

City of Santa Fe, New Mexico

memo

DATE: July 8, 2025

TO: Historic Districts Review Board Members

VIA: Heather Lamboy, Planning & Land Use Department Director *HL*
Maggie Moore, Assistant Land Use Director *MM*
Gary Moquino, Historic Preservation Division Manager

FROM: Lani McCulley, Senior Planner, Historic Preservation Division *LM*

2025-010683-HDRB, Shelby St. Foot Bridge, Downtown & Eastside Historic District, contributing, Wonderstone Consulting LLC, agent for City of Santa Fe, owner, requests to demolish the pedestrian bridge. An exception is requested to section 14-5.2(D)(1)(a) for demolition of a contributing structure.

REFERENCE ATTACHMENTS (Sequentially):

CITY SUBMITTALS

District Standards & yard wall
& fence standards.

Historic Inventory Form

Zoning Review Sheet

Other:

APPLICANT SUBMITTALS

Proposal Letter

Site Plan/Floor Plan

Elevations

Photographs

Other: [2025 HCPI, demolition and
exception criteria]

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff finds that the exception criteria for section 14-5.2(D)(1)(a) for demolition of a contributing structure have been met; therefore, staff recommend approval of the application with the condition that the reconstruction of the bridge matches the existing bridge in appearance and reuses the existing stones of the bridge, as it complies with 14-5.2(D) General Design Standards for all Historic Districts, and 14-5.2(E) Downtown and Eastside Design Standards and 14-3.14 Demolition of Historic or Landmark Structure.

Sample motions:

- a. In case 2025-010683-HDRB, for Shelby Street Footbridge, approve/deny the demolition of the footbridge structure.

Should the Board deny the exception request, the applicant shall return with an alternative proposal for review and approval before proceeding to a building permit.

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY:

The Shelby Street Footbridge is located on the south side of Alameda Street at the base of Shelby Street. The footbridge is contributing to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District. It is located above the stone-lined channel constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the 1930s. The area is part of the Santa Fe River Park, which is a passive recreational area with landscaping, picnic tables, and a walking path. The park is restricted to parcel sections from twenty to one hundred feet wide, bounded on one side by the ten-foot drop to the riverbed and on the other side by Alameda Street. This parkway was developed for the visual enhancement of the nature of the site.



Figure 1: Location of Shelby Street Footbridge.

The Shelby Street Footbridge is one of two footbridges that cross the Santa Fe River within the park. Eight public vehicular bridges and several private vehicular bridges also cross the park. The

street bridges include Defouri Street Bridge, Delgado Street Bridge, Grant Avenue Bridge, Don Gaspar Street Bridge, Galisteo Street Bridge, Old Santa Fe Trail Bridge, Camino Cabra Bridge, Palace Avenue Bridge, and Paseo de Peralta Bridge. The Santa Fe River State Park and Don Gaspar Street Bridge are on the National Register, and the National Register of Historic Places registration form classifies the 1928 Delgado Street Bridge as contributing. All of the other bridges are considered non-contributing according to the National Register of Historic Places registration form. However, the Historic Districts Review Board designated statuses for the Defouri Street Bridge in 2013 (contributing), the Delgado Street Bridge (significant), the Grant Avenue Bridge (significant), and the Don Gaspar Street Bridge (significant) in 2014. The Galisteo Street, Old Santa Fe Trail, Camino Cabra, Palace Avenue, and Paseo de Peralta Bridges remain without status. The other footbridge, the Brothers Lane Footbridge, came before the HDRB in 2003. While no status was designated because the bridge was under 50 years old, the bridge was subject to a city project which proposed to reconstruct the bridge and widen it by 2'0". However, the Brothers Lane Bridge was required to be reconstructed of wood in keeping with the original bridge.



Figure 2: Side view of Shelby Street Footbridge

The Shelby Street Footbridge was constructed in 1968, most likely as a replacement for a timber bridge that was constructed in the 1930s as part of the Civilian Conservation Corps project. The 1968 bridge is constructed of concrete slabs with timber and stone abutments and concrete girders (*see figure 4 for parts of a bridge*), and a steel pipe railing. An additional concrete beam was placed between the girders for added support at an unknown date. The exterior of the girders is embedded with sandstone blocks set into a concrete bed, which gives the footbridge an appearance of rock construction in an arch. The entrance to the bridge is bordered on each side by low sandstone parapets about 12" in height, and the metal railing is embedded in square masonry end posts at about 18" in height. The entrance on the north of the bridge has curved stone walls up to four feet in height flanking the approach to the bridge. These walls connect to the masonry end posts. The south entrance has had stones removed to accommodate the widening of the pedestrian path.



