



June 20, 2025

To: Historic Districts Review Board

RE: Shelby Street Footbridge Demolition Request

Dear HDRB:

The Shelby Street footbridge is a historic structure in the Downtown and Eastside Historic District. Because the case for determining its historic status within the district is to be heard in the same meeting as the request for demolition, the application before you includes responses to an exception to 14-5.2(D)(1) in the event that the bridge is determined to be contributing to the district.

The Shelby Street footbridge was closed to the public in 2022 due to safety concerns. This application will demonstrate the state of disrepair of the bridge. The City of Santa Fe was provided New Mexico State Senate appropriations for the bridge, just released in January 2025, and is now urgently working to restore this pedestrian route which crosses the Santa Fe River to retain the State appropriated funds essential to the project.

CASE OUTLINE

- 1) Demolition request
- 2) Considerations on the demolition criteria per 14-3.14, *Demolition of Historic or Landmark Structure*
- 3) Response to exception criteria for demolition of a contributing structure, 14-5.2(D)(1)

FIGURES AND CASE MATERIALS

- Project Location (Figure 1)
- Existing site plan and profile drawings of the footbridge (Appendix A)
- Letter from Tyler Ashton, Wilson & Company PE (Appendix B)
- Letter from Bobby Padilla, City of Santa Fe Building Official (Appendix B)
- Historic Cultural Properties Inventory form (Appendix C)

REQUEST FOR DEMOLITION

The City of Santa Fe Parks and Open Space Division requests approval for the demolition of the Shelby Street footbridge. The bridge crosses the river near the intersection of Shelby Street and E. Alameda on the north bank and near E. DeVargas Street on the south bank (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Project location. Bridge location shown outlined in red. (Image from HCPI form.)

This application includes: a site plan and drawings of the existing bridge (Appendix A); an engineer's evaluation letter from Wilson & Company, Inc, PE Tyler Ashton with photos demonstrating the current condition of the bridge (Appendix B); a letter from the City of Santa Fe Building Official Bobby Padilla (Appendix B); and the 2025 HCPI form completed by John Murphey is included in this application as well (Appendix C).

Considerations under 14-3.14(G) for HDRB evaluation:

a) *Is the structure of historical importance?*

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 Corp (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.

b) Is the structure an essential part of a unique street section and will the street section be reestablished by a proposed structure?

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 replacement of the footbridge since 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.

c) *What is the state of repair and structural stability of the structure?*

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 Brother's Lane Bridge. The failure of this bridge is now requiring it to be replaced.

Exception Requested to Demolition a Contributing Historic Structure (14-5.2(D)(1))

i. *Does not damage the character of the district.*

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.

ii. *Are required to prevent a hardship to the applicant or injury to the public welfare.* As is demonstrated in Appendix C with photos of the failed structure and the letter from the 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.

iii. *Strengthens the unique heterogenous character of the City by providing a full range of design options to ensure residents can continue to reside in the historic districts.*

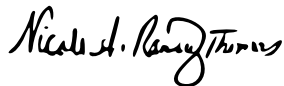
In the design case following this demolition request, proposals for the design will be presented. Several design options were considered and options 3 and 4 below have been chosen to present to the board in the design review case. Both designs strengthen the unique heterogenous character of downtown 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 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.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this demolition request and the exception responses.

Sincerely,



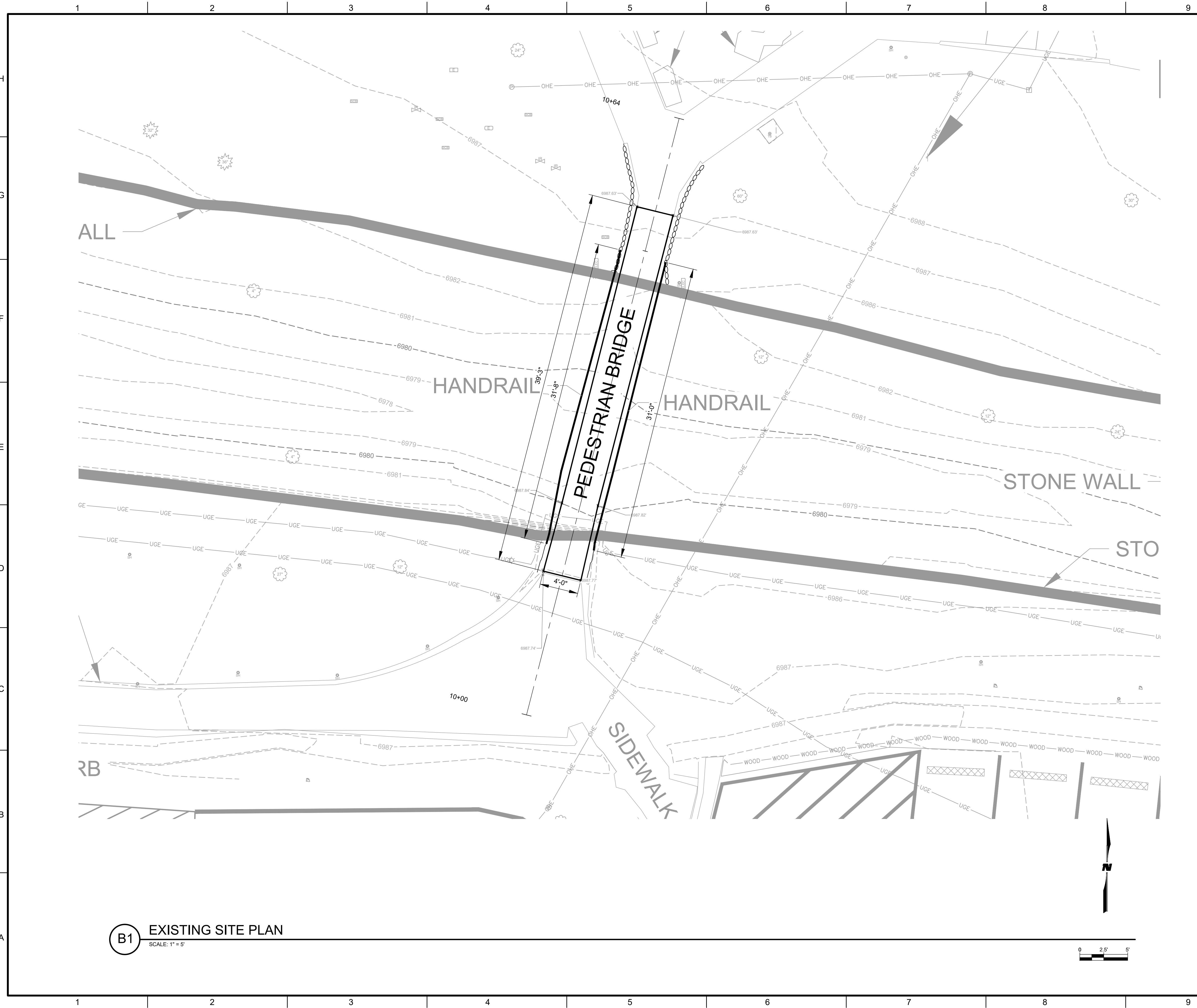
Nicole A. Ramirez Thomas

Wonderstone LLC

Principal/ Owner

APPENDIX A
Existing Site Plan and Profile Drawings

C:\Users\lawprentice\DC\ACCDocs\Wilson & Company\Shelby_St_Ped_Bridge\Project Files2_Disciplines\SHEETS\SHEET12_Sheets - civil\23603017-SP01.dwg



B1 EXISTING SITE PLAN
SCALE: 1" = 5'

GENERAL SHEET NOTES

1. ALL UTILITIES AND OTHER TOPOGRAPHIC FEATURES ARE APPROXIMATE BASED ON FIELD SURVEY. ACTUAL LOCATIONS AND LAYOUT CONTROL POINTS SHALL BE FIELD VERIFIED PRIOR TO CONSTRUCTION.
2. ANY ADDITIONAL DAMAGE TO SITE NOT DETAILED IN PLANS PAID IN-KIND BY THE CONTRACTOR.
3. EXISTING VEGETATION/IRRIGATION LINES ADJACENT TO THE NEW IMPROVEMENTS SHALL BE PROTECTED.
4. ALL EXISTING BLOCK ON SITE NEEDS TO BE IDENTIFIED AND REUSED PRIOR TO ORDERING NEW BLOCK.

