



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

723 West Markham Street

Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-1334

Phone: (501) 371-4790 Fax: (501) 399-3435

www.littlerock.gov

LITTLE ROCK HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

MINUTE RECORD

Thursday, October 2, 2025, 4:00 p.m.

Board Room, Little Rock City Hall, 500 W. Markham

I. Roll Call

Members Present:

Christina Aleman, Chair
Dr. Thomas DeGraff III
Tom Fennell
Diane Thomas-Holladay
Chase Waters

Members Absent:

Amber Jones, Vice Chair
Scott Green

Staff Present:

Sarah Spakes
Hannah Ratzlaff
Raeanne Gardner

II. Finding a Quorum

A quorum was present being five (5) in number.

III. Citizen Communication

Deputy City Attorney Cameron Bowden updated the Commission on a court case that was dismissed by Judge James the previous week. The plaintiff has 90 days to file a notice of appeal.

Hannah Ratzlaff, Planning Manager, welcomed Sarah Spakes to the Planning and Development Staff as the new Long Range and Preservation Planner. She will be the HDC lead staff, and Hannah will be handing off more responsibilities. Residents in MacArthur Park and around the City should direct their inquiries to Sarah Spakes.

IV. Minutes

July 7, 2025 Minutes

The minutes were presented to the commission. Commissioner Fennell made a motion to approve the minutes as submitted. Commissioner Thomas-Holladay seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously by voice vote as submitted.

V. National Register Nominations

None

VI. Deferred Certificates of Appropriateness

None

VII. New Certificates of Appropriateness

1. HDC2025-022

Marc Nixon
913 McMath Ave
New Construction of Commercial
Building

ITEM NO.: 1

FILE NO.: HDC2025-022

NAME: McMath Retail Suites – New Construction - Certificate of Appropriateness

LOCATION: Portions of Lots 5, 6, 7, 12, 13, and 14 of the Masonic Addition, also referred to as 913 McMath Avenue, Little Rock, Arkansas 72202

OWNER/AUTHORIZED AGENT:

Marc Nixon (Owner)
616 N. Taylor
Little Rock, AR 72205

SCM Architects, PLLC (Architects)
1400 Kirk Rd.
Little Rock, AR 72223



Figure 1. 913 McMath Ave, 2025.

AREA: 0.53 acresNUMBER OF LOTS: 1WARD: 1HISTORIC DISTRICT: MacArthur Park Historic DistrictHISTORIC STATUS: Non-ContributingCURRENT ZONING: UU – Urban Use District**A. PROPOSAL/REQUEST/APPLICANT’S STATEMENT:**

The application proposes a 4,455 square foot new single-story, multi-tenant office and retail building on a 23,147 square foot cleared lot. The proposed structure’s exterior is primarily composed of brick veneer with precast concrete architectural details, brick pilasters delineating traditional storefront bays, topped by a brick and concrete parapet wall. The proposed site includes an exterior patio, 30 off-street parking spots, three ingress/egress points, and landscaping.

B. BACKGROUND*Location*

The subject property is located at the site previously addressed as 913 McMath Avenue. The property’s legal description is “Lots 12, 13 and the South ½ of Lot 14, all of the South ½ of Lot 5, all of Lot 6 and all of Lot 7 lying west of the U.S. Interstate Highway No. 30 Right of Way; and all of that part of the closed alley lying between said lots, all in Block 4, Masonic Addition to the City of Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas.”

Context

The subject property is the site of a 23,147 square foot cleared lot that previously held a Pizza Hut (b. 1981) that was approved for demolition on August 4, 2023 through HDC2023-022. As a Pizza Hut, this site’s use was

