



Althea A. Graves

Committee on City Property, Member

Committee on Finance, Member

Committee on Urban Redevelopment Renewal, & Planning, Member

Committee on State Legislative Affairs, Member

Councilwoman – Ward 12

Marc Greenfield
Chair, Providence Zoning Board of Review
444 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903

June 3, 2025

Chair Greenfield,

I am writing to you and your esteemed colleagues in reference to the application for a dimensional variance and special use permit for the fence located at 31 Candace Street (plat 68, lots 421, 420, and 518). Community Libraries of Providence is planning a replacement of the historic wrought iron fencing at its Smith Hill branch with a steel replica with increased durability. However, per the zoning ordinance, the fence is two feet too high at five feet. In the interest of community welfare and enjoyment, I urge you to instead grant a dimensional variance and permit the fence to stand at its existing height despite the replacement.

The fence is an invaluable part of life in Smith Hill, with annual traditions now attached to it. Providence College students paint the fence at the start of the fall semester, while Providence students maintain and repaint it at the end of their school year. This bookending decoration symbolizes the attachment and pride that participants feel in their neighborhood and challenges notions about the neighborhood. Succinctly, these young people have made Smith Hill their home by visibly maintaining a small portion of it. Moreover, the library and its fence date from 1932, making the fence height a historical feature of the site rather than a deliberate flouting of the ordinance.

To shorten the fence would be to eliminate a community canvas, and ultimately, undermine the expression and stake of residents in my ward. While the proposed upgrade to durable steel fencing is welcome, any alteration of the height would, in my estimation, deter from the historicity of and neighborhood affinity toward the Smith Hill library. I strongly support the dimensional variance requested for 31 Candace Street and trust that the board will act accordingly and considerately.

Sincerely,

Althea Graves
Councilwoman - Ward 12

Providence City Council

Providence City Hall, 25 Dorrance Street, Providence, RI 02903