Figure 3: North and South Entrances to Shelby Street Footbridge.

The bridge is directly on the river embankment (visible in figure 2), supported by large timber blocks (abutments and girders). This forces the bridge to rely heavily on soil and timber for stability. The river flow fluctuations have made alterations to the river channel where the bridge sits, and according to the HCPI, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was going to remove the bridge in the 1970s due to its inability to handle to flow of the river. Due to damage to the bridge, from poor construction methods and frequent flooding, the footbridge has been closed since 2022. There are holes in the walkway of the bridge. According to the evaluation issued by Wilson and Company, “Note in Figure 4 (of the evaluation) the presence of brown efflorescence near the hole. This is an indication that the reinforcement in the top flange is rusting and likely losing its strength, thus providing less capacity to support the travel way as initially intended. Wilson and Company further show that there is damage to the double-tee beam, which is a load-bearing structure of reinforced concrete. Wilson and Company’s summary reads, “From the evaluation, it can be determined that the bridge is both structurally deficient with its excessive damage and functionally obsolete. The existing travel way is less than 4’-0” wide, which would be too narrow to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Given the information from the evaluation presented herein, it is recommended that this bridge be demolished and replaced with a new structure.” The City Building Official also found the overall condition of the structure as unsafe and in very poor condition.

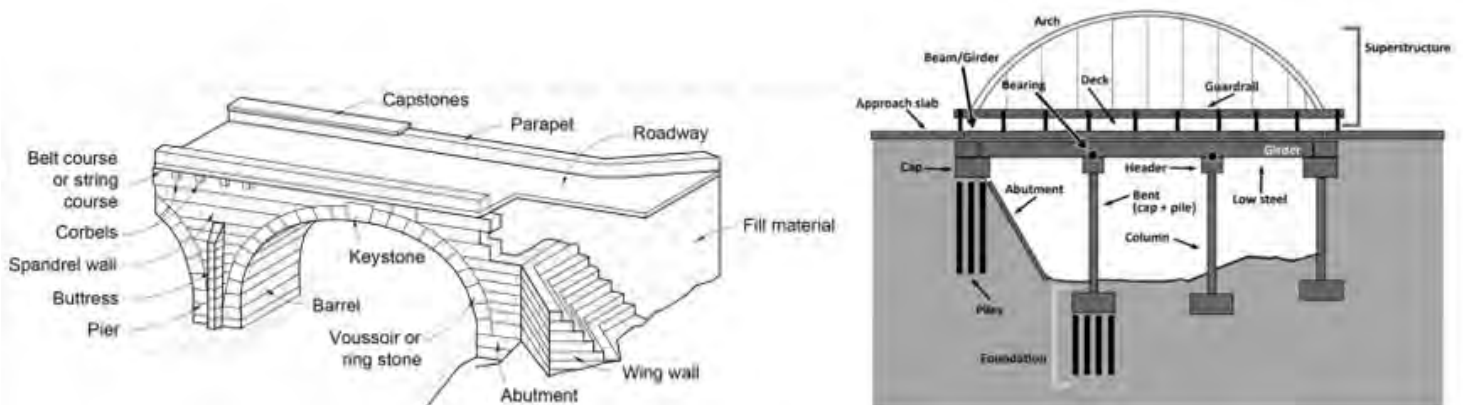


Figure 4: Parts of a Bridge

APPLICANT’S REQUEST:

The applicant proposes the following exterior alterations:

- 1) Demolish the Shelby Street Footbridge.

Given the deteriorated condition of the bridge, the staff recommends demolition of the bridge with the condition that the reconstruction of the bridge matches the existing bridge in appearance and reuses the existing stones of the bridge.

DEMOLITION CRITERIA AND RESPONSES

(a) Whether the structure is of historical importance;

Applicant Response: The Shelby Street footbridge was built in 1968 and is historical in age. It is located within the Santa Fe River Park Channel National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) property. The bridge is considered a non-contributing structure within the NRHP property because it was not constructed as part of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) program and was not constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). The bridge is outside of the Period of Significance for the NRHP property, which is 1933-1940. The NRHP form was provided to the Board as background information for the historic status review.