KEYNOTES

LEGEND

- 6690 EXISTING CONTOURS
- 6685 PROPOSED CONTOURS

WILSON & COMPANY
 4401 WASTHEAD ST. NE, SUITE 150
 ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87109
 PHONE: 505-348-4000
 FAX: 505-348-4055
 www.wilsonco.com

CONSULTANTS

SEAL
 30% SUBMITTAL
 NOT FOR
 CONSTRUCTION

PROJECT NAME
**SHELBY ST.
 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE**

REV.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY

PROJECT NO: 23-600-030-17
 DESIGNED BY: CVA
 DRAWN BY: AWP
 CHECKED BY: TA
 DATE: JUN 2025

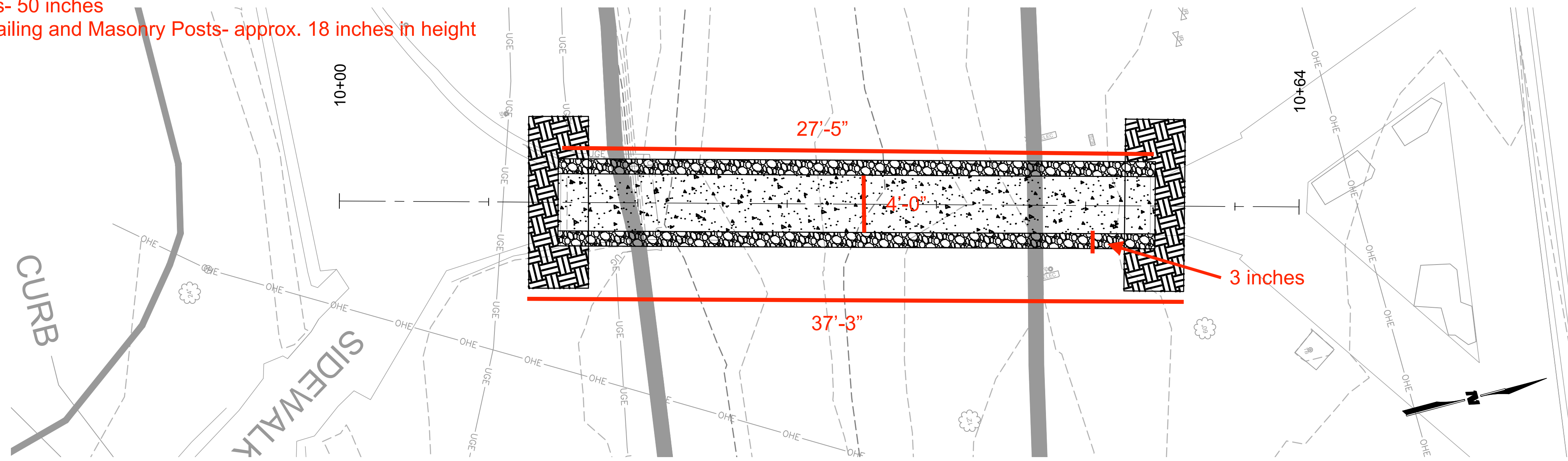
SHEET TITLE
EXISTING SITE PLAN

SHEET NO:
C-103

C:\Users\JRGum\DCACCDocs\Wilson & Company\Shelby_St_Ped_Bridge\Project Files\2_Disciplines_SHEETS4_sheets - structural\23603017-BRDG
 6/5/2025
 EXIST.dwg

Bridge Dimensions:

- Bridge Length- 37 feet and 3 inches (including approaches)
- Bridge Deck- 27 feet and 5 inches
- Bridge Width- 4 feet
- Stone Girders- 50 inches
- Metal Pipe Railing and Masonry Posts- approx. 18 inches in height



