staff is unclear if any of the windows and/or exterior doors still remain.
- The application proposes to install a fence/wall at 3628 and 3644 Lincoln’s property lines. Currently, these are two separate parcels. The applicant has noted that the property owner is currently seeking to combine the parcels. However, a review of records maintained by the Detroit Assessor’s office, the parcels have yet to be combined.
- The project’s architectural drawings note that the rear wood fencing/gate will be 6’-0” in height. However, the applicant has noted that the height as indicated in the drawing is incorrect and that he desires for the fence at this location to rise to 7’-0” in height. Staff finds the proposed 7’-0” height and material to be appropriate with the condition that it be painted or stained an appropriate color within a year of its erection.
- The application proposes to locate a new 5’-6” high fence at the west/front property line, nearly adjacent to the sidewalk. Also, new fencing/a wall at the south/side property line is proposed to be installed at a 7’-0” height. Note that the HDC’s guidelines for fencing calls for front yard fencing to be located adjacent to the front face of the house at mid-block properties. Also, the HDC guidelines allow for a 6’-0” high maximum height for side yard fencing. Please note that the HDC guidelines for fences and hedges are for general use and define fencing types, heights, and locations that can be staff/administratively reviewed and approved. They may not be applicable to every historic property or context.
- The applicant has stated that the property owner wishes to erect the 7’-0” high retaining wall/fence/berm at the south property line to buffer their property against the new multi-family development proposed for the adjacent parcels to the south, addressed as 3606 Lincoln, 3618 Lincoln & 1352 Brainard (see below plan). This body reviewed and approved an application for the new development at the 5/10/2023 regular meeting [3606-3618 Lincoln & 1352 Brainard \(04/12/2023\) | City of Detroit \(detroitmi.gov\)](#), However, construction has yet to commence at the site.



3628-3644 Lincoln outlined in red. Planned new multiple-family development outlined in yellow

- A review of photos included in the 1979 NRHP nomination [National Archives NextGen Catalog](#), recent field visits to the neighborhood, as well as a review of Google Streetview images of the district’s properties revealed that it is common for front yard edges within 3628-3644 Lincoln’s nearby environs to be marked by fencing between 4’ and 6’ and/or landscaping of an equivalent height. Also, note that Woodbridge Farm’s Elements of Design acknowledge that front lawn fencing is found throughout the district. Specifically, per the below Element #13, entitled *Relationship of significant landscape features and surface treatments*:
 - The Lincoln streetscape consists of a 70-foot right-of-way with the widths of tree lawns varying by block, although most are narrow. The Trumbull right-of-way is 80 feet; tree lawns are also narrow. The Gibson right-of-way is mostly 40 feet wide and serves primarily as an alley to the houses on the east side of Lincoln. Characteristic treatment of individual properties is a flat or slightly graded shallow front lawn area in grass turf subdivided by a straight concrete walk leading to the front entrance and a concrete walk along the side of the building; there are very few

