

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

**Case # 2025-10683-HDRB**

**Address** – Shelby Street Footbridge (100 block East Alameda Street)

**Agent’s Name** – Wonderstone LLC

**Owner/Applicant’s Name** – City of Santa Fe

THIS MATTER came before the Historic Districts Review Board (“Board” or “HDRB”) for hearing on July 8, 2025.

**BACKGROUND**

The Shelby Street Footbridge is located on the south side of East Alameda Street at the base of Shelby Street. The HDRB has given the footbridge contributing status to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District; see Case # 2025-10683-HDRB. 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 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, concrete girders, 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 bridge is directly on the river embankment, 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 2025 Historic Cultural Properties Inventory, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was going to remove the bridge in the 1970s due to its inability to handle the 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 an evaluation issued by Wilson & Company, the presence of brown efflorescence near the hole is an indication that the reinforcement in the top flange is rusting, losing its strength, and providing less capacity to support the travel way. Wilson & Company’s report further shows there is damage to the double-tee beam, which is a load-bearing structure of reinforced concrete. Wilson’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 and Inspections Division Manager, Bobby Padilla, also found the overall condition of the structure to be unsafe and in very poor condition.

The Applicant proposes to demolish the Shelby Street Footbridge, with the objective of building a new bridge. 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.

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

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

1. Historic Preservation Division Staff reviewed the application and related materials and information submitted by the Applicant for conformity with applicable Santa Fe City Code (“SFCC”) requirements and provided the Board with a written report of its findings (“Staff Report”), which evaluates the factors relevant to the application.
2. Historic Preservation Division Staff Recommendation: Staff found that the exception criteria for SFCC Section 14-5.2(D)(1)(a) for demolition of a contributing structure had been met; therefore, Staff recommended approval of the application with the condition that the reconstruction of the bridge simulates the appearance of the existing bridge and reuses the stones of the existing bridge, as the application complies with SFCC Sections 14-5.2(D), General Design Standards for all Historic Districts; 14-5.2(E), Downtown and Eastside Design Standards; and 14-3.14, Demolition of Historic or Landmark Structure.
3. The project is subject to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C), Regulation of Significant and Contributing Structures.
4. The project is subject to the requirements and general design standards set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(D), General Design Standards.
5. The property is located in the Downtown and Eastside Historic District and is subject to the district design standards set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(E).

#### **Exception Request:**

6. Staff determined that the demolition of this structure will jeopardize its contributing status, contrary to SFCC Section 14-5.2(D)(1), and that approval of the demolition request would require an exception according to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b).
7. The Applicant requested this exception in the application.
8. To obtain an exception, the Applicant must conclusively demonstrate that the following exception criteria in SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b) have been met: (i) Do not damage the character of the district; (ii) Are required to prevent a hardship to the applicant or an injury to the public welfare; and (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.

9. Based on the information set forth in the Staff Report and exhibits, and the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing, the Board agrees with Staff's finding that the Applicant has conclusively demonstrated that all three exception criteria have been met:
  - a. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(i), the Board finds that granting the exception would not damage the character of the district because the present condition of the bridge detracts from the character of the district, and replacement of the bridge in a similar design would remedy this;
  - b. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(ii), the Board finds permitting the demolition is required to prevent a hardship to the Applicant or an injury to the public welfare because the condition of the bridge is poor, replacement is required for the safety of the community and pedestrians in the City park; and
  - c. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(iii), the Board finds that the proposed demolition will strengthen the unique heterogeneous character of the City by providing a full range of design options to ensure that residents can continue to reside within the Historic Districts, because the reconstruction of the bridge to a functioning condition will allow residents, including disabled residents, to make full use of the City park.
10. The Board finds that the Applicant has conclusively demonstrated that all of the exception criteria have been met.

**Demolition Criteria:**

11. Under SFCC Sections 14-2.6(C), 14-3.14 and 14-5.2(C)(3)(a), the Board has authority to review and approve or deny all applications for new construction and exterior alteration and demolition of structures in the historic districts in accordance with the standards set forth in SFCC Chapter 14.
12. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-3.14(C), the Staff provided to the Board information on a structure, the pedestrian bridge on the 100 block of East Alameda Street at the base of Shelby Street, under consideration for demolition.
13. Under SFCC Section 14-3.14(G)(1), in determining whether to approve a request for demolition in a historic district, the Board must consider whether the structure is of historic importance, whether the structure is an essential part of a unique street section/block front, whether the street section/block front will be reestablished by a proposed new structure, and the state of repair and stability of the structure:
  - a. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-3.14(G)(1)(a), the Board finds that the structure is of historic significance.
  - b. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-3.14(G)(1)(b), the Board finds that the structure is an essential part of a unique street section, and that this street section will be reestablished by a proposed structure with a similar appearance.
  - c. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-3.1(G)(1)(c), the Board finds that the structure under consideration is unsafe and unusable, with a failing T-beam, holes in the structure, and other deteriorated components; it is also inaccessible to the disabled.
14. Based on the Staff Report and exhibits, and the information and evidence presented at the hearing, the Board finds that all applicable requirements for Board review have been met.

15. Based on the Staff Report and exhibits, and the information and evidence presented at the hearing, the Board finds that the Applicant has demonstrated that the criteria under SFCC Section 14-3.14(G)(1) support the demolition of this structure.

**CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

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

1. The Board has the authority to review and approve the application.
2. The Board grants the exception requested in the application.
3. The Board approves the application to demolish the footbridge on the 100 block of East Alameda Street at the base of Shelby Street.

**IT IS SO ORDERED ON THIS 12<sup>th</sup> DAY of MAY, 2026, BY THE HISTORIC DISTRICTS REVIEW BOARD OF THE CITY OF SANTA FE.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Cecilia Rios  
Chair

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Date

FILED:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Geraldyn Cardenas  
City Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Frank Ruybalid  
Assistant City Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date