

City of Santa Fe, New Mexico

memo

DATE: May 12, 2026

TO: Historic Districts Review Board Members

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

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

2025-011550-HDRB. 539 Garcia St. Downtown & Eastside Historic District. Contributing. Geisler Projects, agent for Matt and Penelope Rembe, owners, proposes to construct a 108 sq. ft. addition to a height of 10'-6", where the maximum allowable is 10'-10". A 206 sq. ft. portal to a height of 10'-3". Replace windows and doors on the residence, convert the garage to a casita by altering the garage door to a window, and installing a new window, and reroof, and stucco both buildings. An exception is requested to section 14-5.2(D)(2)(d) for constructing an addition within 10'-0" of the primary façade.

REFERENCE ATTACHMENTS (Sequentially):

CITY SUBMITTALS

District Standards & yard wall
& fence standards.

Historic Inventory Form

Zoning Review Sheet

Other: [previous case documents]

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)(2)(d) for constructing an addition within 10' of the primary façade. Staff also recommends 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:

- a. In case 2025-011550-HDRB, for 539 Garcia Street, approve/deny the exception to 14-5.2(D)(2)(d) for constructing an addition within 10' of the primary façade, finding that the exception criteria have/have not been met
- b. In case 2025-011550-HDRB, for 539 Garcia Street, approve/deny the elements of the project that do not require an exception.

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

The property lies within the Historic Downtown Archaeological Review District. See Chapter 14, SFCC, Article 14-4.2(D)(1). There may be archaeological concerns associated with this project, and archaeological clearance may be required.

BACKGROUND & SUMMARY:

Streetscape:

The property at 539 Garcia Street sits about 115 feet to the east of Garcia Street, behind another residence on a narrow dirt private drive. The private driveway is considered the streetscape for the property since the property does not have street frontage. The private drive accesses nine residences and consists of low yard walls, coyote fencing, and chain link fences on the property lines and dirt driveways to the sides of the buildings. The houses are newer Spanish Pueblo Revival Style buildings that sit within seven feet of the property line. Two of the neighbors have wood trellises for seating areas in the rear and sides of the homes, and two others have covered protruding porches. Each property has a portal over the front door. Five properties' garages are still in use as garages, while the others have been converted into living space. One property is multi-family, while the remaining are all single-family. All the properties have mature trees and vegetation.

Site Description:

The single-family residence at 539 Garcia Street is listed as contributing with the south elevation, including the portal as the primary façade to the Downtown and Eastside Historic District. The accessory structure is designated as contributing to the south elevation as the primary façade, excluding the non-historic materials and the garage door material.



Figure 1: Property setting

The Spanish Pueblo Revival-style home was constructed in the 1940s using adobe as part of the Garcia family compound. A rear addition was constructed sometime between 1958 and 1966 (see aerials provided in 2025 HCPI) in a ranch style at a lower height than the original structure. After 1978, a bay window addition was constructed on the west elevation, along with two window opening changes. According to the 2025 Historic Cultural Properties Inventory (HCPI), the south elevation porch appears to have been reconstructed at an unknown date due to the types of materials used in the construction, including milled plates and precut corbels. The windows are a combination of wood, aluminum, and vinyl. The residence is one of the original homes located in the Jose Dolores Garcia Estate Subdivision (lot 2), which was developed to accommodate Garcia family members from land deeded from the Garcia family ranch.



Figure 2: South Elevation of Residential Structure

In the northwest corner of the lot sits an adobe one-car garage in Pueblo-Revival style consistent with the house style, also dating to the 1940s. The windows are wood sash windows, with one being a three-over-one window and the other a one-over-one window.



Figure 3: South Elevation of Accessory Structure

PREVIOUS CASE SUMMARIES:

ARC:

No archaeological clearance has been issued for the property.

HDRB:

Under case 2025-010489-HDRB on June 24, 2025, the HDRB retained the main residence as contributing and designated the south facade as primary, and designated the garage as contributing with the south facade as primary, excluding the non-historic materials and the garage door material.

