

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

Case # 2025-10684-HDRB

Address –Shelby Street Footbridge (100 block of 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 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. This parkway was developed for the visual enhancement of the nature of the site.

The footbridge was constructed in 1968 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, which gives the footbridge an appearance of rock construction in an arch form. The entrance to the bridge is bordered on each side by low sandstone parapets about 12 inches high, and the metal railing is embedded in square masonry end posts at about 18 inches high. The entrance on the north of the bridge has curved stone walls up to four feet high 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.

Due to damage to the bridge from poor construction methods, frequent flooding and deterioration, the footbridge has been closed since 2022. There are holes in the walkway of the bridge. 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. Consulting engineers reported there is damage to the double-tee beam, which is a load-bearing structure of reinforced concrete, and due to this and other decay the bridge is both structurally deficient and functionally obsolete. The existing travel way is less than 4 feet wide, which is too narrow to meet Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. The City Building Official, Bobby Padilla, also found the overall condition of the structure to be unsafe and in very poor condition.

The HDRB gave this pedestrian bridge a “contributing” historic status in Case # 2025-10666-HDRB, and approved its demolition in Case # 2025-10683-HDRB. Both cases were heard earlier in the hearing on July 8, 2025. The Applicant then proposed the following:

- 1) Construct a replacement footbridge for the Shelby Street Footbridge. The new bridge will be brought up higher to the bank of the river and will be extended from 37'3" long to 42 feet long. It also will be widened from 4 feet wide to 6 feet.

The first proposed design is metal with no stone façades and a concrete approach. The railing height would be raised from 18 inches to 3'10". The pilasters or end caps would be constructed of CMU and stucco, and it would have a concrete deck and painted metal rails. An exception is requested to Santa Fe City Code Section 14-5.2(D)(5)(b), which requires, for significant, contributing and landmark structures, that new materials match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities.

A second, alternative design is offered, in the same dimensions, but with a stone façade, brick approach, stone pilasters and end caps, and a brick deck.

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. Land Use Department Staff conducted a preliminary zoning review ("PZR") and determined that the application appears to meet the underlying zoning standards set forth in the Santa Fe City Code ("SFCC").
2. Historic Preservation Division Staff reviewed the application and related materials and information submitted by the Applicant for conformity with applicable SFCC requirements and provided the Board with a written report of its findings ("Staff Report"), which evaluates the factors relevant to the application.
3. Historic Preservation Division Staff Recommendation: Staff found that the exception criteria had not been met by the first design option and recommended denial of the exception to SFCC Section 14-5.2(D)(5)(b) for failure to match the existing material in composition, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. However, the Staff recommended approval of design option 2, which emulates the existing bridge and complies with SFCC Sections 14-5.2(D), General Design Standards for all Historic Districts, and 14-5.2(E), Downtown and Eastside Design Standards.
4. The project is subject to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C), Regulation of Significant and Contributing Structures.
5. The project is subject to the requirements and general design standards set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(D), General Design Standards.
6. 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).
7. Under SFCC Sections 14-2.6(B-C), 14-5.2(A)(1), 14-5.2(C)(2)(a-d & f), 14-5.2(C)(3)(a-b), 14-5.2(C)(4) and 14-5.2(D), the Board has authority to review, approve, with or without conditions, or deny, all or some of the Applicant's proposed design to assure overall compliance with applicable design standards.
8. SFCC Section 14-5.2(D)(5)(b) reads, in part: "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.”

9. The Applicant proposes to construct the bridge in a design (design option 1) that does not match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities.
10. Staff determined that an exception to SFCC Section 14-5.2(D)(5)(b) would be required for approval of the application, and the Applicant requested an exception.
11. To obtain an exception, the Applicant was required to conclusively demonstrate that the three exception criteria set forth in SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b) have been met.
12. 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 not conclusively demonstrated that all 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 damage the character of the district because the 1968 bridge appears to be built of traditional and historic materials, and the new bridge is inconsistent with that appearance;
 - b. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(ii), the Board finds that the exception is not required to prevent a hardship to the Applicant or an injury to the public welfare, because there is no evidence a hardship is solved by creating a footbridge with a modern appearance; and
 - c. Pursuant to SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(5)(b)(iii), the Board finds that granting the exception would not 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 other design options emulate the historic footbridge and solve the unavailability of pedestrian access.
13. The Board finds that the Applicant has failed to conclusively demonstrate that all of the exception criteria have been met with respect to the first design option.
14. Under SFCC Section 14-5.2(C)(3)(b), the Board has the authority to approve an application for alteration or new construction on the condition that changes relating to exterior appearance recommended by the Board be made in the proposed work, and no permit is to issue until new drawings or documentation, satisfactory to the Board, have been submitted.
15. Design option 2, a prefabricated pedestrian bridge with a rock facing, stone pilasters and end caps, a brick approach and brick deck, is consistent with the historic design of the footbridge and the design standards of the Downtown and Eastside Historic District.
16. The information contained in the Staff Report and exhibits, and the testimony and evidence submitted at the hearing, establishes that all applicable requirements for Board review as herein described have been met.
17. The information contained in the Staff Report and exhibits, and the testimony and evidence submitted at the hearing, establishes that all applicable design criteria have been met, subject to the conditions imposed by the HDRB, as described below.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

Finding of Fact and Conclusions of Law – Remodel or New Construction

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1. The Board has the authority to review and approve the application.
2. The Board denies the exception requested in the application for construction of the footbridge in design option 1.
3. The Board approves the project in design option 2, with the rock façade as set forth in the application, as recommended by Staff, with the following additional conditions:
 - a. The final plans will correspond as closely as possible with the existing bridge;
 - b. That no artificial stone facades will be used;
 - c. That the stone of the existing bridge be reused where possible;
 - d. That the pattern of the replacement rock match as closely as possible the existing rock, and that it be laid as closely as possible with the same pattern and points in between and texture as the existing;
 - e. That the Applicant and its contractors will, as much as possible, avoid damage or removal of the rocks that line the river channel;
 - f. The new dimensions of the 6-foot width, the 42-inch-high railing, and additional length are approved to meet the Americans with Disabilities Act requirements and proportional balance of the bridge;
 - g. The final design drawings showing that these conditions have been met shall be submitted to the Staff for approval; and
 - h. If the Staff is uncertain about the final design it shall be presented to the HDRB for approval

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

Cecilia Rios, Chair

Date

FILED:

Garlyn Cardenas
City Clerk

Date

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Frank Ruybalid
Assistant City Attorney

Date