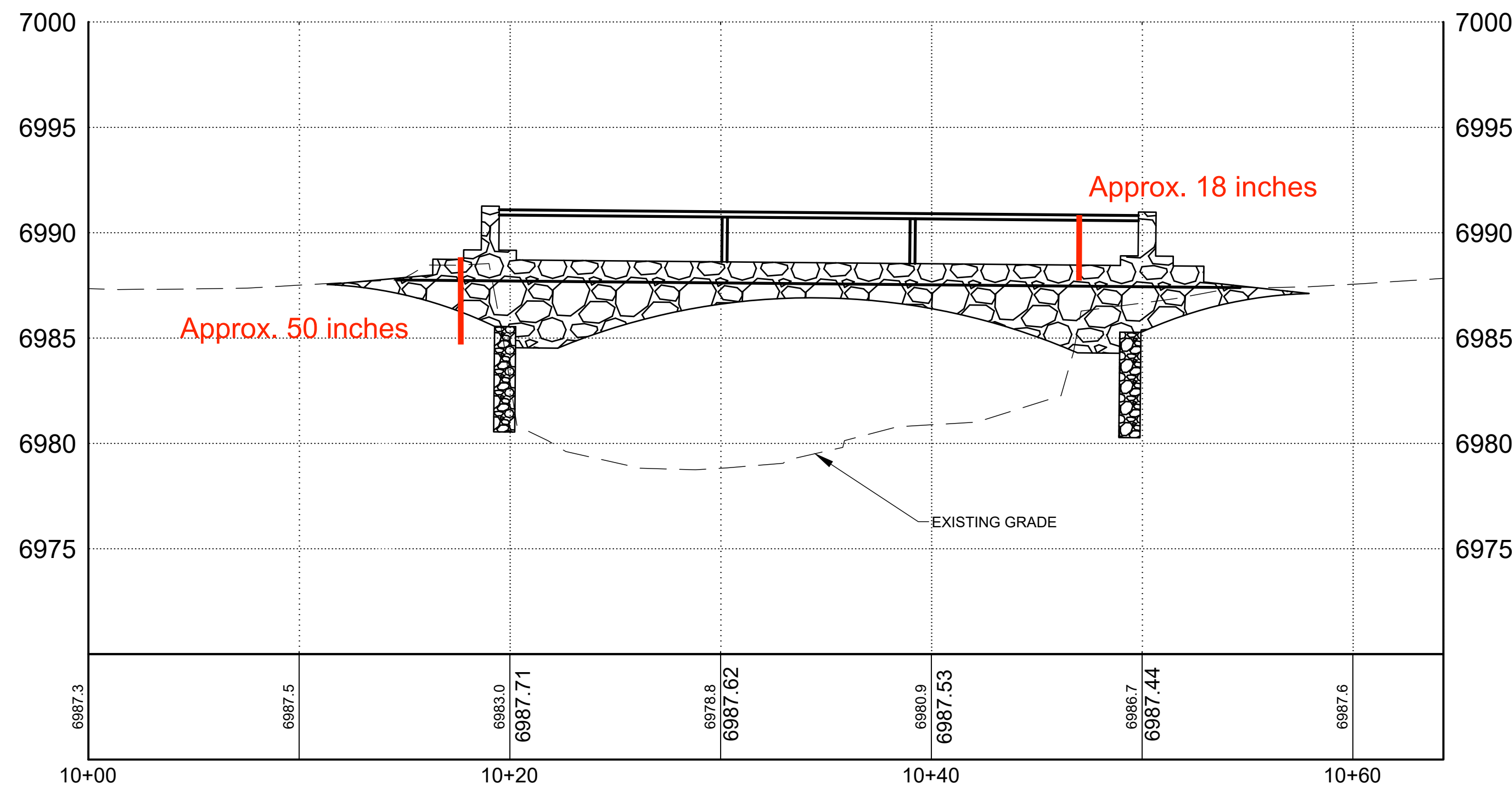
EXISTING BRIDGE PLAN

GENERAL SHEET NOTES

KEYNOTES

LEGEND

- 6690 EXISTING CONTOURS
- ROCK FROM EXISTING BRIDGE
- CONCRETE BRIDGE DECK
- EARTH/SOIL



EXISTING BRIDGE PROFILE

WILSON & COMPANY
 4401 MASTHEAD ST. NE, SUITE 150
 ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87109
 PHONE: 505-348-4000
 FAX: 505-348-4055
 www.wilsonco.com

CONSULTANTS

30% SUBMITTAL
 NOT FOR
 CONSTRUCTION

SEAL

PROJECT NAME
**SHELBY ST.
 PEDESTRIAN BRIDGE**

REV.	DATE	DESCRIPTION	BY

PROJECT NO:	23-600-030-17
DESIGNED BY:	CVA
DRAWN BY:	AWP
CHECKED BY:	TA
DATE:	JUN 2025

SHEET TITLE
**EXISTING PLAN &
 PROFILE**

SHEET NO:
XX

APPENDIX B- Existing Conditions of the Shelby Street Bridge
Tyler Ashton Letter
Bobby Padilla Letter

Memorandum

To: Melissa McDonald, City of Santa Fe

From: Carlos Aguilar, P.E., Wilson & Company, Inc.

CC: Sherman Peterson, P.E., Wilson & Company, Inc.; Tyler Ashton, P.E., Wilson & Company, Inc.

Date: 6/9/2025

Re: Shelby St. Pedestrian Bridge Evaluation

On April 10, 2025, a team consisting of Carlos Aguilar, P.E. and Sherman Peterson P.E. from Wilson & Company, Inc. conducted an evaluation of the Shelby St. Pedestrian Bridge. The Shelby St. Bridge is a single span bridge that carries pedestrian traffic over the Santa Fe River in Santa Fe, New Mexico. The bridge connects pedestrians from Shelby St. and E. Alameda St. to the north with government agencies and businesses to the south. No as-built plans were available; as such, there is no known date for the time of construction. The superstructure consists of an approximate 27'-5" single span (overall beam length of 37'-3") with one prestressed concrete double tee beam. The top flange of the double tee beam acts as the deck of the bridge. From inspection, the abutment substructure consists of timber beams that could likely be recycled railroad ties. The beam was measured to have an approximate depth of 15", with an approximate 3" thick top flange and 12" deep stems. There is also an approximate 8½" wide by 10" deep rectangular beam placed in between the stems of the double tee beam with an attached utility line. This beam was likely placed to provide additional support for the utility line; it should be noted that this beam is sagging significantly and has no influence on the support of the bridge.

Outside of the bridge there are stone arch facades that vary in depth from 50 inches at its deepest near the abutments to 20 inches at the midpoint of the bridge. It appears that the top flange of the beam is encompassed by these arches, as they also provide an approximate 1' curb for the travel way along the top surface. There are steel pipes attached to the stone arches that serve as railing along the bridge, approximately 38" above the travel way. A location plan is shown in Figure 1, with an elevation view of the bridge in Figure 2. The superstructure configuration from underneath the bridge is shown in Figure 3, highlighting the rectangular beam between the double tee beam.

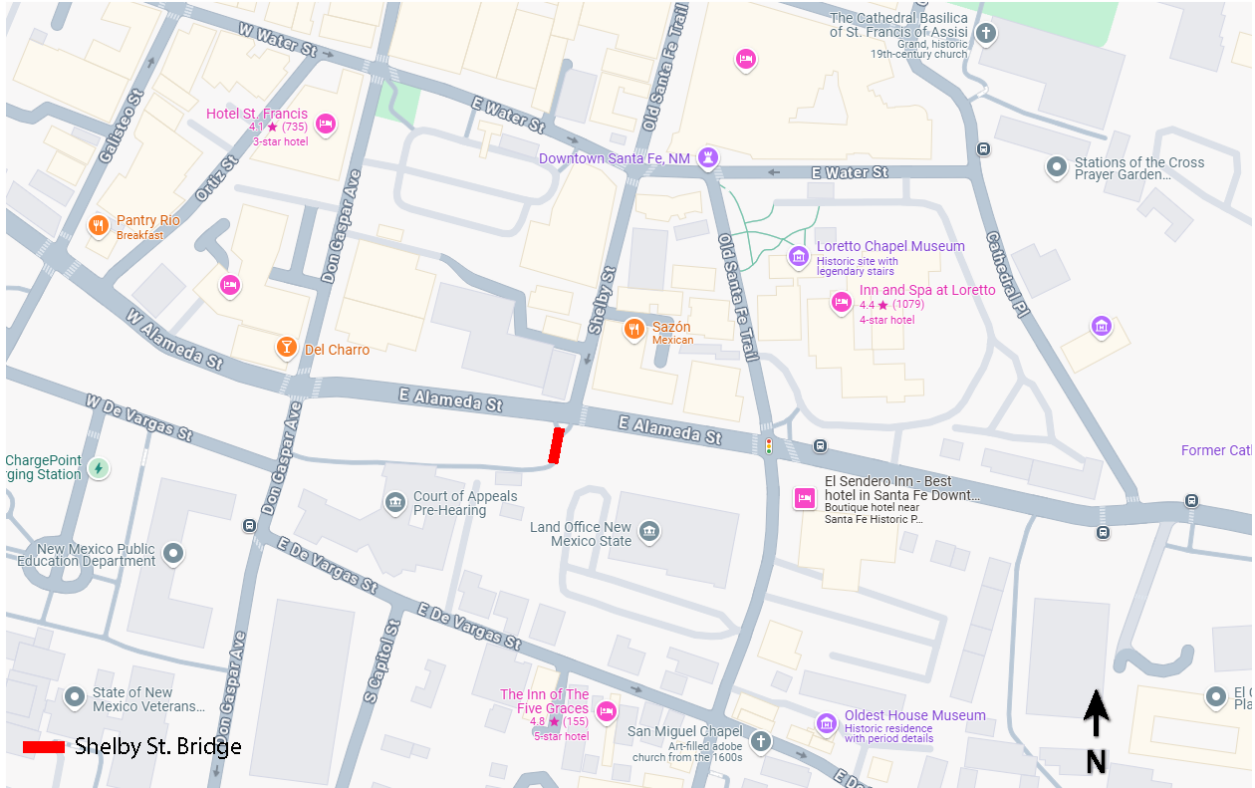


Figure 1 – Bridge location plan



Figure 2 – Bridge elevation view



Figure 3 – Bridge superstructure configuration

Given the significant damage present along the bridge, it has been closed to the public. During the evaluation, it was observed that the top flange of the beam, acting as the deck of the bridge, has a large hole near midspan with additional smaller holes along its edges near the stone arch. Figures 4 and 5 illustrate the damage in the top flange from above and below the bridge, respectively. Note in Figure 4 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.