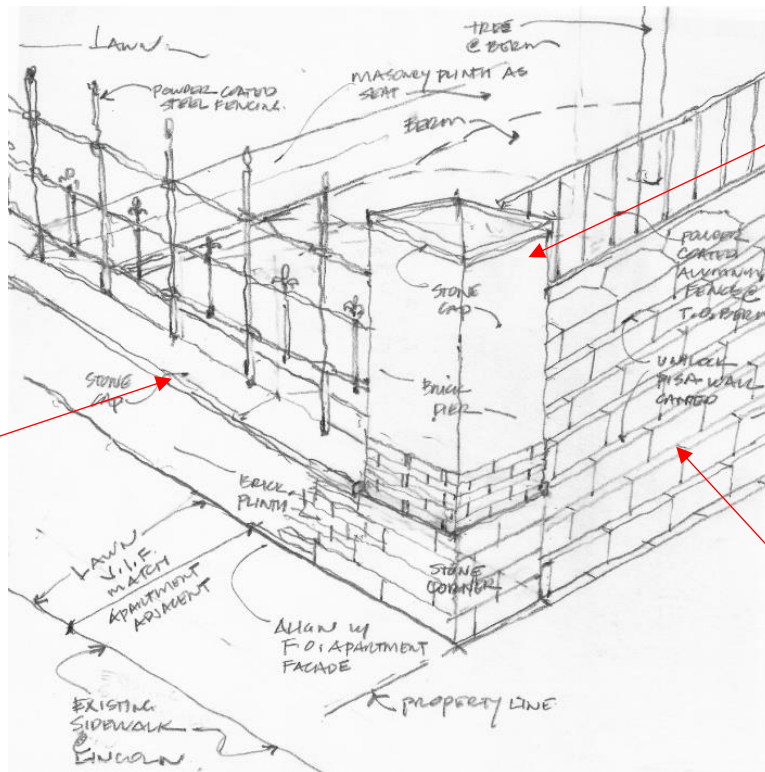
driveways, none being original. On Trumbull, tree lawns are graded up to the public sidewalk, which is approached from the curb by a concrete step. Sidewalks are concrete; alleys are either paved in concrete, asphalt, or brick. Curbs on Lincoln south of Selden are concrete and north of Selden are red stone; those on Trumbull are primarily red stone. Lighting poles are of the O.P. variety on Trumbull and on Lincoln are modern steel cranes atop wooden telephone poles. **Black wrought iron fencing is occasionally used for front yard fencing**; modern chain-link fences predominate in the district. They are frequently used along the rear property line, such as along Gibson, sometimes with other types of fencing along the sides and front. Stockade and wood board fencing is used occasionally along rear and side lot lines. Some buildings, especially on Trumbull, have chain-link fencing running along the front lot lines. Wrought iron balusters and railings with hedges behind front the former Scripps Estate at the southwest corner of the district. Shrubs and plantings in front of fences and along the sides of fences on corner lots throughout the district are also common.

- The NRHP nomination for the Woodbridge Neighborhood Historic District notes that the neighborhood was listed for its significance as an upper middle-class, "...streetcar suburb of high architectural and environmental qualities." In particular, regarding Lincoln Street, the nomination notes that the area "...had been paved with cedar blocks, a luxury for the time. In contrast to most of the developers, the Hodges Brothers built and sold completed houses on ample sized lots. In 1879 the weekly newspaper advertised 11 Elegant New Modern Brick Houses on Lincoln." As demonstrated by the nearby Scripps Mansion, (formerly located at 3664 Trumbull and destroyed by fire in 1986), it was common for grand houses of a scale similar to 3466 Lincoln's, especially in 19th century contexts, to have front yard fencing/fencing which enclosed the entire parcel.



3664 Trumbull, AKA Scripps Mansion ca. 1881. The dwelling was destroyed by fire in 1986.

- Also, despite the 5'-6" height of the fencing proposed for installation at the front property line, note that it will be composed of a 1'-7" high opaque masonry base and a 3'-11" high metal open picket fence. Similarly, the 7'-0" high wall proposed for the south/side property line will include a 3'-0" high opaque base/wall and 4'-0" high open aluminum picket fence. Despite the proposed height of the front and side fences, views to the property from the public right-of-way will not be obscured due to their incorporation of traditional and compatible open picket design of the metal fencing. For the above-noted reasons, it is staff's opinion that front and side yard fencing of the height and location proposed by the current application would be typical of a grand, late 19th century, high-style house within the Woodbridge Farm neighborhood and will not obscure views of the property from the public right of way. Staff therefore supports the height and location of the proposed fencing and the front and side property lines.
- Regarding the stone proposed for the fencing's base at the front property line and the pier which shall be located at the property's southwest corner, the applicant has noted that it will match the stone which is present at the historic house's front façade. However, the application does not specify the type and/or finish of the stone. Images of the brick and the stone cap/coping and brick proposed for these areas have also not been provided.
- Regarding the pier which is proposed for the property's southwest corner, note that the front yard fencing at this location will be 5'-6" in height at its intersection with the pier while the side yard fencing will be 7'-0" in height at its intersection with the pier. As the current application does not indicate the height or the footprint dimensions of the pier at this location (see the below image), it is unclear to staff how the transition between the side and front yard fencing will be executed. It is staff's opinion that the pier's height should be high enough to meet the 7'-0" height of the side wall/fence.



