



Historic Landmarks and Preservation Districts Commission

Report to the Committee

To: Old Louisville Architectural Review Committee
Thru: Savannah Darr, Historic Preservation Officer
From: Drake Watson, Planner I – Urban Design
Date: August 14, 2026 *SD*

Case No: 26-COA-0146
Classification: Committee Review

GENERAL INFORMATION

Property Address: 433 Park Ave

Applicant: Samuel Pera
2205 Wrocklage Ave
Louisville, KY 40205

Owner: Willoughby Ventures LLC
PO Box 5127
Louisville, KY 40255

Estimated Project Cost: \$30,000

Description of proposed exterior alteration:

The applicant seeks after-the-fact approval for:

- Construction of two, three-tiered, terraced retaining walls. The walls are made of gray split-faced CMU blocks with a cap. The first terraced retaining wall starts at the concrete staircase on the western side of the property, measures 5' H x 8' D x 24" L, ending at the middle staircase. The second wall starts at the middle staircase, measures 5'H, 8'D x 16'L, ending at the staircase on the east property line.
- Replacement of a non-historic simple metal railing along the porch steps and steps adjacent to the sidewalk with a new simple metal railing.

Communications with Applicant, Completion of Application

The application was received on June 26, 2026 following zoning enforcement case #ENF-ZON-26-000906 and assigned to a case manager on June 29, 2026. At that time, the application was considered complete and requiring a committee level review.

The case is scheduled to be heard by the Old Louisville Architectural Review Committee (ARC) on Wednesday, August 19, 2026 at 4:30 p.m. in the Metro Development Center located at 444 S. 5th Street.

FINDINGS

Guidelines

The following design review guidelines, approved for the Old Louisville Preservation District, are applicable to the proposed exterior alterations: **Site** and **Porches and Decks**. The report of the Commission Staff's findings of fact and conclusions with respect to these guidelines is attached to this report.

The following additional findings are incorporated in this report:

Site Context/ Background

The property is located on the north side of Park Ave, six lots east of S 6th Street. It contains a three-story Italianate masonry structure that features a flat roofed full front porch, second-story bay window, and deep eaves on the rooflines. The property is surrounded by structures in a variety of massing, styles, and eras, as well as an Olmsted park.

Conclusions

The after-the-fact terraced retaining walls generally do not meet the Old Louisville design guidelines for **Site**. The original topography of the yard featured a historic slope, which is a character defining feature for the street and the district as a whole. The retaining walls removed the historic slope, no longer matching the adjacent properties along Park Ave where no retaining walls are present, thus not meeting guidelines **ST.9**, **ST. 11**, or **ST.14**. The use of the split-faced CMU blocks where there are no other nearby retaining walls, the use of a terraced style retaining wall, and exceeding 2' in height does not meet guideline **ST.15**. Although plantings and landscape edging were attempted by the applicant to retain the soil, guideline **ST.13** is not met because other methods were not attempted by the applicant, which could have been attempted if the applicant had contacted Staff prior to construction. Because the walls as constructed do not meet the guidelines, Staff must recommend denial. However, in an effort to bring the wall into compliance Staff recommends that the top two terraces be removed and the wall also the sidewalk be lowered to 2' in height.

The replacement of the non-historic metal railing with the new metal railing does meet the guidelines for **Porches and Decks**, specifically guideline **ST.6** because the new railing is simple in design, and most other properties feature simple metal railings along the staircases in the front yards.

RECOMMENDATION

On the basis of the information furnished by the applicant and the applicable design guidelines, Staff recommends the application for a Certificate of Appropriateness be **denied**.

However, should the ARC and the applicant agree to mitigation to bring the wall into compliance with the design guidelines, then Staff recommends **approval with the following conditions**:

1. The top two tiers of the terrace shall be removed within 10 months of this approval.
2. The lower terrace wall at the public sidewalk shall be no taller than 2' when measured from the sidewalk. Any alterations shall be made within 10 months of this approval.
3. The front yard slope shall be reconstructed within 10 months of this approval.
4. Should the scope of work change, the applicant shall contact Staff for review and approval prior to work taking place.