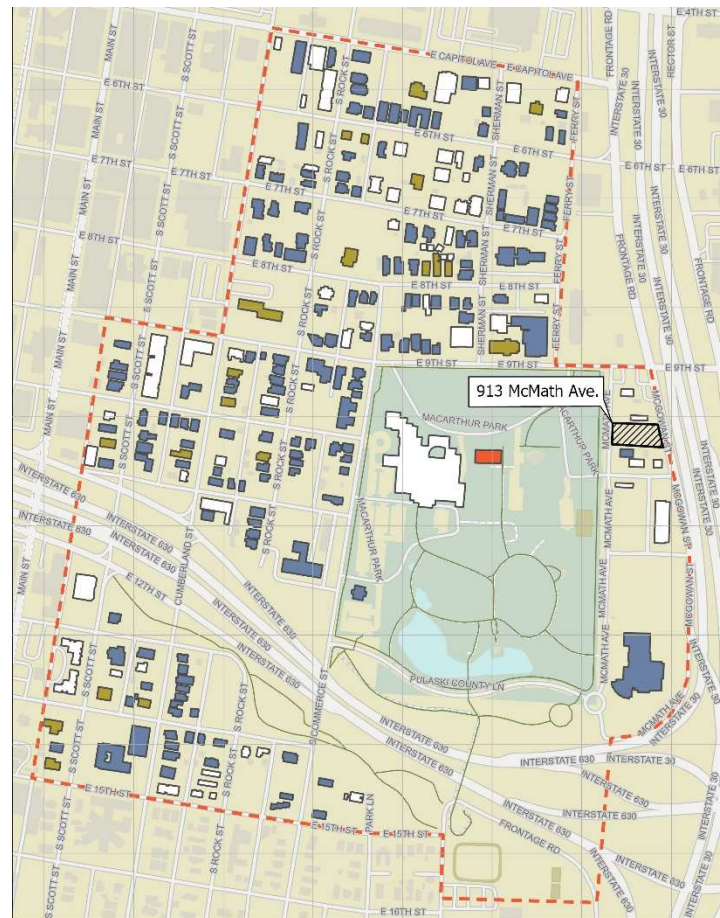


Figure 2. 913 McMath Avenue located in MacArthur Park Historic District.

restaurant/cafeteria. The Pizza Hut was built in the standard commercial 20th century style with one story. The signature Pizza Hut red metal roof was added in 1996 through HDC1996-006. The site takes access from McGowan St. to the east and McMath Ave. to the west. The former Pizza Hut was non-contributing to the MacArthur Park Historic District and the most recent Arkansas Architectural Resource Form (PU2943, 2007) is provided as Attachment A. South of the site is a historic wood frame, single-story Folk Victorian residential structure (b. 1913) with a detached, rear, two-story accessory dwelling. The site is the last remaining contributing structure on the block. North of the site is a commercial structure (b. 1978) that is non-contributing to the district.

The applicant attended a Pre-Application Meeting with the Design Review Committee on June 18, 2025, which is mandatory for new construction proposals. The Design Review Committee comments are provided as Attachment D.

Development History

The subject property has been vacant since 2023. From 1981-2023, the site was home to a Pizza Hut. The Pizza Hut building was oriented to face Interstate 30 and was a frame construction on a continuous foundation. The structure had a rectangular floor plan and a red hipped metal standing seam roof, signature to Pizza Hut buildings. The windows were stationery in a trapezoidal shape, some being open corner windows. Several windows were horizontal and sliding to service a drive-through. The rear of the building faced McMath and had a freezer addition attached. In c. 1971, three historic residences were demolished following the rezoning of the property from Two-Family District to Commercial District for the purpose of new commercial development.

Previous Action

On August 4, 2023, a COA (HDC2023-022) was issued to Hut Little Rock LLC to allow for all structures to be demolished, with conditions that the removal of all debris and old structures avoid surrounding structures.

On September 5, 1996, a COA (HDC1996-006) was issued to National Pizza Co. to allow for the 18-year-old wooden shake roof to be replaced with a red metal groove-locked panel standing seamed roof.

On September 13, 1989, a COA (HDC1989-004) was issued to National Pizza Co to allow for a drive-thru window addition, with the condition that no open speaker phones would be installed at the order windows, to the Pizza Hut building.

On October 13, 1978, a CUP (Z-3237) was issued to Dr. Lem Clement to allow for the construction of a Pizza Hut restaurant.

On August 1, 1968, a zoning permit (Z-2181), seeking to rezone the subject site and two adjacent lots from “C” Two-Family District to “F” Commercial District for the purpose of a service station, was denied by the Little Rock Planning Commission.

No previous actions were found on this site.