The height of the corner pier is not indicated in the drawing nor are the dimensions of its footprint. Also, a graphic detailing how the front fencing and the side wall/fence will actually interact with the corner pier has not yet been provided

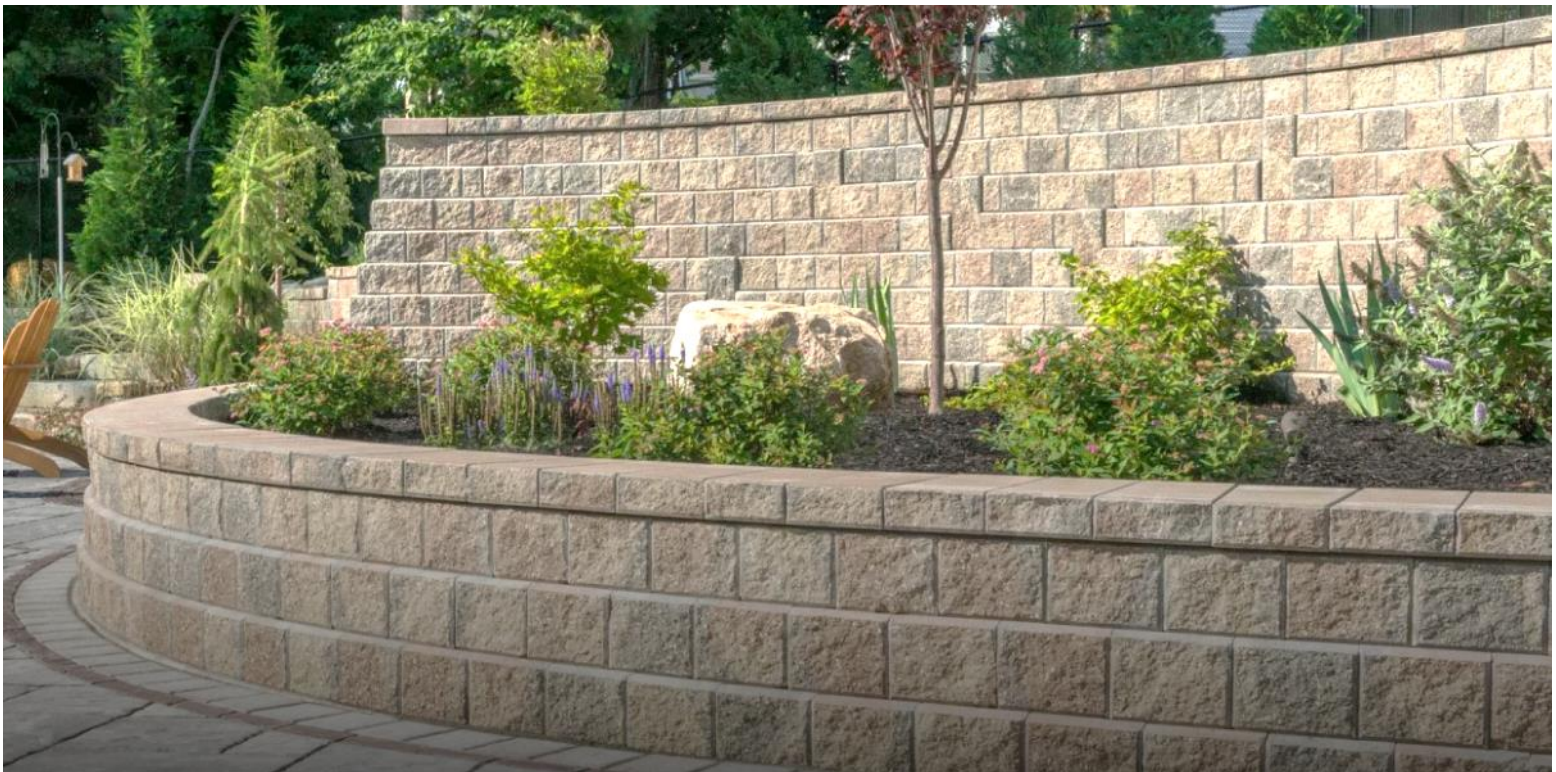
This wall with fence mounted atop will measure 7'-0" in height and will be 1'-8" deep

This fencing is proposed for the front property line and will be 5'-6" in height, 1'-7 1/4 in width, and will be set back nearly 3' from the sidewalk

Drawing of pier proposed for southwest corner of lot. Note that the height of the pier is not indicated. The applicant has noted that they have yet to determine that detail. It is staff's opinion that it should be high enough to meet the 7'-0" height of the side wall/fence.