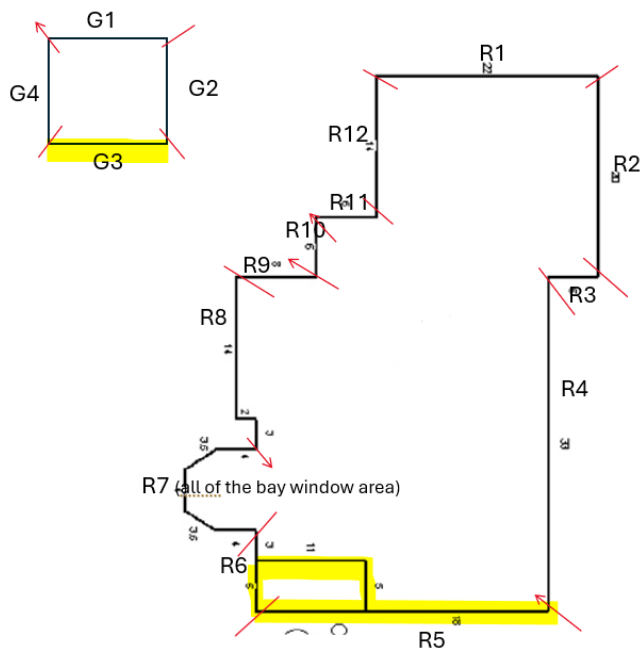


Figure 5: Façade Diagram

ADMINISTRATIVE:

On December 29, 2010, staff approved a re-roof with modified bitumen and replacement of five canales with metal-lined wood canales in the residence.

APPLICANT'S REQUEST:

The applicant requests the following:

Residence:

- 1) Remove the 1980s addition of the bay window on the west elevation.
- 2) Construct a 33 sq. ft. addition to a height of 10'-6" where the maximum allowable is 10'-10". Exceptions are requested to section 14-5.2(D)(2)(d) for constructing an addition within 10' of the primary façade.
- 3) Construct a 309 sq. ft. portal to a height of 10'-3". The portal will be within 10' of the primary façade. An exception is requested to section 14-5.2(D)(2)(d) for constructing an addition within 10' of the primary façade.
- 4) Replace windows and doors on the non-primary facades of the residence. The windows on the north and east elevations will match the existing three-over-one window pattern, except for the smaller windows, which will match the existing smaller windows in a two-over-one pattern. The new window on the south wall will be a two-over-one pattern similar to the existing three-over-one primary façade windows. The primary façade windows are not being replaced. They are being repaired only. Under the requested west elevation portal is a larger 8'-11" wide by 6'-6" high window, which is requested as a seven-over-three pattern. This pattern matches the window requested as part of the garage conversion below. The smaller windows under the west portal are two over one.
- 5) Repair the window on the primary façade of the residence.
- 6) Refinish and repair the door on the primary façade of the residence.
- 7) Repair posts and corbels of the south portal, which is part of the primary façade. The posts and corbels will remain in the same style as exists currently. No replacement is requested at this time.
- 8) Reroof the residence (approximately 2,305 sq. ft.) using modified bitumen to match the existing roof. There shall be no publicly visible rooftop appurtenances, and no roofing material shall be on the top of the parapets; it shall be flashed on the interior of the parapets. There shall be no changes to existing skylights, canales, solar, mechanical, line sets, or other rooftop appurtenances at this time.
- 9) Stucco in cementitious La Habra "Kokanee" to match the existing stucco.
- 10) Paint Benjamin Moore "Simply White" millwork trim and portal details and window trim.
- 11) Stain the portal posts and corbels to match the existing in "Dark Walnut".

Garage:

- 12) Alter the garage door to a window. The window will be a larger 8'-11" wide by 6'-6" high window with a seven-over-three pattern to match the window under the west portal of the residence. The garage door is on the primary façade; however, it is excluded from the primary façade.
- 13) Replace the two existing windows and install a new window on the non-primary façades.