Sanborn Maps and Aerials:

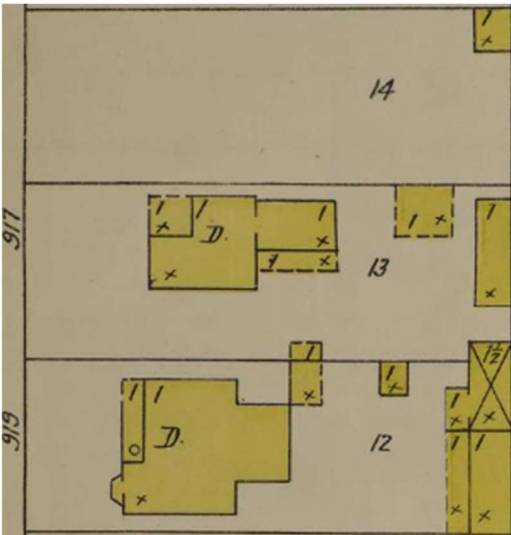


Figure 3: 913 McMath (formerly McAlmont) Ave, Sanborn Maps, 1897, Volume 1, Sheet 56.

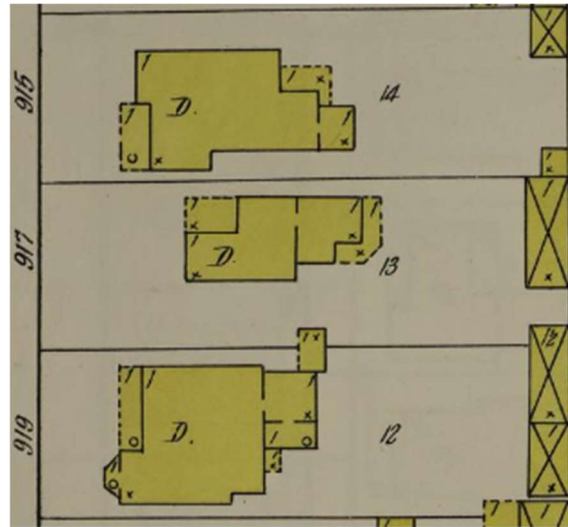


Figure 4: 913 McMath (formerly McAlmont) Ave, Sanborn Maps, 1913, Volume 2, Sheet 193.

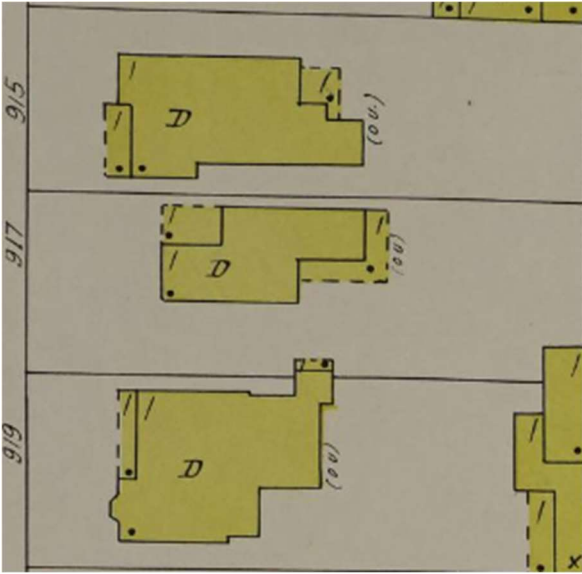


Figure 5: 913 McMath (formerly McAlmont) Ave, Sanborn Maps, 1939, Volume 1, Sheet 67.



Figure 6: 913 McMath Ave, 1960 aerial view.



Figure 7: 913 McMath Ave, 1998 aerial view.

Historical Photos



Figure 8: 913 McMath, Pizza Hut, pre-1996.



Figure 9: 921 McAlmont, 2007.

C. EXISTING CONDITIONS:

See site photos (Attachment B) and application packet (Attachment C). The application packet includes cover letter, application, public notice, survey, site plan, elevation renderings, materials, and site photographs.

D. NEIGHBORHOOD COMMENTS:

At the time of distribution, there were no comments regarding this application.

All owners of properties located within 200 feet of the site and all neighborhood associations registered with the City of Little Rock that surround the site were notified of the public hearing.