The 2025 Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) form notes that the Shelby Street footbridge was constructed as part of the State Parks and Recreation Commission projects post World War II. The Shelby Street footbridge replaced a CCC-built wooden footbridge near the location of the existing bridge. The style of the Shelby Street footbridge differed from the existing CCC rock work and was intended to create a more “urban” park setting within the Santa Fe River Park, an official State Park between 1957 and 1999. Please refer to the HCPI form in Appendix B for a more complete discussion of the history of the footbridge.

Despite the bridge being historical in age, it was constructed in a way that created a false sense of history. Rather than designing the bridge in a new style, the State Parks and Recreation Commission worked to match the style of the WPA project and CCC construction. While there are visible differences between the New Deal era construction and design and the 1950s and 1960s State Park improvements, they may be subtle and imperceptible to those that interact with the park space along the river.

Given that this application is presented in tandem with the HDRB’s review of the historic status of the bridge, it is unknown if the bridge is considered contributing to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District and if the structure has been determined to be of historical importance.

Staff Response: Staff finds this criterion is met. While the footbridge is of historical importance, it requires repair or replacement. The evaluation of the damage to the existing bridge demonstrates the need for replacement.

(b) *Whether the structure for which demolition is requested is an essential part of a unique street section or block front, and whether this street section or block front will be reestablished by a proposed structure; and*

Applicant Response: For over 50 years the footbridge has been a part of the Santa Fe River Park. Until its closure in 2022, the bridge was well used, and there have been many calls for the replacement of the footbridge even before that time. Along with the demolition request are two replacement footbridge designs for the HDRB to review that are intended to reestablish a bridge crossing the river in this location. The first design is a simple prefab bridge design consistent with other pedestrian bridges crossing the Santa Fe River. The second design is the prefab bridge with non-structural stone and concrete curtain walls and is intended to offer an “in-kind” replacement of the existing bridge. Per Staff, the proposed design of the bridge is not to be considered at the time of a demolition request. The subsequent case will present the two design options.

Staff Response: Staff finds this criterion is met. The bridge is an essential part of a unique street section and block front, and it is planned to be reestablished.

(c) *The state of repair and structural stability of the structure under consideration.*

Applicant Response: The bridge is, unfortunately, in a state of complete deterioration (see Appendix B and C) and cannot be repaired or made structurally sound. It requires replacement. Beyond its current state, the bridge was deemed unsafe to withstand a 100-year flood in 1983 by the United States Army Corps of Engineers. At that time, other bridges were also deemed to be in need of replacement, and the funds for replacement were funneled to the Old Santa Fe Trail bridge. Other bridges crossing the river were replaced in the 2010s, such as the De Fouri Street Bridge and the Brother’s Lane Bridge. The failure of this bridge is now requiring it to be replaced.

Staff Response: Staff finds this criterion is met. The evaluation of the bridge by Wilson and Company clearly shows that the existing bridge is unsafe and would require enough work that replacement is required. Staff points out that the replacement bridge should emulate the existing contributing structure.

EXCEPTION CRITERIA AND RESPONSES:

Exception to section 14-5.2(D)(1)(a): The applicant requests an exception to “*The removal of historic materials or alteration of architectural features and spaces that embody the status shall be prohibited*”.

(i) *Do not damage the character of the district*

Applicant Response: The Shelby Street bridge is one of several small bridges that crosses the Santa Fe River, connecting the north and south banks. Small foot bridges and vehicular bridges which have existed since the river began to channelize around 1893 with the construction of Two Mile Dam. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and other historic maps indicate that the bridges crossing the river were stone, wood, and now concrete- changing materials over time to accommodate the modernizing and engineering needs for crossing a river channel. The nearest pedestrian bridge to the Shelby Street bridge is the Brother's Lane bridge. This bridge was last replaced around 2016 and is now a wooden bridge with wooden rails. Given that bridge materials change over time, removal of the stone bridge will not damage the character of the district.

To remove the bridge entirely would change the character of this location along the river park, but the bridge will be replaced. The current situation of having a closed and dangerous bridge along a main street in the downtown area is damaging to the district. Demolishing and replacing the bridge is not.

The removal of the bridge will not affect the space that embodies the bridge, which is the river park. The river park with other bridges crossing the river will remain and the overall character and design of the river park property will remain with the bridge replacement. However, the request is to remove a contributing structure, and this request is being made because of the structures condition and the inability to restore the structure. The historic material will be removed, but the design presentation will demonstrate that a replacement bridge will maintain and contribute to the river park, and the design of the bridge will be in keeping with the historic district standards.