- 14) Reroof the garage (approximately 403 sq. ft.) using modified bitumen to match the existing roof. There shall be no publicly visible rooftop appurtenances, and no roofing material shall be on the top of the parapets; it shall be flashed on the interior of parapets.
- 15) Stucco in cementitious La Habra “Kokanee” to match the existing stucco.
- 16) Paint Benjamin Moor “Simply White” millwork trim and portal details and window trim.

Property:

- 17) Hardscape by installing a gravel driveway, concrete landings, and steps as necessary.



Figure 6: Rendering of requested remodels

EXCEPTION CRITERIA AND RESPONSES:

Exception to 14-5.2(D)(2)(d): The applicant requests an exception to “*Additions are not permitted to the side of the existing footprint unless the addition is set back a minimum of ten (10) feet from the primary façade*”.

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

Applicant Response: The proposed addition replaces an existing non-conforming bay window that is already located within close proximity—approximately 1–2 feet—from the primary south façade.

Rather than introducing a new encroachment, the project maintains a similar footprint while replacing an incompatible architectural element with a simplified massing that is consistent with traditional forms found within the district.

This approach improves the architectural integrity of the structure and avoids introducing additional visual impact along the primary façade. The work reinforces, rather than diminishes, the character of the district.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. The non-historic addition of the bay window area is not in keeping with the architectural style of the home. The new addition will

be in keeping with the architectural style of the original home and will not damage the character of the district.

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

Applicant Response: The requested exception is necessary because the existing non-conforming condition occupies a location within 10 feet of the primary façade, and relocation of this portion of the structure is not feasible without a substantial impact on the overall building.

Shifting the addition outside of the 10-foot setback would require:

- Significant reconfiguration of the existing floor plan
- Disruption to the relationship between the south and west façades
- Potential loss of usable interior space and functional layout

The proposed design resolves the existing condition in place, providing a functional and architecturally appropriate solution without introducing greater impacts to the structure.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. The additional 60 sq. ft. of the addition will make the area where the bay window is currently a more livable space for the residence. The space is currently not a livable space.

(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 project replaces an incongruous and stylistically inconsistent bay window with a massing that aligns with the traditional architectural vocabulary of the district. By maintaining the general footprint while improving form and proportion, the design supports the layered and evolving character of the Historic Eastside, where buildings reflect a combination of preservation, adaptation, and compatible reinvestment.

This approach reinforces the district’s heterogeneous character by correcting a non-conforming element rather than introducing new inconsistencies.

Staff Response: Staff finds that this criterion is met. The applicant reviewed with staff other design options, which did not improve the flow or use of the residence. The addition in this location minimizes the impact of an addition while improving the usability of the residence long term.

(iv) *Due to special conditions and circumstances which are peculiar to the land or structure*

Applicant Response: The existing bay window condition—constructed by a previous owner—is located unusually close to the primary façade and is not consistent with the historic architectural character of the structure.

The constrained relationship between the south and west façades limits the ability to relocate this portion of the building without a disproportionate impact.

These conditions are specific to this structure and not generally applicable to other properties.

(v) *Are not the result of actions of the applicant*

Applicant Response: The existing non-conforming bay window was constructed before the current ownership and is not the result of actions taken by the applicant.

The current proposal seeks to correct this pre-existing condition through a more historically appropriate design.

(vi) *Provide the least negative impact with respect to the purpose of this section*

Applicant Response: The proposed design represents the least impactful solution by:

- Maintaining a footprint similar to the existing condition
- Avoiding further encroachment toward the primary façade
- Replacing an incompatible element with one that is architecturally appropriate

Relocating or removing the addition entirely would result in greater disruption to the structure and would not achieve the same level of architectural coherence.

Staff Note: Criteria iv, v, and vi are not required. The applicant did respond to them. They are included here for more information from the applicant regarding their exception request.

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.