E. ANALYSIS:

Sec. 23-120(d) of the Little Rock Municipal Code states: “When evaluating the general compatibility of alterations to the exterior of any building in the Historic District, the commission shall consider, but not be limited to, the following factors within the building’s area of influence: (1) Siting. (2) Height. (3) Proportion. (4) Rhythm. (5) Roof area. (6) Entrance area. (7) Wall areas. (8) Detailing. (9) Facade. (10) Scale. (11) Massing.” Additionally, the Little Rock Municipal Codes states: “Sec. 23-120(f) states that “New construction shall be judged on its ability to blend with the existing neighborhood and area of influence. The commission shall consider, but not be limited to the factors listed for alterations in paragraph [subsection](d).”

Siting

The application proposes that the new building has a front setback of approx. 24 feet, a side setback of approx. 48 feet to the north, a side setback of 10 feet to the south, and a rear setback of 56 feet from its shortest point and 86 feet from its longest point as the lot line is slanted along McGowan Street. The adjacent front yard setbacks of the site are approx. 22 feet (residential lot) and 50 feet (commercial lot). The front setback is within plus or minus 10% of the residential lot setback. The proposed site has a lot coverage of 19.25% and its primary entrance is oriented to McMath Ave, with secondary entrances oriented to the I-30 and the interior of the lot. The application proposes that the new building has off-street parking in addition to on-street parking on McMath Ave.

Staff finds the siting of the proposed building to be consistent with the Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.1. The proposed building’s setbacks, lot coverage, and orientation comply with the Design Guidelines.

Height

The proposed height of the structure is 22 feet, from the from the finished ground level to the highest point of a building. Staff finds the height of the proposed building to be consistent with the Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.2. The proposed building is less than 35 feet in height and is compatible with the height of neighboring structures.

Proportion

The front façade facing McMath Avenue measures approximately 63.5 feet in width and is composed of three evenly proportioned storefront bays. The primary entrance is located at the north corner and is marked by a prominent square tower element, with its parapet extending approximately 3.5 feet above the adjacent storefront bays. Each storefront measures approximately 16 feet 8 inches in width and 12 feet in height.

The rear façade, facing the McGowan Street, spans 49 feet and features two evenly proportioned storefront bays, identical in size to those on the front. A secondary entrance tower is located at the north corner and matches the height and design of the front tower.

The interior (north-facing) façade, oriented toward the parking area, is 103 feet 4 inches wide and organized into five evenly spaced storefront bays. These bays are framed at each end by the two matching tower elements, providing visual continuity across the building's elevations.

The south side elevation, which is minimally visible from the street, rises to a height of 18 feet 8 inches and is simply detailed, featuring a smooth sanded stucco finish and utilitarian rear doors. This elevation serves a more functional role and does not include the architectural articulation seen on the primary façades.

The storefronts include window and door openings in a traditional storefront configuration with five-lite transoms and traditional pane patterns.

Staff finds the proposed building to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guidelines 7.3. The proportion of the size and shape of windows and door openings, including trim and other detailing, and the ratio of wall surface to windows are compatible with those found on historic commercial buildings within the district.

Rhythm

The application proposes traditional storefront bays with traditional wall sign sections and parapet walls. Staff finds the proposed building rhythm to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.4. The architectural rhythm of a new building is compatible with historic commercial buildings in the district and area of influence, and

is compatible with neighboring residential structures, supporting the spatial harmony of the block.

Scale and Massing

Staff finds the proposed building's scale and massing to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.5. The proposed building includes features such as storefronts and parapets that are compatible with the scale and massing of buildings within the area of influence. The proposed building is compatibly scaled in terms of façade, floor area, and lot coverage. The proposed building is wider along its east-to-west orientation, which matches the scale and of the existing structures in the area of influence in relation to lot orientations

Entrance Area

The proposed structure's primary entrance faces McMath Ave. and is located at the north corner of the front facade, marked by a prominent square tower element and double doors. The proposal takes advantage of the site's double frontage along McGowan Street and provides a secondary entrance inclusive of similar elements as the primary entrance.

The proposed building's front façade includes an outdoor patio seating area with two secondary storefront bays, customer entrance areas include display windows with transparent glazing, bulkheads made of ¼" thick cement board material mounted on ½" thick exterior plywood, transom windows, 6" Accoya modified painted wood storefront framing, cement cornices, a sign band, and standing seam metal awnings. The application proposes that the south elevation has five steel doors for staff use and building code compliance.

