

# City of Santa Fe, New Mexico

# memo

**DATE:** January 13, 2026

**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, *GM*

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

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**2025-011725-HDRB, 1302 Cerro Gordo Rd., Downtown & Eastside Historic District, Non-contributing, Dr. Mavrick Lobe, owner, proposes to construct a 3,698 sq. ft. free-standing residence to a height of 22'-0" where the maximum allowable height is 15'-6". An exception is requested to 14-5.2 (D)(9) for exceeding the allowable height.**

**REFERENCE ATTACHMENTS (Sequentially):**

**CITY SUBMITTALS**

- District Standards & yard wall & fence standards.
- Historic Inventory Form
- Zoning Review Sheet
- Other: [height calculation]

**APPLICANT SUBMITTALS**

- Proposal Letter
- Site Plan/Floor Plan
- Elevations
- Photographs
- Other: [exception criteria]

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION:**

Staff finds that the exception criteria have been met and recommends approval of the exception to section 14-5.2(D)(9) to exceed the maximum allowable height of the residence. Otherwise, staff recommend approval of the other elements of the application as they comply with 14-5.2(D) General Design Standards for all Historic Districts, and 14-5.2(E) Downtown and Eastside Historic District Design Standards.

### **Sample motions:**

Up to two motions will be required in this case.

- a. In case 2025-011725-HDRB, for 1302 Cerro Gordo, approve/deny the exception to 14-5.2(D)(9) to exceed the maximum allowable height of the residence, finding that the exception criteria have/have not been met
- b. In case 2025-011725-HDRB, for 1302 Cerro Gordo, approve/deny the elements of the project that do not require an exception.

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

The property lies within the River and Trails Archaeological Review District. See Chapter 14, SFCC, Article 14-3.13(B)(2). There may be archaeological concerns associated with this project, and archaeological clearance may be required.

### **BACKGROUND & SUMMARY:**

#### **Streetscape:**

This section of Cerro Gordo Road consists of various sloped sites, with those on the north at a higher grade than the road and those in the south at a lower grade. The houses vary in proximity to the road, ranging from directly on the street to about thirty feet from the road. The street is lined with a variety of fences, from wire or coyote latillas, and stucco, adobe, and rock walls. The houses vary with both flat and pitched roofs, and very low single-story homes and taller two-story homes. The predominant styles are Spanish Pueblo Revival and Vernacular. Stucco tends to be lighter shades of brown with paint in red, brown, or white. The pitched roofs are metal with either a grey or red tone. The lots are long and narrow, with housing at the front and secondary housing at the rear of the lots. The taller residences range from sixteen feet to 28 feet in height and are located to the east and rear of the subject property. The lower residences range from eleven feet to fifteen feet in height. The older structures to the rear of the lots on the south of the road average at about fourteen feet in height. The newer construction in the rear of the lots averages twenty feet in height.

#### **Site Description:**

The site holds two lots, located in the Downtown and Eastside Historic District. Lot 1 features a non-contributing single-family residential structure of approximately 1,498 sq. ft. in a Spanish Pueblo Revival style, constructed in 2021. The site also includes a non-historic coyote fence and stuccoed wall. The existing residence on Lot 1 and the yard walls are exempt from this request. Lot 2 is to the rear of the property and sits below street level grade by approximately forty feet. Lot 2 is a vacant lot with access provided from Lot 1.

### **PREVIOUS CASE SUMMARIES:**

#### **ARC:**

No archaeological clearance has been issued for this property.

**HDRB:**

The existing front residence on this property was stuated as non-contributing under case 2021-003829-HDRB, and was partially demolished and remodeled under case 2021-004367-HDRB

**ADMINISTRATIVE:**

The existing front residence on this property received administrative approvals for changes to case 2021-004367-HDRB under cases 2021-004632-ADMIN, 2022-005144-ADMIN, 2023-007317-ADMIN, 2023-007415-ADMIN, 2023-007455-ADMIN, and 2025-010083-ADMIN. The changes included meeting the conditions of the Board approval, yard wall, and stucco changes.

**APPLICANT'S REQUEST:**

The applicant proposes the following exterior alterations:

- 1) Construct a 3,698 square foot single-family residence in a Spanish Pueblo Revival Style to a height of 22'-0" where the maximum allowable height is 15'-6". An exception is requested to section 14-5.2(D)(9) to exceed the maximum allowable height.
  - a. The windows on the north street-facing elevation will be divided light in Iron Ore color. Windows and doors under portals on the south and on the east, and west elevations will be single-lite. This is similar to those of the existing house.
  - b. The entry door will be wood with hand-forged hardware.
  - c. The garage door will be a metal raised panel design.
  - d. Stucco color has not yet been determined, but will most likely match the other residence in a synthetic "buckskin".
  - e. Exterior lighting will consist of Rose Onyx Rectangular Wall sconce 16"H x 8" W x 4" deep to match the front house.
  - f. Canales will be metal-lined wood trough units.
- 2) Install a 10'-0" wide 5'-0" high metal and wood electric gate at the entrance to the back side of the lot at the driveway access.