- Regarding the landscaping which shall be planted at the berm proposed for the south property line, the application does not specify the plant species which will be installed at this location. Staff is therefore unclear if the plantings will be of the type which will have an appropriate maximum height, especially given that they will be planted on a 3'-6" maximum high berm.
- Regarding the Unilock masonry product proposed for the south retaining wall, note that it will be highly visible from the public right of way when viewing the property/historic district facing north and/or east from Brainard and Lincoln. Please see the submitted brochure for the product and the below image to note that it is essentially concrete block which is manufactured to approximate the esthetic of natural stone. It is staff's opinion that the product does a poor job of approximating traditional stone for the following reasons:
 - The product presents a regular, machined appearance versus the irregular and naturally varied appearance that natural stone offers
 - The product will be dry stacked and does not have mortar joints, which natural stone typically has
 - The product's rough textured surface/finish does not have the same depth as traditional stone

It is staff's opinion that the proposed Unilock product, which is commonly used as a decorative landscaping element within contemporary suburban residential and commercial settings, is incompatible with the historic character of the late 19th and early 20th century domestic properties along Lincon Street. It is also staff's opinion that the highly visible wall will present a stark, incompatible machined/modern appearance when viewed within the context of the property's historic masonry/brick and natural stone and the brick and natural stone products proposed for the new fencing and pier at the front property line. It is staff's opinion that a simple masonry wall which is faced with brick, a painted concrete wall or painted concrete block wall (topped with the proposed aluminum fencing to mark the element as a recent addition) which sits quietly within its setting would be a more appropriate esthetic treatment for the proposed retaining wall.



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ISSUES

As noted above, it is staff's opinion that the proposed Unilock product, which is commonly used as a decorative landscaping element within contemporary suburban residential and commercial settings, is incompatible with the historic character of the late 19th and early 20th century domestic properties along Lincon Street. It is also staff's opinion that the highly visible wall will present a stark, incompatible machined/modern appearance when viewed within the context of the property's historic masonry/brick and natural stone and the brick and natural stone products proposed for the new fencing and pier at the front property line. It is staff's opinion that a simple masonry wall which is faced with brick, a painted concrete wall or painted concrete block wall (topped with the proposed aluminum fencing to mark the element as a recent addition) which sits quietly within its setting would be a more appropriate esthetic treatment for the proposed retaining wall.

RECOMMENDATION

Recommendation - Section 21-2-78 -Certificate of Appropriateness – Erect a new front porch

It is staff's opinion that the proposed project is generally compatible with the subject property's historic character, is in keeping with the district's Elements of Design, and meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Staff therefore recommends that the Commission issue a Certificate of Appropriateness for the work with the following conditions:

- The project's architectural drawings shall be revised to note that the rear wood fencing/gate will be 7'-0" in height prior to the issuance of the project's permit. Also, the wood fencing proposed for installation at the rear property line shall be painted or stained an appropriate color within a year of its erection. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final color choice prior to the issuance of the project's permit.
- The stone proposed for installation at the front property line's fencing and the pier which will be located at the property's southwest corner shall be a natural stone. HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final product prior to the issuance of the project's permit.
- HDC staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final brick product proposed for the new fencing base/retaining wall bench prior to the issuance of the project's permit.
- Re: the pier that is proposed for the property's southwest corner, the applicant shall submit a drawing to staff which specifies its height and footprint dimensions and details the transition between the side and front yard fencing. Staff shall be afforded the opportunity to approve this element prior to the issuance of the project permit.
- The landscaping/plant species which shall be installed atop the berm proposed for the south property line shall not substantially block views into the district and property in terms of height and opacity. Staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve a final planting plan for the berm prior to the issuance of the project permit.
- The proposed Unilock masonry product shall not be utilized for the retaining wall as it will be highly visible and will present an appearance that is incompatible with the historic character of the property and the historic district. Rather, the applicant shall select a product which better reflects the qualities of/is visually compatible with the features, texture, and color with the historic masonry found throughout the neighborhood. Staff shall be afforded the opportunity to review and approve the final project selection prior to the issuance of the project permit.