Staff finds the proposed building's entrance area to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.6.1 and 7.6.3. The primary entrance (McMath) and secondary entrance (McGowan St.) face the public rights-of-way. All storefronts along the west, north, and east facades include traditional storefront components.

Wall Areas

The proposed structure's wall areas are primarily composed of McCool Hall brick veneer, precast concrete architectural detailing, and traditionally configured storefront bays that feature: transparent glazing, ¼" thick cement board mounted on ½" exterior plywood bulkheads, five-lite transom window, 6" Accoya modified wood trim storefront framing, precast concrete cornices, framed sign bands, and metal standing seam shed awnings. The southern rear façade displays smooth stucco, aluminum gutter downspouts, and steel utilitarian doors.

Staff finds the proposed structure's wall areas are consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guidelines 7.7. The proportion, rhythm, and scale of the proposed wall areas are compatible with structures within the area of influence. The proposed wall areas reflect the historic context of the MacArthur Park Historic District while distinguishing the structure through the use of contemporary architectural materials inspired by historic materials found in the district. Staff recommends using transparent glazed windows rather than tinted glazed windows.

Roof Areas

The proposed structure displays a flat roof covered with TPO and a parapet wall with concrete coping.

Staff finds the proposed building's roof area to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.8. The roof material is minimally visible and used in modern construction as well as historic rehabilitations for commercial flat roof structures. The roof design, including the parapets and the concrete copings, are compatible with roofs of buildings of similar use within the area of influence.

Façades

The proposed structure's facades include both traditional and contemporary materials. Traditional materials include brick, glass, precast concrete, and standing seam metal. Contemporary materials include modified wood for storefront framing, cement board for bulkheads, insulated glazing, and modern glazing.

Staff finds the proposed building's façade to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.9. The proposed materials complement the historic context and material heritage of the Historic District.

Detailing

Staff finds the proposed structure's architectural detailing to be consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 7.10. The proposed detailing aligns with the traditional commercial historic style and proportions are compatible with the area of influence.

Storefront Awnings

The proposed structure includes standing seam metal shed awnings above the storefronts. Though standing seam metal is a traditional building material, its material heritage in the Historic District is primarily found as a historic roofing material. Staff finds the proposed awnings are mostly consistent with the Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 5.15.2. Staff recommends using a canvas or fabric material if a shed awning is

desirable, or using simple metal canopy systems located between the storefront display windows and transoms.

Historic Site Features

No historic site features—including monuments, markers, sidewalks, signs, or stone curbs exist on the site.

Parking & Landscaping

The proposed site includes an asphalt parking lot with 30 off-street parking stalls located along the north (side) and east (rear) portions of the lot. The siting would require the relocation of the existing curb cut on McMath Avenue to the north, allowing a side drive to access parking, and does not increase the number of curb cuts to McMath Ave. or I-30 Frontage. The parking area is approximately 11,700 sq. ft., which is 50% of the area of the lot. The parking area is not located in the side yard setback as there is no required setback in the Urban Use Zoning District if not adjacent to a single-family structure. The parking along the north section of the property encroaches past the front facade of the proposed structure and the structure on the adjacent parcel.

The proposal includes planting screening foliage around the property, including two trees and 13 bushes as screening between the proposed patio and McMath Ave., a tree on the northwest corner of the property, a tree on the northeast corner of the property, a tree on the northeast corner of the proposed structure, and three trees and 11 bushes along the south property line east of the proposed building. The application proposes landscaping, such as manicured grass.

Staff finds the proposed project's parking to be mostly consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guideline 9.12. The proposed parking area is not adequately screened visible from McMath Avenue and encroaches past front facades. Staff recommends the removal of two parking stalls closest to McMath Ave. to conform to Guideline 9.12.4. and additional landscaping to adequately screen the parking area visible from McMath Ave to conform to Guideline 9.12.3.

Mechanical Equipment, Collectors & Structures

The proposal places the garbage collector in the southeast corner of the lot behind a fenced screening. The site plan does not include information regarding the placement of mechanical equipment.

Staff finds the proposed project's mechanical equipment, collectors, and structures to be mostly consistent with Design Guidelines, specifically Guidelines 9.23 and 9.24. The proposed project locates the garbage collector both in the rear and concealed with

fenced screening. Staff recommends that mechanical equipment be located in areas not visible from the public rights-of-way.