Figure 4 – Top of flange damage



Figure 5 – Underside of flange damage

Throughout the length of the girder, the double tee beam has significant damage, including large cracks and spalls, with areas of exposed prestressing strands that appear to be rusted. Figures 6 and 7 include the damage present along the beam. Prestressing strands are used in concrete to place the beam under compression while in service to eliminate any cracking due to tension. The current condition of the beam is an indication that this beam has failed and can no longer serve its purpose to carry any pedestrian loading. Given the configuration of prestressed concrete, once a prestressing strand is damaged it becomes extremely difficult to repair the beam to restore the bridge to its original condition.



Figure 6 – Beam delamination and cracking along web and flange



Figure 7 – Beam web spalling with exposed prestressing strand

With the beam failing at midspan, it appears that the stone arch façade is supporting the load from the bridge through its embedment of the top flange. This is likely not the intention of the arch, as it appears to be more of an aesthetic feature. It appears patch work along the girder has been performed in the past, with some evidence that these patches were also attached to the arch. This can be seen in Figure 7.

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 is demolished and replaced with a new structure.



Figure 7 – Beam web spalling with exposed prestressing strand

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City of Santa Fe, New Mexico

memo

Historic Inspection Report

DATE: 6/20/2025

TO: Gary Moquino,
Division Manager
Historic Preservation

FROM: Bobby Padilla, *B.P.*
Building Official, Division Manger
Inspections

ITEM & ISSUE

Shelby Bridge on West Alameda Across Shelbe St.

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY

An inspection was carried out on June 18, 2025, at the above-mentioned location. The bridge is built out of concrete and masonry with rock cladding. The walking deck is deteriorating and coming apart from the structure, supports underneath the deck are concrete beams the supporting members are cracked and deteriorated.

The overall condition of the structure is unsafe and in very poor condition

Should you have any questions pertaining to this matter, please feel free to contact me at 955-6503.


Thank you,

APPENDIX C
HCPI Form

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Base Form (FORM 1)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

Date of Form: June 7, 2025

For HPD Office use only:		
HCPI No. _____	District No. _____	NRHP <input type="checkbox"/> SRCP <input type="checkbox"/> Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D
1. Name of property: <p style="text-align: center;">Shelby Street Footbridge</p>	2. Location: <p style="text-align: center;">Over Santa Fe River Downtown and Eastside Historic District – Santa Fe</p>	3. Local Reference Number: <p style="text-align: center;">Santa Fe ID: N/A</p> <hr/> 4. County: Santa Fe <p style="text-align: center;">Parcel # 910017966</p>
5. Property Type: <input type="checkbox"/> Buildings: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Structures: Bridge <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object		
6. Date of Survey: <p style="text-align: center;">May 20, 2025</p>		
7. Previous Survey Date(s): <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No:		
8. Name of Project: <p style="text-align: center;">HDRB Status Evaluation</p>		
9. Lat/Long: <p style="text-align: center;">35.6850349,-105.9392324</p>		
10. Photo Information: John W. Murphey, photographer. Photo 1: View of east elevation, facing southwest.		
11. Brief Description of the Property: <p>Erected in 1968 by staff of the State Parks and Recreation Commission, the Shelby Street Footbridge is an approximately 26-foot-long standard girder-slab span crossing the Santa Fe River (Photo 1). It is dressed with sandstone curtain walls designed to give the appearance of a masonry arch bridge. The bridge was crudely constructed and is now in poor condition, with a major punch-through in the deck and areas of concrete delamination. These issues prompted the City of Santa Fe to close the bridge in 2022 (Photo 2).</p> <p><i>Continued on Page 5.</i></p>		
12. Who uses the property? Not in use		
13. Construction Date: 1968 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Known <input type="checkbox"/> Estimated Source: Newspaper article		
14. Setting: <input type="checkbox"/> Suburban <input type="checkbox"/> Rural <input type="checkbox"/> Village <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban If Urban: <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Residential <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public: Park		
15. Relationship to Surroundings: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Similar <input type="checkbox"/> Dissimilar Comments: N/A		

16. Additional Perspective: (Photos, drawing, footprint, etc., indicate north arrow when possible)



Portion of Parcel # 910017966 with Shelby Street Footbridge highlighted.

Source: Office of the Santa Fe County Assessor
 Blue parcel lines are not accurate



17. Surveyor:
 (your name, address, telephone number, and any group affiliation)

John W. Murphey
 Architectural Historian
 Architectural History Services
 505-577-7593/707-583-7819
 John@archhistoryservices.com

For: Current owner:

18. Owner (if known) and other knowledgeable people:

Current owner: Assumed to be the City of Santa Fe, though no deed was located for the property, per Office of the Santa Fe County Clerk

19. Is Property Endangered? Unknown No Yes How?

20. Significance to Current Community: Unknown None Low Moderate High
 Describe: Unknown

21. Other Significance or Information of Interest: (such as historical, legendary, structural, former ownership, etc.)
 See Historical Overview.

22. National or State Register:

Is this property individually listed on a historic register? Unknown No Yes
 If yes: State National
 If 'no' or unknown, do you think this property is eligible for listing? No Yes
 Why? See Evaluation of Historical Status

23. National or State Historic District: City of Santa Fe

Is this property in a historic district? Unknown No Yes
 If yes: Significant Contributing Non-contributing No Status
 Per City of Santa Fe official designation map
 If 'yes', what is the name of the district? State National City of Santa Fe:
 Downtown and Eastside Historic District

24. Supplemental Forms:

None HCPI Detail Form (FORM 2) Continuation Sheets, # pages: _____

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

For HPD Office use only: Please complete HCPI FORM 1 before completing FORM 2		
HCPI No. _____	District No. _____	Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D
1. Name of property: <p style="text-align: center;">Shelby Street Footbridge</p>	2. Location: <p style="text-align: center;">Over Santa Fe River Downtown and Eastside Historic District – Santa Fe</p>	3. Local Reference Number: <p style="text-align: center;">Santa Fe ID: N/A</p> <hr/> 4. County: Santa Fe <hr/> 5. Date of Survey: May 20, 2025
Bridge Data 6. Feature Crossed: Santa Fe River 7. Bridge Type: Pre-cast concrete girder-slab with masonry false spandrel wall 8. Total Structure Length: 38' ± 9. Number of Spans: one 10. Main Span Length: 26' ± 11. Main Substructure: Timber abutment (assumed) and stone abutments and bridge seats 12. Deck Width: 4' ± 13. Railing Type: Steel pipe rail		
14. Designer/Engineer: Unknown Builder/Contractor: New Mexico State Parks and Recreation Commission Force Account Labor		
15. Modifications: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> <u> </u> <input type="checkbox"/> No known modifications #1 Date: Unknown.		