Staff Response: Staff finds this criterion is met. It is in the best interest of the Historic District to have a functional and safe footbridge for public access.

(ii) *Are required to prevent a hardship to the applicant or an injury to the public welfare*

Applicant Response: As is demonstrated in Appendix C with photos of the failed structure and the letter from Mr. Ashton, the bridge is a public safety concern as it lacks structural integrity. The bridge is beyond repair. Demolition of the bridge is required to prevent injury to the public welfare, both bodily injury and liability to the City of Santa Fe.

Staff Response: Staff finds this criterion is met. The deteriorated condition of the bridge is a hazard to the public.

(iii) *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*

Applicant Response: In the design case following this demolition request, proposals for the design will be presented. Several design options were considered, and options 3 and 4 below have been chosen to present to the board in the design review case. Both designs strengthen the unique heterogeneous character of downtown Santa Fe and the river park area. Staff has prohibited the design options from being included in the demolition and exception request.

The design options considered were:

- 1) Leave the bridge and permanently close it.
- 2) Demolish the bridge and do not replace it.
- 3) Demolish the bridge and replace it with a modern prefab pedestrian bridge as seen in other areas along the Santa Fe River.
- 4) Demolish the bridge and replace it with a modern prefab pedestrian bridge with non-structural rock girders to match closely the existing design.

Staff Response: Staff finds this criterion is met. The replacement of the bridge is the preferred option of considered design options considered. Staff would further recommend that the bridge replacement emulate the 1968 design.

RELEVANT CODE CITATIONS:

14-3.14 DEMOLITION OF HISTORIC OR LANDMARK STRUCTURE

(G) Standards

- (1) In determining whether a request for demolition in a historic district should be approved or denied, the HDRB shall consider the following:
 - (a) Whether the *structure* is of historical importance;
 - (b) Whether the *structure* for which demolition is requested is an essential part of a unique *street* section or block front, and whether this *street* section or block front will be reestablished by a proposed *structure*; and
 - (c) The state of repair and structural stability of the *structure* under consideration.
- (2) In determining whether a request for demolition of a *landmark structure* should be approved or denied, the HDRB and *governing body* shall consider the following:
 - (a) The historical importance of the *structure*; and
 - (b) The state of repair and structural stability of the *structure*.

14-5.2 HISTORIC DISTRICTS

(A) General Provisions

(1) General Purpose

In order to promote the economic, cultural, and general welfare of the people of the *city* and to ensure the harmonious, orderly and efficient growth and *development* of the *city*, it is deemed essential by the *governing body* that the qualities relating to the history of Santa Fe, and a harmonious outward appearance, which preserve *property* values and attract tourists and residents alike, be preserved, some of these qualities being:

- (a) The continued existence and *preservation* of historical areas and *buildings*;
- (b) The continued construction of *buildings* in the historic styles; and
- (c) A general harmony as to style, form, color, height, proportion, texture, and material between *buildings* of historic design and those of more modern design.

(C) Regulation of Significant and Contributing Structures in the Historic Districts

(Ord. No. 2004-26)

(1) Purpose and Intent

It is intended that:

- (a) Each *structure* to be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical *development*, such as the addition of conjectural features or architectural elements from other *buildings*, shall not be undertaken.
- (b) Changes to *structures* that have acquired historic *significance* in their own right shall be retained and preserved, recognizing that most *structures* change over time;
- (c) Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a *structure* be preserved; and
- (d) New additions and related or adjacent new construction be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the original form and integrity of the historic *property* and its environment would be unimpaired.

(2) Designation of Significant, Contributing, or Noncontributing Status within Historic Districts

(a) Status Designation

Structures within historic districts may be designated a status of "significant," "contributing," or "noncontributing" based upon the definitions of these terms in Article 14-12. Staff shall maintain a record as to the current status of *structures* located in the Historic Districts.

(b) Board Authority to Review Status Designation

- (i) The Board is authorized to change the status of a *structure* or to designate a status for a *structure* with no status designated.
- (ii) A change in status or the designation of a status shall be based upon an evaluation of data provided through survey or other relevant sources of information and the definitions of "significant," "contributing," or "noncontributing."

(e) Appeals (Ord. No. 2009-42 § 16)

Decisions made by the historic districts review board may be appealed to the *governing body* as set forth in Section 14-3.17.

(f) Restoration of Status

If a *property owner* makes changes to a *structure* without the proper *city* approvals, which result in the lowering of the *structure's* status, staff or the board may require the *property owner* to restore the *structure* such that its former status is restored.