Drake Watson

Drake Watson
Planner I – Urban Design

08-14-2026

Date

Site

Standard Design Guideline Checklist

+	Meets Guidelines	NA	Not Applicable
-	Does Not Meet Guidelines	NSI	Not Sufficient Information
+/-	Meets Guidelines with Conditions		

	Guideline	Finding	Comment
ST.1	Preserve established property line patterns as well as street and alley widths in a preservation district. • If re-platting is considered, draw boundaries based on historic development patterns.	NA	
ST.2	Maintain a walkway that connects the street and building when this is a character defining feature in the surrounding context.	NA	The sidewalk, staircases, and walkways were not altered with the construction of the terraced retaining wall.
ST.3	Install a new sidewalk to be compatible with the historic ones in the area. • Maintain the existing width of neighboring sidewalks. • Use a traditional sidewalk material as seen in the surrounding context, such as historic concrete mix or pavers. Match the pattern of the historic sidewalks where that is character defining.	NA	
ST.4	Minimize the visual impact of parking and delivery areas.	NA	

	Guideline	Finding	Comment
	• Provide access to structures from an alley wherever one exists. • If alley access is unfeasible, locate driveways, parking areas, and loading docks to the side and rear of properties. • Use landscaping to screen a parking area. • Plant and landscape a large parking lot to soften the impact of paving. • Do not use paving in the front yard for a parking area unless necessary due to site specific conditions or historically appropriate to the surrounding context. • Do not create a new driveway or garage that opens onto a primary street unless necessary due to site specific conditions or historically appropriate to the surrounding context.		
ST.5	Maintain a historically significant fence or site wall.	NA	
ST.6	Repair a historic fence with materials that match existing sections of historic fencing in height and detail. • If an exact match of materials cannot be made, a simplified design that is subordinate to the historic is appropriate.	NA	
ST.7	Design a new fence to be compatible with the architectural style of the house and existing fences in the surrounding context. • Install a metal fence under 3' in the front yard where there is historic precedent. Wood may be used where there is historic precedent in the District. • Install a rear- or side-yard privacy fence to be set back from the side wall by at least 2'. • Install a rear- or side-yard privacy fence so the finished side is presented out. • Use stained or painted wood for a wood privacy fence. • Any privacy fencing shall be 7' feet in height or less, as measured from grade, including any retaining walls. • Do not install a masonry wall in a street-visible location unless it is used to retain earth at changes in grade, screen service areas, or unless a historic precedent exists. • Do not install chain-link, split-rail, or woven-wood fencing or concrete block walls in areas visible from the public view unless historically appropriate to the surrounding context.	NA	
ST.8	Preserve a large tree in the front yard unless it is diseased, dying, and/or damaging the historic building. A report from an arborist can determine this. • Select and place trees or landscaping that minimize the likelihood of damage to structures once mature.	NA	
ST.9	Maintain original front yard topography, including grades, slopes, elevations, and berms. • Do not recontour front-yard berms into stepped terraces. • Do not use railroad ties, landscape timbers, or other historically inappropriate materials for retaining walls. • Do not carry out excavations or regrading within or adjacent to a historic building, which could cause the foundation to shift or destroy significant archaeological resources.	-	The historic slope that was character defining for the front yard has been removed with the construction of the terraced retaining wall.