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

For HPD Office use only: <i>Please complete HCPI FORM 1 before completing FORM 2</i>		
HCPI No. _____	District No. _____ NRHP _____ SRCP _____ Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D	
1. Name of property: Shelby Street Footbridge	2. Location: Over Santa Fe River Downtown and Eastside Historic District -Santa Fe	3. Local Reference Number: Santa Fe ID: N/A 4. County: Santa Fe 5. Date of Survey: May 20, 2025

Architectural Description Continued

Setting

The Shelby Street Footbridge crosses the river near the base of Shelby Street in downtown Santa Fe. It is positioned above a stone-lined channel constructed by the Civilian Conservation Corps in the early 1930s. Pedestrian walkways, added in the 1950s during the area’s tenure as a state park, flank the bridge on both the east and west approaches.

The bridge lies within a modified riparian corridor where the river has been straightened and channelized. The surrounding context includes a mix of commercial and governmental buildings, reflecting the area’s urbanization from the mid to late 20th century. Mature cottonwoods, willows, and other riparian vegetation provide shade and visual relief, reinforcing the river’s presence as a natural element in an increasingly dense built environment (Photo 3).

Bridge Details

Superstructure

The bridge consists of two precast concrete girders supporting a cast-in-place or integrally cast slab deck (Photo 4). Each girder measures approximately 3 inches wide by 11½ inches high and is T-shaped, flanged into the slab. A later addition—a concrete beam measuring approximately 8½ inches wide by 9¾ inches high—was installed between the girders for supplemental support; however, the beam exhibits noticeable deflection at mid-span. The bridge spans the river at 26 feet, with a total length of approximately 38 feet including approaches.

The exterior features non-structural concrete curtain walls with a false arch profile. It is clad in local sandstone likely intended to mimic a closed-spandrel masonry arch (Photo 1). These false spandrel walls measure approximately 3 inches wide with a variable height and consist of sandstone blocks set into a concrete bed (Photo 5). The blocks exhibit pronounced horizontal striations or bedding planes that visually differ from the limestone channel walls below (Photo 6).

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

For HPD Office use only:		<i>Please complete HCPI FORM 1 before completing FORM 2</i>			
HCPI No. _____	District No. _____	NRHP _____	SRCP _____	Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D	
1. Name of property: Shelby Street Footbridge	2. Location: Over Santa Fe River Downtown and Eastside Historic District -Santa Fe	3. Local Reference Number: Santa Fe ID: N/A			
		4. County: Santa Fe			
		5. Date of Survey: May 20, 2025			

Similar to a true masonry arch, the false spandrel walls taper toward the center, narrowing from 4 feet at the base to approximately 20 inches at the “keystone”—a small vertical block located at the bridge’s midpoint (Photo 7). This keystone is decorative and non-structural.

Vertical clearance beneath the bridge at mid-span is approximately 73 inches, a limited height that has long raised flood control concerns. In the 1970s, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers identified the bridge for removal due to its inadequate hydraulic capacity.

Substructure

The bridge rests directly on the river embankment, supported by large timber blocks that serve as both abutments and bridge seats.¹ This rudimentary substructure reflects minimal engineering, relying largely on soil mass and timber resistance for lateral stability. The lower abutments and bridge seats are faced with stone for visual effect (Photo 8).

Deck and Approach

The bridge’s deck is formed by the concrete slab. Over time, surface deterioration has exposed the reinforcing steel mat. Near the center of the span, a punch-through has developed, accompanied by widespread concrete delamination.

The 4-foot-wide walkway is bordered on both sides by low sandstone parapets that rise approximately 12 inches above the deck surface (Photo 9). A painted metal pipe railing runs along the edges of the deck, terminating at each end in square masonry end posts approximately 18 inches high, which visually anchor the span.

On the north side, the bridge is approached by a continuation of the concrete slab (Photo 10). Curving stone walls flank this approach, rising from ground level to approximately four feet where they connect with the masonry end posts. On the south side, the original approach was removed to accommodate the widening of the pedestrian path (Photo 2).

¹ Based on a restricted view of the north bank, it is presumed that timber blocks function as the back (or rear) abutment.

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

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1. Name of property: Shelby Street Footbridge	2. Location: Over Santa Fe River Downtown and Eastside Historic District -Santa Fe	3. Local Reference Number: Santa Fe ID: N/A			
		4. County: Santa Fe			
		5. Date of Survey: May 20, 2025			

Condition

The bridge is currently in poor condition and shows multiple signs of structural distress. A large punch-through in the deck reveals corroded reinforcing steel (Photo 11). Significant delamination has weakened the concrete surface, and cracks are evident both longitudinally and transversely beneath the deck (Photo 12). Efflorescence—white mineral deposits indicating moisture infiltration—is visible across the underside (Photo 12). These combined issues have compromised the structural integrity of the bridge, leading to its closure by the City of Santa Fe in 2022.

Historical Overview

Introduction

In late April 1968, Lela Wilson—a 28-year-old Clovis native and secretary for the New Mexico State Parks and Recreation Commission—stood at the center of the recently completed Shelby Street Footbridge. A State Parks photographer captured an image of Wilson, her bouffant hairstyle silhouetted, as she looked out across the Santa Fe River (Fig. 1). The pair had likely walked from the Commission’s new office at 141 East DeVargas Street to take the photo.

The bridge at the time marked the western terminus of Santa Fe River Park and likely replaced a rustic log span erected by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1934. The new structure, designed to blend with the CCC-built limestone river walls, continued to serve the same essential function: carrying pedestrians across the Santa Fe River. It fulfilled this role until 2022, when ongoing deterioration and substandard construction led officials to deem it a public hazard.

Imagining a River Park

At the start of the Great Depression, New Mexico—like many states—did not have a single state park. With the infusion of New Deal funding and the labor of the Civilian

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

Historic Preservation Division, New Mexico Department of Cultural Affairs

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Conservation Corps (CCC), the state was able to launch its first formal park program.² In August 1933, Governor Arthur Seligman issued an executive mandate establishing the New Mexico State Park Commission, enabling the state to use CCC labor for park development.

One of these recreation areas fulfilled a long-held ambition to create a linear parkway along the Santa Fe River. The ambitious but ultimately unproductive 1912 Santa Fe Preliminary Plan envisioned a “Paseo del Rio” boulevard and park stretching along the river from Camino Cabra westward to the future St. Francis Drive (Fig. 2).³ With no funding attached to the proposal, the plan failed to materialize.

The river parkway concept resurfaced in the 1920s, when the City of Santa Fe, the Chamber of Commerce, and civic groups such as the Kiwanis and Lions Clubs launched a campaign to establish the Santa Fe River Park.⁴ Although preliminary drawings were prepared, progress stalled due to resistance from property owners unwilling to sell land fronting the river. With the arrival of the CCC, the project resurfaced. An editorial in the *New Mexican* stated the federal program put a “chance in front of [civic leaders] to secure one of the most beautiful parks in the country.”⁵

Building a Riparian Park

In Santa Fe, the Civilian Conservation Corps undertook two state park projects concurrently. In the Sangre de Cristo foothills, CCC crews developed Little Tesuque Canyon—later designated Hyde Memorial State Park—into an all-season recreation area with campsites, stone shelters, a lodge, and a ski run.⁶ At the same time, in the heart of the city, crews from the same camp—headquartered in what would become the Casa Solana subdivision—constructed an urban riparian park along the Santa Fe River, transforming the corridor into a landscaped public space that served both recreational and flood-control purposes. Early plans had envisioned the two parks being connected.