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

(1) Purpose and Intent

It is intended that:

- a. Each *structure* to be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical *development*, such as the addition of conjectural features or architectural elements from other *buildings*, shall not be undertaken.
- b. Changes to *structures* that have acquired historic *significance* in their own right shall be retained and preserved, recognizing that most *structures* change over time;

- c. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a *structure* be preserved; and
- d. New additions and related or adjacent new construction be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the original form and integrity of the historic *property* and its environment would be unimpaired.

(D) General Design Standards for All H Districts

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

(1) General

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

(2) Additions

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

additional *story* is to be placed upon an existing contributing *structure*, that footprint may be no greater than fifty percent of the footprint of the existing *structure*, subject to the provisions of Subsection A(1) above. For the purposes of this paragraph, an additional *story* shall not exceed twelve (12) feet from the existing rooftop to the highest point of that *story*.

(5) Windows, Doors, and Other Architectural Features

- (a) For all facades of significant and *landmark structures* and for the primary facades of contributing *structures*:
 - (i) Historic windows shall be repaired or restored wherever possible. Historic windows that cannot be repaired or restored shall be duplicated in the size, style, and material of the original. Thermal double-pane glass may be used. No opening shall be widened or narrowed.
 - (ii) No new opening shall be made where one presently does not exist unless historic documentation supports its prior existence.
 - (iii) No existing opening shall be closed.
- (b) For all façades of significant, contributing, and *landmark structures*, architectural features, finishes, and details other than doors and windows shall be repaired rather than replaced. In the event *replacement* is necessary, the use of new material may be approved. The new material shall match the material being replaced in composition, design, color, texture, and other visual qualities. *Replacement* or duplication of missing features shall be substantiated by documentation, physical, or pictorial evidence.

(6) Roofs

The existing roof styles and materials shall be maintained or replaced in kind if necessary. The addition of dormers or other roof features should only be considered when they are an existing or historical feature of the *structure*.

(8) Archaeological Resources

Discovery of archaeological resources made during the historic districts review process shall be referred to the archaeological review committee.

(9) Height, Pitch, Scale, Massing, and Floor Step backs

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

The following sections identify specific areas and specific *projects* subject to this section. Planning and land use department staff shall determine whether or not properties are included within this section. (Ord. No. 2007-45 § 30; Ord. #2020-22, § 16)

- F. When the proposed *building*, *yard wall*, or fence is located in a *streetscape* that includes no *buildings*, *yard walls*, or fences, the

height of the proposed *building* shall not exceed sixteen (16) feet. *Yard walls* and fences in this *streetscape* shall not exceed five (5) feet in height.

(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 above the average of the ridge height of the pitched roofs in the *streetscape*.
- C. *Yard walls* and fences shall be limited to a height that does not exceed the average of the height of other *yard walls* 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 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* step-backs from the *street*.

(d) Pitch

If the determined *streetscape* includes over fifty percent of *buildings* with pitched roofs, the proposed *building* may have a pitched roof. A pitched roof is defined as a gable, shed, or *hipped roof*. The pitch of the roof shall match the predominant pitch extant in the *streetscape*.

(e) Scale

The height of a proposed *building* or addition, its façade length, and its roof form and pitch shall appear to be in proportion to the height, façade length, and roof form and pitch of *buildings* in the applicable *streetscape*, or the *building* on which the addition is proposed.

(f) Massing and Floor Step backs

The Board may require that upper floor levels be stepped back, to carry out the intent of this section; provided that the board in making such determinations shall take into account whether the height of the proposed *building*, *yard wall*, fence, or proposed step back of upper floor levels is in harmony with the massing of the applicable *streetscape* and *preservation* of the historic and characteristic visual qualities of the *streetscape*. The Board shall also require that the *publicly visible* façades of the *structure* be in conformance with Subsections 14-5.2(E) through (H), and in meeting those requirements, may require that different floor levels be stepped back.

(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 waterspouts, 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 a 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.