	Guideline	Finding	Comment
ST.10	Use low-water and non-evasive species when considering a new planting. Consider the use of plantings and placement that will assist in managing rainfall at the site. These Low Impact Design (LID) strategies help to control rainfall and storm water runoff at the source. It also helps distribute storm water across the site to replenish groundwater supplies and contribute to overall water efficiency.	NSI	See conditions of approval.
ST.11	Match the grade of adjacent properties with new construction.	-	The grade of the property no longer matches the grade of adjacent properties.
ST.12	Preserve and maintain a historic site wall or retaining wall. - Repair only the portion of a historic retaining wall or site wall that is deteriorated. - Preserve the character of a historic mortar joint when repointing a historic wall or retaining wall. - If an exact match cannot be made, a simplified design is appropriate.	NA	There was no historic retaining wall on the site previously.
ST.13	Explore alternatives before proposing significant site and topographical changes to a historic site. Alternatives include: - Construct a subterranean retaining wall to stabilize the slope, but that sits below the landscaped surface, and so remains invisible. - Use a stabilizing plant material or other ground cover that does not require mowing or a high degree of maintenance, rather than constructing a new retaining wall. - Construct a low, transparent fence at the top of the slope to provide an enclosed front yard area for children or pets, rather than replacing the slope with a new retaining wall. - Where low curbing (approximately 6") is prevalent, replicate this rather than constructing a wall.	-	The applicant reports creeping plants, bushes, trees, and garden stones were previously used to attempt to retain and stabilize the soil. Furthermore, the applicant says that the soil erosion was still present following those measures. Staff was not consulted during this process. The front yard topography has now been significantly altered with the installation of the over scaled three-tier terraced retaining wall, where previously only a character defining historic slope existed. Thus, negatively changing the cultural landscape of the entire street.
ST.14	Avoid adding a new retaining wall until all alternatives have been explored. - Only add a new retaining wall that will alter the slope of a historic front yard area where at least one of the following conditions is present: a. The slope is not a character defining feature of the preservation district or individual landmark. b. There is a high level of variety in the treatment of front yard areas among adjacent properties, including retaining walls. c. The front yard slope is unstable, threatens the foundation of a historic structure, and other strategies have been tested and been unsuccessful.	-	The historic slope is a character defining feature of this block in the Old Louisville Preservation District. On Park Avenue, there are no other retaining walls, and all front yards feature a historic slope. The front yard topography increased by about 5'-6' in elevation. Though the applicant did attempt plantings and gardening to retain the soil they did not try any other methods prior to construction of the wall that may have mitigated the situation.
ST.15	If all other strategies have failed, locate and design a new retaining wall to minimize impacts on the preservation district or historic property.	-	The wall is terraced and exceeds 2' in height. The wall completely removed the

	Guideline	Finding	Comment
	• Use a low-kick wall, up to 2' in height, to help stabilize the yard while maintaining most of the historic slope. • Design a new retaining wall to minimize visual impacts on the character defining features of the historic property, block, and district. • Use a material that is historically significant to the preservation district or that relates to the historic property. • Avoid using terraced retaining walls. • Do not completely replace the slope with a tall retaining wall.		character defining historic slope. Though the split-face retaining wall block is a material that could be appropriate in certain applications, it is not appropriate for this property where there are no other nearby retaining walls.
ST.16	Preserve a historic site material when possible. • Maintain a brick, stone, or poured concrete step or pathway wherever present. • Maintain historic curbing whenever possible. • Any replacement should use historic materials. If replacement with historic materials is not technically or economically feasible, a substitute material may be used if it duplicates the color, texture, pattern, and visual appearance of the original. • Use paving materials that are compatible with adjacent sites and architectural character.	+	Existing historic concrete staircases and brick walkways have been retained.
ST.17	Preserve and maintain a historic lighting fixture if it is character defining, when possible.	NA	
ST.18	Design new or replacement lighting that is in character with the setting. • Use a fixture that is compatible with architectural and site design elements. • When adding a new fixture, use an understated fixture that is subordinate to the historic building. • When installing a new fixture, attach it in a way that does not damage the historic fabric. • Design lighting to be contained within a site and to not spill over to a neighboring property. • Softly illuminate an architectural feature if desired. • Direct light down and away from a neighboring property. • For a commercial property, minimize free standing lighting. Instead, use ambient light from a storefront as a light source. • Do not use an imitation historic fixture that may convey a false sense of history. • Do not use a light source that creates a harsh glare or color. • Do not light parking lots in a harsh manner. • Do not use a blinking or animated light.	NA	
ST.19	Minimize the visual impact of a service area and its related fixtures. • Position an air conditioning unit, satellite dish, greenhouse addition, overhead wiring, or other fixture type on a secondary elevation where they do not detract from the character of the site. • Screen a cellular tower and associated fixture from view. • Install a utility line underground wherever possible. • Do not harm historic resources through road widening, driveway construction, or underground utility repair.	NA	
ST.20	Locate pools in the rear yard. Do not harm historic resources during the construction of a pool.	NA	