² John W. Murphey, “Santa Fe Historic Context Study: 1610-1986,” Document prepared for the City of Santa Fe (Revised June 4, 2021), 55.

³ *Ibid.*, 56

⁴ “Alleged Catron Obstructs Park Development; Matter to Come Before Council on Wednesday,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, April 24, 1934, 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ Mary Wright Coan, “The New Deal in Little Tesuque,” *New Mexico Magazine* (July 1934), 24-25+.

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The river park would extend nearly two miles along the Santa Fe River, starting at the lower reservoir and moving downstream to a point near St. Francis Drive. Unlike earlier efforts, federal officials assisted in acquiring riverfront parcels, resulting in more than 90 quitclaim deeds made to the State of New Mexico by local landowners.⁷

The project’s primary goal was to straighten and channelize the river for flood control. Until this point, the river routinely flooded, damaging homes and property along its course. A secondary goal was to create an urban recreation area, with a concentration of amenities placed between College Street (now Old Santa Fe Trail) and Shelby Street.

Work on this section began in the spring of 1934 and was largely completed by the end of the year. It included obliterating an ancient acequia and channeling its flow along a raised stone-lined ditch.⁸ By August, CCC crews had constructed stone retaining walls reaching Shelby Street, where they were in the process of erecting a rustic log footbridge over the river.⁹

The bridge provided access to the newly built State Parks Commission headquarters on East DeVargas Street. This Pueblo Revival-style building (Fig. 3), funded with New Deal money, served as the administrative offices for the state park system. It was demolished in the 1960s to make way for a parking lot serving the new State Land Office Building.

A Rustic Log Bridge

An article in the *New Mexican* described the new footbridge as made of large yellow pine logs “nearly two feet in diameter.”¹⁰ Though brief, the description fits what would later be called the National Park Service rustic style of park architecture.

As a CCC project, the design of park structures and furnishings was overseen by the regional office of the National Park Service. During this period, the NPS guided park development through a series of design portfolios that covered nearly every aspect of planning and construction. The effort began in 1934 with a slim volume showcasing

⁷ David Kammer, “Santa Fe River Park Channel,” National Register of Historic Places nomination (Washington, D.C.: June 2008), 9-18, bibliographical entry.

⁸ “Alleged Catron Obstructs Park Development,” 2.

⁹ “Work on River Park,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, August 13, 1934, 1.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

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representative park structures and expanded—under the direction of NPS architect Albert H. Good—into an encyclopedic three-volume set published in 1938.¹¹

As articulated by Good, the Park Service design philosophy sought to promote “through the use of native materials in proper scale, and through the avoidance of severely straight line and over sophistication. . . the feeling of having been executed by pioneer craftsmen with limited hand tools . . . [and by doing so achieve] sympathy with the natural surroundings and with the past.”¹²

For small footbridges in parks, Good recommended the use of logs or stone, noting that such materials “appear more indigenous to our natural parks than spans of steel or concrete.”¹³ His chapter on footbridges included photographs illustrating what the Park Service considered exemplary design. Many of these were rustic log spans, which likely influenced the design of the original Shelby Street footbridge. Unfortunately, no known photographs of that bridge survive, making it difficult to determine its actual appearance.¹⁴

Completing the Park

The erection of the massive retaining walls extended westward beyond the Don Gaspar Avenue Bridge to a point near St. Francis Drive, and was largely completed by 1937. The State Parks Commission envisioned developing the river corridor westward through downtown into a formal park, while preserving the area east of College Street in a more

¹¹ John W. Murphey, “Maryland State Parks: A Survey of Selected State Parks in the Eastern and Western Regions,” (Report prepared for the Maryland Historical Trust, January 31, 2019), 58-59.

¹² Albert H. Good, *Park and Recreation Structures, Part I- Administration and Basic Service Facilities* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Interior, National Park Service, 1938), 176.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ No photographs of the bridge were located at the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives (Catie Carl, email communication to John W. Murphey, May 8, 2025). Inquiries with the City of Santa Fe, the New Mexico State Archives, and New Mexico State Parks regarding park records, drawings, and photographs produced no results. It is possible that relevant materials may exist in Record Group 35 at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), College Park, Maryland. However, the short turnaround time and limited budget for this project did not allow for a NARA records search.

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natural state.¹⁵ How much of this vision was ever fully realized remains unclear. With the major structural work completed, the CCC devoted its final years to installing picnic tables along the grassy strip lining the river between College and Shelby Streets.

By the end of the Depression, New Mexico had established four state parks built by the CCC—but the improved Santa Fe River area was not among them.

Santa Fe’s Unofficial Park

After its completion, the *Santa Fe River State Park*—as it was referred to in the press—fell into a jurisdictional gray area. The park encompassed state-owned land, including the riverbed and narrow linear strips along both banks, but was bordered by city-owned and private properties. These overlapping boundaries created administrative uncertainty, and as a result, the park remained unofficially designated for nearly two decades.

After the conclusion of World War II, the Commission began efforts to improve the Santa Fe River Park. According to a 1947 newspaper account, State Parks Superintendent Charles Roehl planned to enhance the urban stretch by developing footpaths, building rock tables and benches, installing drinking fountains, and planting grass.¹⁶ The project was a joint undertaking by the State Parks Commission, the State Highway Department, and the State Penitentiary, which provided prison labor for the work.

The Santa Fe River Park continued to receive incremental improvements but did not achieve official state park designation until the late 1950s. As of 1954, the New Mexico State Parks Commission operated six officially designated parks: Bluewater Lake, Bottomless Lakes, City of Rocks, Conchas Lake, Kit Carson, and Hyde Park. The Santa Fe River Park, by contrast, remained an unpublicized strip of state-owned land—maintained by the state but not formally recognized or promoted as part of the official park system.

¹⁵ “City and Vicinity Given Preference in Park Work, Says Supervisor,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, March 30, 1937, 4.

¹⁶ “Roehl Tells of Plans to Make River Parkway a Place of Beauty,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, July 15, 1947, 1.

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In its 1954 annual report, the New Mexico State Parks Commission acknowledged the unusual status of the river park running through the heart of the capital. The report flagged the unresolved question of whether the area should be formally designated a state park or incorporated into the South Capitol Complex—a growing cluster of state government offices located south of the river.¹⁷ While the matter remained unsettled, the Parks Commission continued to maintain the river corridor.

In 1957, the Santa Fe River Park was officially designated as a state park. The original unit encompassed only the north bank of the river, extending approximately 0.4 miles from Delgado Street on the east to Shelby Street on the west.

Park Beautification

Beautification efforts began as early as 1953, when state park employees planted lawn and installed picnic tables along the stretch between Cathedral Place and what is now Paseo de Peralta.¹⁸ This initial work was followed by improvements farther west, including raising the streambed and importing topsoil to level the embankments.

