

**ATHENS-CLARKE COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION
STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

APPLICATION NUMBER..... COA-2024-10-2154
DATE..... November 20, 2024
PETITIONER..... Kristen Shockley & Albert Winters
REQUEST..... Retaining Wall Modifications
LOCATION..... 424 Bloomfield Street
PROPERTY INFORMATION..... Tax Parcel # 171C3 E011A, Bloomfield, RS-5
RECOMMENDATION..... Denial

REQUEST

A Certificate of Appropriateness is requested for modifications to a front retaining wall and associated steps in excess of the previously approved changes.

BACKGROUND

Parcel Status: The property is considered contributing to the Bloomfield Historic District, which means that changes on the property are reviewed for their impact on the district only and with concern for the historic character on the subject property.

Parcel History: Previous Certificates of Appropriateness on file for this property include a 2014 application regarding demolition of a detached garage and a 2017 staff level approval of ridge venting at the roofline. A staff level approval was also granted in May of this year that included a number of site changes, including the materials for the front steps. Sanborn Maps indicate that the structure was constructed between by 1918 when this block of Bloomfield Street was first included in the area mapped.

Lot Features: The subject property is located on the western side of Bloomfield Street and is the second parcel south of the intersection with Springdale Street. The property has approximately 80 feet of lot width at Bloomfield Street and 194 feet of lot depth. The rear of the property narrows to about 60' width with an alley adjacent at the southern end. Topographically, the property rises about 8 feet from left to right and about 6 feet front the street level at Bloomfield.

EVALUATION

This request involves modification to the front retaining wall and steps in excess of limited modifications that were included in a staff level COA approval. That staff level approval included material changes to the steps and wing walls with the introduction of corner pedestals but the front retaining wall and steps were not otherwise being affected by the greater project plans approved.

During the construction, the condition of the retaining wall was found to be compromised and it was then rebuilt with changes from the previous condition. It is these changes that are being requested for approval.

- The retaining wall along the sidewalk at Bloomfield Street was previously about 20” in height at the north end and rose to about 30” at the south end where it is adjacent to the driveway. The new wall remains at the same location with the height starting at 22” on the north end and rising to over 56”* at the south end to the top of the corner pedestal. The wall retains a stucco finish.
- The wing walls along the steps have been raised from being just a few inches above the steps to being over 20” at the north and over 27” at the south with the corner pedestals at the top of the stairs reaching to 36” in height.
- The addition of lights to the top of pedestal is noted in the application form, though it is unclear if these is requested for all pedestals or just those at the top or bottom of the steps. A lantern style light is depicted as the style intended along with a note that the existing light post would be removed.

* Walls over 4’ in height require a building permit and those over 30” must be placed outside of the vision clearance triangle. These requirements do not impact the HPC review but may impact the permit ability of the project.

RECOMMENDATION

Review of this application would follow the general set of Design Guidelines, including Chapter 3B regarding fencing and walls.

	Met?	Comments
3B: Fencing and Walls	No	<i>New walls should look to others in the vicinity for material and design.</i> The concrete material of the wall is consistent with the previous wall at this location; however, the design is significantly higher than before. No retaining walls of this height are found within the Bloomfield Historic District Front Yards and several yards with similar topographic slopes do not utilize retaining walls at all or utilize minimal walls such as that previously in place. Steps up from the sidewalk to front yards are common within the Bloomfield Historic District. Most occurrences offer little adornment similar to the previous conditions. A few examples with low wing walls and pedestals are found though none with the height proposed and none with lighting fixtures furthering the prominence of feature.

The use of a retaining wall along the sidewalk is found with several properties within the Bloomfield Historic District and is appropriate with a low masonry wall of minor adornment if any details are used. The previous conditions were consistent with the typical retaining wall aspects for the area. The proposed (extant) wall exceeds the area present in height and proposed adornment, both of which increases the scale and significance of this site feature to an inappropriate level. **Denial** of the request is recommended.

This recommendation for **denial** is made to address the design guidelines noted above, as well as Section 8-5-5 D (1) of the Athens-Clarke County Historic Preservation Ordinance regarding Acceptable Historic Preservation Commission Reaction to an Application for Certificate of Appropriateness.

REPORT FOR:	424 Bloomfield Street	
In evaluating the attached report, the following standards, which are checked, were considered in making a recommendation. Items that are not applicable are marked as such. More detailed descriptions of each item are included in the attached report.		
REVIEWED	NOT APPLICABLE	
X		1. HISTORIC USES OF PROPERTY
X		2. NECESSITY OF PROPOSED CHANGES
X		3. INTEGRITY OF HISTORIC RESOURCE
		4. THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE CHANGE WILL AFFECT:
X		A. INTEGRITY OF THE BUILDING
X		B. INTEGRITY OF THE AREA
X		5. ORIGINAL AND CURRENT USES

424 Bloomfield Street Review Worksheet

	Met?	Not Met?	Comments
3B: Fencing and Walls			