Porches and Decks

Standard Design Guideline Checklist

+ Meets Guidelines

- Does Not Meet Guidelines

+/- Meets Guidelines with Conditions

NA Not Applicable

NSI Not Sufficient Information

	Guideline	Finding	Comment
PO.1	Preserve a historic porch in its original location. - Do not move, screen, enclose, or demolish a historic porch. - Do not add new ornament to a historic porch that did not exist historically or cover architectural details. - Do not add a front porch to the primary facade of a historic structure that never had a porch. - Screen panels may be permitted if they can be removed seasonally, are set behind porch elements, and do not damage historic fabric.	NA	
PO.2	Repair a porch in a way that maintains the historic character. - Use a material that is similar to the historic structure material in style, texture, finish, composition, and proportion. - Do not cover porch or cornice elements with vinyl or aluminum siding unless historic documentation shows this material was original. - Do not install porch ceilings or close in exposed eaves where none existed previously. Exposed rafters and roof decks are character-defining features for certain architectural styles. - An alternative material may be considered for a porch when the appearance is similar to that of the original. Consult the Alternative Materials guidelines for more information.	NA	
PO.3	If reconstruction is required, design porch elements in a way that reflects the time period of the historic structure and use in-kind materials. Consult the Alternative Materials guidelines for more information. - Install replacement flooring that closely matches the original tongue and groove flooring dimensions. - Match the dimensions of the original material. - Do not use over-sized boards for a porch floor. - Do not replace historic stone steps unless the stone is no longer usable. - Replace deteriorated porch steps with in-kind materials. Replacement steps should be of the same scale and dimensions as the original.	NA	
PO.4	When enclosing a side or rear porch, preserve the design and detailing of original porch elements. Use large sheets of recessed glass rather than solid materials for the enclosure.	NA	
PO.5	Preserve a historic railing or baluster.	NA	Railing was present on the property previously but was not historic based on pictorial evidence.
PO.6	Design a replacement railing or baluster to match the historic as closely as possible. If matching the historic design is technically or economically unfeasible, a simplified porch rail and baluster may be used.	+	The new railing along the staircases is simple in design and is stylistically compatible with other historic railings seen along the street and within the district.

	Guideline	Finding	Comment
	- When installing a code-required handrail or railing, select a design that is simple and stylistically compatible with a historic railing. - Use a replacement material appropriate to the material of the historic structure. For example, a cast- or wrought-iron column, railing, or baluster should not be used to replace a brick or wood porch element.		
PO.7	Minimize visibility of a new deck. - Do not construct a new deck along a street-facing or street-address facade. - Construct a new deck at the rear of a historic structure. It should not extend beyond the side walls of the historic structure. If a deck is needed on a secondary elevation, screen it from view from the primary street and the street-facing or street-address façade.	NA	
PO.8	Minimize damage to the historic structure and maintain the ability to remove the new deck.	NA	
PO.9	Use wood when constructing a new deck. - All wood will be stained or painted. - Alternative materials may be allowed on certain portions of a new deck. Consult the Alternative Materials guidelines for more information.	NA	