Following the park’s official designation, a series of additional improvements were undertaken. The stone retaining walls were raised to accommodate more fill (Fig. 4), new picnic areas with concrete tables and benches were added, turf was planted throughout, footpaths were laid, and signage installed—including an Official Scenic and Historic Marker framed in rustic brown logs. None of the archival sources reviewed—including newspaper accounts and records from the State Parks and Recreation Commission—mention the replacement of the original CCC-built log bridge.

By 1967, a year before the current footbridge was erected, the park featured 18 designated picnic sites (“picnic pits”) and a continuous lawn along the length of its corridor.¹⁹ Ongoing maintenance focused on repairing older log tables and removing dead trees and overgrowth.

¹⁷ New Mexico State Park Commission, *Your State Parks – 1954* [annual report] (Santa Fe: New Mexico State Park Commission, n. pag.); New Mexico State Parks and Recreation Division Records, Folder: "Parks & Recreation Department Publications," New Mexico State Records Center and Archives, Santa Fe, New Mexico (hereafter PRDP).

¹⁸ “A Good Start” [editorial], *Santa Fe New Mexican*, December 2, 1953, 4.

¹⁹ New Mexico State Parks and Recreation Commission, “Welcome to New Mexico State Parks” [foldout brochure], (Santa Fe: State Parks and Recreation Commission, 1967), n. pag., PRDB.

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A Replacement Bridge

The current footbridge was constructed in early 1968, likely replacing an earlier structure—possibly the original timber span built during the CCC era. A February 1968 aerial photograph shows two footbridges crossing the river at the foot of Shelby Street (Fig. 5). By the following year, only the present bridge remained (Fig. 6). The bridge was erected by park personnel under the supervision of Joe B. Rodriguez, then the area supervisor for Northern New Mexico.

The bridge’s design marked a departure from earlier CCC-era standards. Thirty years prior, National Park Service architect Albert H. Good had advised against constructing stone footbridges with a “thin and structurally weak appearance.”²⁰ He recommended a more substantial parapet wall rising above the deck, arguing that such designs maintained a more appropriate “park character” than those capped with “thin ... and more formal cap stone.”²¹ The new bridge, by contrast, featured a tapering false spandrel and a low parapet wall—elements that contradicted Good’s guidance and lent the structure a more urban profile.

Its completion was marked with a photograph in the local newspaper (Fig. 1), although the project went unmentioned in the State Parks and Recreation Department’s internal newsletter. It did, however, appear in the background of two promotional films produced in the late 1960s to advertise New Mexico’s state parks (Fig. 7).

The State Park’s Final Years

The 1960s enhanced park was marketed by the state as an urban recreational amenity, focused on strolling and picnicking. A 1977 park brochure described the space as “a serene retreat in the center of Santa Fe for visitors and local residents.”²²

The New Mexico State Park and Recreation Commission continued to maintain and improve Santa Fe River State Park through the 1990s. In 1999, the City of Santa Fe and the State of New Mexico entered into a joint powers agreement to support the park’s

²⁰ Good, *Park and Recreation Structures, Part I*, 192.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² New Mexico State Parks and Recreation Commission, “New Mexico State Parks: Santa Fe River & Hyde Memorial” [foldout brochure], (Santa Fe: State Parks and Recreation Commission, 1977), n. pag., PRDB.

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ongoing maintenance and future development.²³ The work was reviewed by the City’s Public Works Committee and ultimately evolved into the River Trail and Greenway Improvement Project.

The City hired Wilson and Company to prepare a master plan for the park’s future development. This work included expanding the park westward and constructing pedestrian and bicycle trails from Delgado Street to Defouri Street under the Santa Fe River Downtown Urban Trail Project. As part of the project, the width of West Alameda Street was reduced to allow for a wider and more gradual embankment from Defouri Street to St. Francis Drive. Improvements to the park have continued through the use of Capital Improvements Program funds.

When a Footbridge Becomes a Liability

Calls to remove the Shelby Street Footbridge began in 1983, following a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers project to channelize a section of the Santa Fe River west of Don Gaspar Avenue using heavy concrete retaining structures. The Corps’ initiative was prompted by an earlier flood study predicting that a 100-year event could submerge Shelby Street and surrounding areas under five feet of water.²⁴ The Corps had been involved with the Santa Fe River since 1957, when a major flood destroyed numerous bridges and riverfront businesses.

As part of the study and following project, the Corps identified several bridges in need of improvement or replacement, including the Old Santa Fe Trail and Defouri Street vehicular bridges, as well as pedestrian crossings like the Shelby Street Footbridge.²⁵ Each of these bridges had been determined to have a flow capacity of 2,100 cubic feet per second or less—insufficient to withstand a 100-year flood event.

As a cost-sharing arrangement, the City of Santa Fe was responsible for replacing the bridges. However, nearly all available funding was directed toward the replacement of the Old Santa Fe Trail Bridge, a high-volume crossing the city had identified in 1975 as a top priority. Its replacement turned into a costly and protracted effort that took several

²³ Edward Vigil (City of Santa Fe), phone message to John W. Murphey, May 30, 2025; various notices of public meetings published in the *Santa Fe New Mexican*, 1998–2000.

²⁴ Sam Atwood, “River Flood Plan Under Attack,” *The New Mexican*, May 5, 1983, A-7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, “River Plan Presented Wednesday,” *The New Mexican*, May 3, 1983, A-7.

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years to complete. With most of the city’s budget directed to the Old Santa Fe Trail crossing, other river spans were not affected by the project, including the Shelby Street Footbridge.

The Shelby Street Footbridge avoided replacement for another 40 years. However, in 2022, with its concrete deck visibly deteriorating, the City of Santa Fe permanently closed the bridge in August after a civil engineering assessment raised safety concerns.²⁶ The structure has remained closed since.

In November 2024, the Santa Fe Governing Body approved the use of \$240,000 in state capital outlay funds to design a new structure to replace the aging and structurally deficient bridge.²⁷ This HCPI is a step in the process of replacing the bridge.

²⁶ Nathan Lederman, “Deteriorating Footbridge in Downtown Santa Fe Closed,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, October 15, 2022, A-1 and A-4.

²⁷ Carina Julig, “Contract Extends Capital Outlay Appropriations,” *Santa Fe New Mexican*, November 19, 2024, A-8.

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Evaluation of Historical Status

The Shelby Street Footbridge was designated a Non-Contributing resource in the 2008 Santa Fe River Park Channel National Register of Historic Places district nomination. That nomination encompassed the immediate park development along the river, including the CCC-era stone retaining walls and other features. The rationale for the bridge’s non-contributing status was that it fell outside the district’s period of significance, ending in 1940, and that it did not stylistically fit with the National Park Service design aesthetic of the New Deal era.

While the nomination did not reference Albert H. Good’s guidance, it is clear—based on his principles quoted above—that the bridge does not embody the Park Service Rustic ideal. Its lean profile and pipe railing lack the form and naturalistic materials associated with that design philosophy.

Given its previous designation, and its poor quality of construction, the recommendation is to designate the Shelby Street Footbridge a Non-Contributing structure to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District.