**EXCEPTION CRITERIA AND RESPONSES:**

Exception to section 14-5.2(D)(9): The applicant requests an exception to exceed the maximum allowable height for the residence.

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

Applicant Response: The proposed new home is approximately 200 feet from Cerro Gordo Rd and approximately 40 feet below the street level of Cerro Gordo, making it virtually invisible. The home is designed in a Spanish Pueblo Revival Style, which matches the overall streetscape of Cerro Gordo Road in this section.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. The residence height will not be obvious from Cerro Gordo Road due to the lot being behind another residence and well below street level.

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

Applicant Response: We are requesting a height exception in order to minimize the building footprint due to setback and lot coverage requirements. The lot is a long, narrow lot, which is popular in this area. Due to the narrow lot and the setback requirements, the new structure will need to be two stories to accommodate the needs of the homeowner and meet city requirements. While most of the residences are lower, making the maximum allowable height 15'6", there is a 2-story structure immediately adjacent to our property and directly above our property across Cerro Gordo Road; there is also another 2-story structure. The two-story residence across the street is above the grade of the street and is very visible, whereas this residence is below grade and will not be very visible from the street.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. Due to the size of the lot, buildable area, and the setback requirements, the design of the structure best meets the code requirements.

- (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: The home will be built to resemble a traditional adobe home. All historic district building codes will be strictly adhered to. The home will be a recent Santa Fe style as defined under section 14-5.2(E)(2).

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. Due to the size of the lot, buildable area, and the setback requirements, the Spanish Pueblo Style design of the structure best meets the code requirements.

- (iv) *Are due to special conditions and circumstances which are peculiar to the land or structure involved and which are not applicable to other lands or structures in the related streetscape;*

Applicant Response: The lot is long and narrow, making the buildable area narrower once the setbacks are taken into consideration. In addition, the lot is only allowed 40% lot coverage. With the guest house already constructed, the main residence will need to adhere to a footprint that is smaller to prevent going over the lot coverage allowance. This lot is approximately 40' below the grade of the street, which means that if it is constructed at a height that is greater than the historic allowed 15'6", it will still not be to the height of the grade of the street. If the home is constructed to the zoning code requirement of 24', it would still be below the grade of the street as well. The house is also located behind another structure, which will further impede the visibility of the new construction.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. Due to the size of the lot, buildable area, and the setback requirements, the design of the structure best meets the code requirements.

- (v) *Are due to special conditions and circumstances which are not a result of the actions of the applicant; and*

Applicant Response: The lot is long and narrow, making the buildable area narrower once the setbacks are taken into consideration. In addition, the lot is only allowed 40% lot coverage. With the guest house already constructed, the main residence will need to adhere to a footprint that is smaller to prevent going over the lot coverage allowance. This lot is approximately 40' below the grade of the street, which means that if it is constructed at a height that is greater than the historic allowed 15'6", it will still not be to the height of the grade of the street. If the home is constructed to the zoning code requirement of 24', it would still be below the grade of the street as well. The house is also located behind another structure, which will further impede the visibility of the new construction.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. The lot is well below grade and would allow for a taller structure to be built without a large impact on the streetscape.

- (vi) *Provide the least negative impact with respect to the purpose of this section as set forth in Subsection 14-5.2(A)(1).*

Applicant Response: The house will be located below the grade of the street, approximately 200 feet from the street, behind another structure. The impact of the 22' structure will be minimized by these factors.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. The grade does allow for a discrete taller structure.

## **RELEVANT CODE CITATIONS:**

### **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.
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- (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.

**(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:

**(9) Height, Pitch, Scale, Massing, and Floor Stepbacks**

The height, pitch, *scale*, and massing of any *structure* in a historic district, as defined in this section, shall be limited as provided for in this section, unless further restricted within this chapter.

**(a) Applicability**

**(c) Height**

- (ii) In exercising its authority under this section, the board shall limit the height of *structures* as set forth in this section. Heights of existing *structures* shall be as set forth on the official map of *building* heights in the historic districts.

- A. If a proposed *building* has a parapet, the façade shall not be in excess of two (2) feet of the average of the height of the façades in the *streetscape*.
- B. If the proposed *building* has a pitched roof, the ridge height of the proposed *building* shall not be in excess of two (2) feet of the average of the ridge height of the pitched roofs in the *streetscape*.
- C. *Yardwalls* and fences shall be limited to a height that does not exceed the average of the height of other *yardwalls* and fences in the *streetscape*.
- D. Pursuant to Section 14-7.4(C), the height of any other *structure* shall be limited to the allowable *building* height within the applicable *streetscape*, as defined in this section. (Ord. No. 2002-37 § 26)
- E. The height and dimension of signage are as set forth in Section 14-8.10(H).
- F. The board may increase the allowable height for proposed *buildings* and additions located on a sloping site where the difference in the natural *grade* along the *structure's* foundation exceeds two (2) feet. In no case shall the height of a façade exceed four (4) feet above the allowable height of the applicable *streetscape* measured from natural or finished *grade*, whichever is more restrictive. This increase in height shall be constructed only in the form of *building* stepbacks from the *street*.

**(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.