(4) Compliance with General and Specific Design Standards Required

All *development* located within the historic districts and subject to this Section 14-5.2 shall comply with all applicable general *development* standards set forth in Subsection 14-5.2(D), as well as any applicable specific *development* standards set forth in Subsections 14-5.2(E) through (I).

14-12 Significant Structure:

A structure located in a historic district that is approximately fifty years old or older, and that embodies distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction. For a structure to be designated as significant, it must retain a high level of historic integrity. A structure may be designated as significant:

- (A) for its association with events or persons that are important on a local, regional, national, or global level; or
- (B) if it is listed on or is eligible to be listed on the State Register of Cultural Properties or the National Register of Historic Places.

14-12 Contributing Structure:

A structure, located in a historic district, approximately fifty years old or older, that helps to establish and maintain the character of that historic district. Although a contributing structure is not unique in itself, it adds to the historic associations or historic architectural design qualities that are significant for a district. The contributing structure may have had minor alterations, but its integrity remains.

14-12 Noncontributing Structure:

A structure, located in an H district, that is less than fifty years old or that does not exhibit sufficient historic integrity to establish and maintain the character of the H District.

14-12 Primary Façade:

One or more principal faces or elevations of a building with features that define the character of the building's architecture.

14-12 Historic Compound

An identifiable grouping of historic resources, including buildings, structures, and landscaping elements, as described in Section 14-5.2(K)(2)(a). Historic compounds may be comprised of more than one lot.

(D) General Design Standards for All H Districts

In any review of proposed additions or alterations to *structures* that have been declared significant or contributing in any historic district or a *landmark* in any part of the *city*, the following standards shall be met:

(1) General

- (a) The status of a significant, contributing, or *landmark structure* shall be retained and preserved. If a proposed alteration will cause a *structure* to lose its significant, contributing, or *landmark* status, the *application* shall be denied. The removal of historic materials or alteration of architectural features and spaces that embody the status shall be prohibited.

- (b) If a proposed alteration or new construction will cause an adjacent *structure* to lose its significant, contributing, or *landmark* status, the *application* may be denied.

(2) Additions

- (a) Additions shall have similar materials, architectural *treatments*, and styles, features, and details as the existing *structure*, but shall not duplicate those of the existing *structure* in a manner that will make the addition indistinguishable from the existing *structure*.
- (b) Additions to *buildings* that meet the standards of Subsection 14-5.2(E) shall continue to meet those standards set forth in Subsection 14-5.2(E) in addition to the standards set forth in this section.
- (c) Additions are not permitted to *primary façades*.
- (d) Additions are not permitted to the side of the existing footprint unless the addition is set back a minimum of ten (10) feet from the primary facade. The addition shall not exceed fifty percent of the square footage of the existing footprint, and shall not exceed fifty percent of the existing dimension of the primary facade. To the extent architecturally practicable, new additions shall be attached to any existing noncontributing portion of *structures* instead of attaching them to the significant or contributing portion.
- (e) The height of additions:
 - (i) For significant and *landmark structures* shall be a minimum of six (6) inches less than the parapet or equivalent roof-feature of the existing adjacent connecting facade.
 - (ii) For contributing *structures* shall be no more than one additional *story* higher than the existing *structure*. To the extent architecturally practicable, two-story additions shall be set to the rear or the side rear of the *structure*. When an additional *story* is to be placed upon an existing contributing *structure*, that footprint may be no greater than fifty percent of the footprint of the existing *structure*, subject to the provisions of Subsection A(1) above. For the purposes of this paragraph, an additional *story* shall not exceed twelve (12) feet from the existing rooftop to the highest point of that *story*.

(5) Windows, Doors, and Other Architectural Features

- (a) For all facades of significant and *landmark structures* and for the primary facades of contributing *structures*:
 - (i) Historic windows shall be repaired or restored wherever possible. Historic windows that cannot be repaired or restored shall be duplicated in the size, style, and material of the original. Thermal double pane glass may be used. No opening shall be widened or narrowed.
 - (ii) No new opening shall be made where one presently does not exist unless historic documentation supports its prior existence.
 - (iii) No existing opening shall be closed.

- (b) For all façades of significant, contributing, and *landmark structures*, architectural features, finishes, and details other than doors and windows shall be repaired rather than replaced. In the event *replacement* is necessary, the use of new material may be approved. The new material shall match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. *Replacement* or duplication of missing features shall be substantiated by documentation, physical or pictorial evidence.