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Documentation Note

No CCC or National Park Service architectural drawings related to the original bridge or associated structures were located in local archives. However, such materials may exist within Record Group 35 (Civilian Conservation Corps) at the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) in College Park, Maryland. Additionally, no drawings or plans were found for the 1950s state park improvements or for the construction of the 1968 footbridge. The following collections were reviewed, with relevant materials noted below:

Local Collections

New Mexico State Archives and Records Center

A. Civilian Conservation Corps, New Mexico District Records

Citation Number: Collection 1959-030

Dates: 1935–1942

B. New Mexico State Parks and Recreation Division Records

Citation Number: Collection 1979-010

Dates: 1939–[ongoing]

C. Governor Arthur Seligman Papers

Collection: 1959-102

Series: Correspondence – New Mexico Park Commission

Citation: Series [not specified], Folder 70, Box 3

D. Governor Clyde K. Tingley Papers

Collection: 1959-104

Series: Correspondence – New Mexico State Park Commission

Citation: Series [not specified], Folder 45, Box 2

E. Map Collection

Citation Number: Collection 1959-296

Series: Santa Fe – City

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F. New Mexico Historical Film Collection

- **Santa Fe River State Park**
Citation Number: Collection 1959-000, Item 11472, Serial No. 11472
- **Santa Fe River State Park**
Citation Number: Collection 1959-000, Item 21628, Serial No. 21628
- **New Mexico State Parks**
Citation Number: Collection 1959-000, Item 11553, Serial No. 11553
Date: Circa late 1960s

City of Santa Fe, Land Use Division

No records

City of Santa Fe, Parks and Open Space Division

No records

New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

National Register of Historic Places files (transferred to NMCRIS)
 Backing information for the Santa Fe River Park Channel NRHP missing

New Mexico Office of the State Engineer Library

Santa Fe/Santa Fe River Materials
 No material relevant to the park or bridge

New Mexico State Parks

No records or knowledge that Santa Fe River Park was a state park

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Illustrations



Figure 1: Lela Wilson stands at the center of the recently completed Shelby Street Footbridge, April 1968. Courtesy of the Santa Fe New Mexican.

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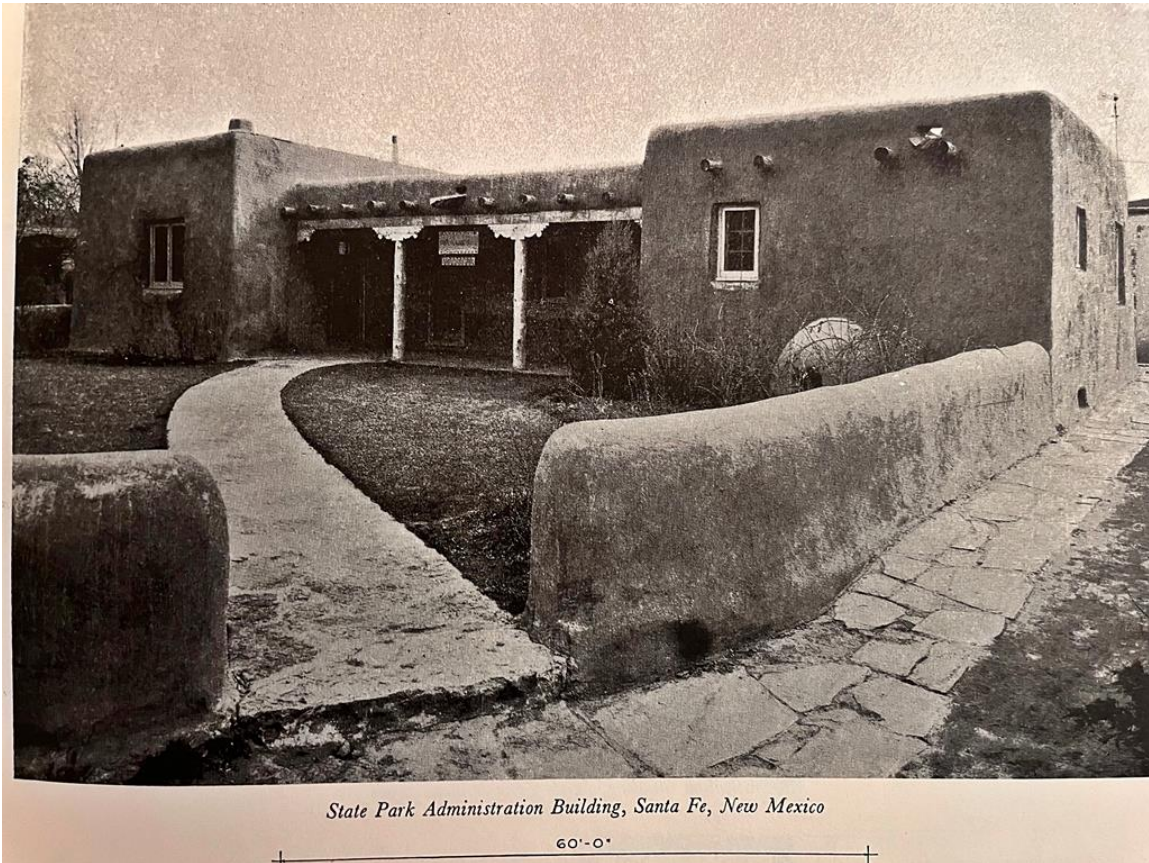


Figure 3: Original State Park Administration that sat on the south side of the river across CCC-built log footbridge. The building was destroyed in the early 1960s create parking for the new State Land Office Building. Courtesy of Princeton Architectural Press.

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Figure 4: Contemporary photograph showing where the river retaining walls were extended in the early 1950s to create the Santa Fe River Park.

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Figure 5: February 2, 1968, aerial photograph showing two bridges at the Shelby Street crossing. A. is the bridge erected 1968; B. is likely the CCC -constructed built in 1934.

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Figure 6: February 27, 1969, aerial photograph, showing the completed current bridge.

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Figure 7: Still taken from late 1960s State Parks and Recreation Areas Commission promotion film with Shelby Street Footbridge in the background. Repeat shot taken June 1, 2025. Original photograph of the Courtesy of the New Mexico State Archives Records Center.

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Survey Photographs

(All images taken by John W. Murphey on May 20, 21, 22, and June 1, 2025.)



Photo 2: South approach. Camera facing north.

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HCPI No. _____	District No. _____ NRHP _____ SRCP _____ Criteria <u> </u> A <u> </u> B <u> </u> C <u> </u> D	
1. Name of property: Shelby Street Footbridge	2. Location: Over Santa Fe River Downtown and Eastside Historic District -Santa Fe	3. Local Reference Number: Santa Fe ID: N/A
		4. County: Santa Fe
		5. Date of Survey: May 20, 2025



Photo 3: River and channel context. Camera facing west.

Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI) Detail Form (FORM 2)

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Photo 4: Bridge superstructure: A: exterior false spandrel walls, B. girder-slab beams C. reinforced center beam. Camera facing north.

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Photo 5: Interior stonework of false spandrel wall.

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Photo 6: Exterior stonework of false spandrel wall.

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Photo 7: Crown of false spandrel wall with “keystone” highlighted.

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Photo 8: Substructure at south embankment stone abutment and bridge seat, and what appears to be timber support. Camera facing south.

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Photo 9: Deck and railing. Camera facing south.

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Photo 10: North approach. Camera facing south.

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Photo 11: Deck showing punch-through, delamination, and exposed rebar mat.

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Photo 12: Deterioration to structural members, including severe delamination and exposed rebar on the beam, along with longitudinal cracking and efflorescence across the slab.