Signage

The application does not include signage requests; however, it is staff's understanding that the applicant wishes to retain an existing ground mounted metal pole sign installed in the 1990s. The retention of the sign may require review by the Board of Adjustments. The sign face is no longer in the framing. Any sign refacing would require administrative review by Historic District Commission staff. The proposal is not inclusive of signage requests for the individual storefront bays.

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Staff finds the proposed project to be consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, specifically Standard 9—"New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment"—and Standard 10—"New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired."

F. STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the approval of the application, as submitted, with the following conditions:

1. Canvas or fabric shall be used on the shed awnings, or simple metal canopy systems located between the storefront display windows and transoms.
2. Additional landscape screening shall be located in front of the parking area to reduce visibility from McMath Avenue and parking stalls shall not encroach past the front façade.
3. Mechanical equipment shall be located in areas not visible from the public rights-of-way.
4. Any future railing along the perimeter of the outdoor seating area along the front façade shall conform to Design Guideline 9.19. and be reviewed by staff before installation.
5. Final architectural drawings and site plan shall be submitted to staff for final review and approval, inclusive of conditions.

COMMISSION ACTION:

OCTOBER 2, 2025

Staff presented the item to the commission. Mr. Marcus Nixon, owner of the property, addressed the commission. Mr. Nixon said he had gone back to the drawing board after the Design Review Commission feedback, and now he is trying to be flexible to welcome new tenants. He would like to see a restaurant in one of the spaces. Chair Aleman voiced her and the Design Review Commission's gratitude to the applicant's reworking of the plan. Mr. Nixon was amenable to staff's recommendations. Ms. Ratzlaff asked the applicant if he would be willing to work with his architect to decide if he chooses a fabric or canvas awning or a canopy awning system and if he would tell staff of his decision. Mr. Nixon agreed to this.

Chair Aleman asked if the applicant was okay with removing the additional parking spaces. Mr. Nixon confirmed. Commissioner Fennell noted that it looked like there was only one parking spot that extended past the front façade. Chair Aleman agreed, stating that she was confused about which parking spot staff referred to. Mr. Nixon replied that it was the one at the top [left corner]. Commissioner Fennell suggested that if Mr. Nixon had proper landscaping, then he would not have a problem with that parking spot extending past the front façade by a little, as shown in the submitted site plan. Commissioner Fennell also commended the applicant on his positive turnaround from the Design Review Commission feedback. The structure is what the Historic District Commission wants to see on this lot. Ms. Ratzlaff said that adding more landscaping between McMath Ave. and the parking lot would be negotiable with the applicant, and the commissioners could include this qualification in their motion.

Commissioner Fennell suggested that Mr. Nixon consult with staff about the signage. Ms. Ratzlaff clarified that there is not a desire to include signage in this application, particularly since the applicant does not know who the tenants will be, so future tenants will apply for signs. Ms. Ratzlaff replied that tenants would need to apply to the HDC staff for storefront bay signage.

Commissioner Fennell made a motion to approve the application with Staff's recommendation and conditions. Commissioner Waters seconded the motion. The motion passed with a vote of 5 ayes, 0 noes, and 2 absent.

VIII. Other Matters

1. CLG Grant Updates

Ratzlaff informed the Commissioners about the fifth and final phase of the Historic Hillcrest Survey. Clifton Historic Services was awarded the bid, and they will start surveying late October. Chair Aleman asked if property owners will be notified about part 5. Ms. Ratzlaff replied that once staff has the dates that the consultants will be surveying, staff will send letters to the surveyed homeowners notifying them with the Historic District Commission letterhead. The consultants have to have that letter on them during their survey work. Staff will announce the survey work on social media and provide a letter to the Commissioners if they would like one.

2. Enforcement Issues

None, since the dismissal of the case.

3. Certificates of Compliance

HDC2025-019—308 E. 7th Street and 621 Cumberland—accessory structure non-historic siding replacement

HDC2025-020—623 Rock Street—installation of non-historic, detached accessory shed

HDC2025-021—913 Rock Street—roof and shingle replacement

IX. Adjournment

There being no further business for the commission, the meeting was adjourned at 4:27 p.m.

Attest:

Chair

Date

Secretary/Staff

Date