

**City of Santa Fe
Historic Districts Review Board
Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law**

Case # 2024-8990-HDRB

Address – 1160 Camino de Cruz Blanca

Agent’s Name – Surroundings Studio LLC

Owner/Applicant’s Name – St. John’s College

THIS MATTER came before the Historic Districts Review Board (“Board”) for hearing on September 10, 2024.

BACKGROUND

St. John’s College is located at 1160 Camino de Cruz Blanca within the Historic Review District. The HDRB assigned historic status to the buildings within the campus in 2017, with a combination of significant, contributing, and non-contributing designations. Tennis courts and a soccer field for students’ use lay on the south side of Camino de Cruz Blanca between Calle Romolo and Camino Cabra. The location of these facilities was approved by the Planning Commission as part of the 2008 Development Plan for the college. The Planning Commission approved chain-link fences around the perimeter of the soccer field and tennis courts were approved as part of this Development Plan, but it was also necessary to obtain the approval of the Historic Districts Review Board.

The chain-link fences, 4’8” high at the athletic fields and 8 feet high at the tennis courts, were approved by the HDRB under Case # H-13-041 in 2013, with the Board granting an exception to Santa Fe City Code (“SFCC”) Section 14-5.2(F)(2)(g), to install a wire fence where wire fences are prohibited. The Land Use Staff later gave administrative approval for replacement of the existing tennis courts with new tennis courts and a pickleball court. See Case # 2023-6684-ADMIN.

The Applicant proposes the following exterior alterations: Install a mesh windscreen at the publicly visible tennis and pickleball courts with an opacity of 80 percent in a green color. The screen will be installed on green rubber-coated chain-link fence, at 2 feet from the ground to a height of 8 feet, which places the top of the screen at 10 feet off the ground. The windscreen is constructed of vinyl-coated mesh. An exception to SFCC Section 14-5.2(F)(2)(g) is requested to install a fence constructed of prohibited materials. The Staff’s position is that a wind screen is appropriate for these courts, but that a more transparent option would be less intrusive to the Historic District.

FINDINGS OF FACT

After conducting a public hearing and having heard from the Applicant and all interested persons, the Board hereby FINDS, as follows:

1. Land Use Department Staff conducted a preliminary zoning review (“PZR”) and determined that the application appears to meet the underlying zoning standards set forth in the Santa Fe City Code.
2. Historic Preservation Division Staff reviewed the application and related materials and information submitted by the Applicant for conformity with applicable SFCC requirements and provided the Board with a written report of its findings (“Staff Report”), which evaluates the factors relevant to the application.
3. Historic Preservation Division Staff Recommendation: Staff did not recommend a finding that all the exception criteria had been met and suggested that a less opaque option would be more appropriate. Staff recommended denial of the application as it did not comply with SFCC Sections 14-5.2(D), General Design Standards for all Historic Districts, and 14-5.2(F), Historic Review Design Standards.
4. The project is subject to the requirements and general design standards set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(D), General Design Standards.
5. The property is located in the Historic Review District and is subject to the district design standards set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(F).
6. Under SFCC Sections 14-2.6(B-C), 14-5.2(A)(1), 14-5.2(C)(3)(a-b), and 14-5.2(C)(4), the Board has authority to review, approve, with or without conditions, or deny, all or some of the Applicant’s proposed design to assure overall compliance with applicable design standards.
7. Under SFCC Section 14-5.2(F)(2)(g), walls and fences visible from the street shall be built of brick, adobe, rock, masonry, wood, coyote fencing, wrought iron, slump block, or similar materials. Walls of unstuccoed concrete block or unstuccoed concrete, chain link, metal wire, or similar materials are prohibited, except where the wall or fence is not visible from the street.
8. The Applicant proposes to install a vinyl wind screen on an existing chain-link fence which is visible from the street (Camino de Cruz Blanca). The Staff determined that an exception to SFCC Section 14-5.2(F)(2)(g) would be required for approval of the application, and the Applicant requested an exception.
9. To obtain an exception, the Applicant was required to conclusively demonstrate that the three exception criteria set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b) have been met.
10. Based on the information set forth in the Staff Report and exhibits, and the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing, the Board finds that, with specific additional conditions, the Applicant has conclusively demonstrated that all exception criteria have been met:
 - a. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(i), the Board finds that granting the exception would not damage the character of the district because that area has many institutional structures (schools, museums) and fenced athletic facilities are common; the natural green color of the mesh, with a reduced height and reduced opacity (68 percent), is harmonious with surrounding turf, trees and other vegetation;
 - b. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(ii), the Board finds that the exception is required to prevent a hardship to the Applicant or an injury to the public welfare, because the mesh will wrap and conceal athletic courts that have a brightly colored paving inharmonious with the streetscape; and

- c. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(iii), the Board finds that granting the exception would strengthen the unique heterogeneous character of the City by providing a full range of design options to ensure that residents can continue to reside within the Historic Districts, because the mesh will facilitate the use of the tennis and pickleball courts by shielding them from wind and the sun.
- 11. The Board finds that the Applicant has conclusively demonstrated that all of the exception criteria have been met.
- 12. Under SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(3)(b), the Board has the authority to approve an application for alteration or new construction on the condition that changes relating to exterior appearance recommended by the Board be made in the proposed work, and no permit is to issue until new drawings or documentation, satisfactory to the Board, have been submitted.
- 13. The information contained in the Staff Report and exhibits, and the testimony and evidence submitted at the hearing, establishes that all applicable requirements for Board review as herein described have been met.
- 14. The information contained in the Staff Report and exhibits, and the testimony and evidence submitted at the hearing, establishes that all applicable design criteria have been met, subject to the conditions imposed by the HDRB, as described below.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Under the circumstances and given the evidence and testimony submitted during the hearing, the Board acted upon the application as follows:

- 1. The Board has the authority to review and approve the application.
- 2. The Board approves the application, with the following additional conditions:
 - a. The opacity of the mesh material shall be no greater than 68 percent; and
 - b. The material shall be placed so that it does not exceed 6 feet in height.
- 3. The Board grants the exception requested in the application.

IT IS SO ORDERED ON THIS 25th DAY of FEBRUARY, 2025, BY THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS REVIEW BOARD OF THE CITY OF SANTA FE.

Cecilia Rios, Chair

Date

FILED:

Andréa Salazar
City Clerk

Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Frank Ruybalid
Assistant City Attorney

Date