(E) Downtown and Eastside Design Standards

The *governing body* recognizes that a style of architecture has evolved within the *city* from the year 1600 to the present characterized by construction with *adobe*, hereafter called "old Santa Fe style", and that another style has evolved, hereafter called "recent Santa Fe style", which is a *development* from, and an elaboration of the old Santa Fe style, with different materials and frequently with added decorations.

(1) Old Santa Fe Style

Old Santa Fe style, characterized by construction with *adobe*, is defined as including the so-called "pueblo" or "pueblo-Spanish" or "Spanish-Indian" and "territorial" styles, and is more specifically described as follows:

- (a) With rare exception, *buildings* are of one *story*, few have three stories, and the characteristic effect is that the *buildings* are long and low. Roofs are flat with a slight *slope* and surrounded on at least three sides by a firewall of the same color and material as the *walls* or of brick. Roofs are never carried out beyond the line of the *walls* except to cover an enclosed *portal* or *porch* formed by setting back a portion of the *wall* or to form an exterior *portal*, the outer edge of the roof being supported by wooden columns. Two-story construction is more common in the territorial than in other sub-styles, and is preferably accompanied by a balcony at the level of the floor of the second *story*. Façades are flat, varied by inset *portales*, exterior *portales*, projecting vigas or roof beams, canales or water-spouts, flanking buttresses and wooden lintels, architraves and cornices, which, as well as doors, are frequently carved, and the carving may be picked out with bright colors. Arches are almost never used except for nonfunctional arches, often slightly ogive, over gateways in freestanding *walls*;
- (b) All exterior *walls* of a *building* are painted alike. The colors range from a light earth color to a dark earth color. The exception to this rule is the protected space under *portales*, or in church-derived designs, inset panels in a *wall* under the roof, in which case the roof overhangs the panel. These spaces may be painted white or a contrasting color or have mural decorations.
- (c) Solid *wall* space is always greater in any façade than window and door space combined. Single panes of glass larger than thirty (30) inches in any dimension are not permissible except as otherwise provided in this section.
- (d) The rule as to flat roofs shall not be construed to prevent the construction of skylights or installation of air conditioning devices, or any other necessary roof *structures*, but such *structures* other than chimneys, flues, vents and aerials, shall

be so placed as to be concealed by the firewall from the view of anyone standing in the *street* on which the *building* fronts;

- (e) True old Santa Fe style *buildings* are made of *adobe* with mud plaster finish. Construction with masonry blocks, bricks, or other materials with which the *adobe* effect can be simulated is permissible, provided that the exterior *walls* are not less than eight (8) inches thick and that geometrically straight façade lines are avoided. Mud plaster or hard plaster simulating *adobe*, laid on smoothly, is required; and
- (f) It is characteristic of old Santa Fe style commercial *buildings* to place a *portal* so that it covers the entire sidewalk, the columns being set at the curb line.

(2) Recent Santa Fe Style

Recent Santa Fe style intends to achieve harmony with historic *buildings* by *retention* of a similarity of materials, color, proportion, and general detail. The dominating effect is to be that of *Adobe* construction, prescribed as follows:

- (a) No *building* shall be over two stories in height in any façade unless the façade shall include projecting or recessed *portales*, *setbacks*, or other design elements.
- (b) The combined door and window area in any *publicly visible* façade shall not exceed forty percent of the total area of the façade except for doors or windows located under a *portal*. No door or window in a *publicly visible* façade shall be located nearer than three (3) feet from the corner of the façade;
- (c) No cantilevers shall be permitted except over projecting vigas, beams, or wood corbels, or as part of the roof *treatment* described below;
- (d) No less than eighty percent of the surface area of any *publicly visible* façade shall be *adobe* finish or stucco simulating *adobe* finish. The balance of the *publicly visible* façade, except as above, may be of natural stone, wood, brick, tile, terra cotta, or other material, subject to approval as hereinafter provided for *building permits*.
- (e) The *publicly visible* façade of any *building* and of any adjoining *walls* shall, except as otherwise provided, be of one color, which color shall simulate a light earth or dark earth color, matte or dull finish, and of relatively smooth texture. Façade surfaces under *portales* may be of contrasting or complementary colors. Windows, doors, and *portals* on *publicly visible* portions of the *building* and *walls* shall be of one of the old Santa Fe styles, except that *buildings* with *portals* may have larger plate glass areas for windows under *portals* only. Deep window recesses are characteristic, and
- (f) Flat roofs shall have not more than thirty (30) inches overhang.