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August 12, 2026

Mesa Historic Preservation Board
c/o Mesa Planning Division
55 N. Center Street
Mesa, Arizona 85201

RE: Appeal of the denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness at 260 N. Center Street, Case ADM26-00657 (denied August 10, 2026); related permit PMT26-01976; prior approved Certificate of Appropriateness ADM25-00154 (June 11, 2025)

Chair and Boardmembers,

I am appealing the denial of three exterior details on our home at 260 N. Center Street in the West Second Street Historic District. My husband and I own and are restoring 260 N. Center, and we live next door at 250 N. Center. I am the sole point of contact for this matter. I grew up in Mesa, my mother has lived here for more than thirty years, and we are raising our two daughters here. We bought a house that had sat vacant and in disrepair, and we have put our own money and labor into bringing it back.

The condition of the house is documented, and it is documented by the City as well as by us. The Certificate of Appropriateness the City issued on June 11, 2025 records that the failed windows had allowed water infiltration and termite damage to the structure, and it approved abatement of asbestos and lead paint. The appraisal the prior owner commissioned in October 2024, before we owned the property, records damaged stucco, wood trim, and eaves, with photographs captioned “DAMAGED WOOD TRIM” and “DAMAGED EAVES,” and flags possible lead-based paint and possible asbestos. Staff inspected the house and agreed in writing on June 10, 2025 that the material was damaged beyond repair.

The three items on appeal are these:

1. The gable field. The decorative dog-eared wood elements could not be saved. Staff agreed on site in June 2025 that they were damaged beyond repair, and the City’s letter of August 5, 2026 states that certain elements, including the dog-ear gable trim, were determined to require replacement. In their place, the smooth or sand finish stucco that the same Certificate of Appropriateness approves for the walls of this house is carried across the gable field, four feet high by sixteen feet wide. That approval authorizes these elements to be “retained or replaced in-kind or with a similar more durable material.” Stucco is that more durable material, and it is the material the City already approved on this building.

2. A low pony wall. Thirty-four inches tall and thirteen feet six inches long, fixed to the new porch posts rather than to the 1945 structure, and removable without loss of historic material. It provides basic safety and privacy from a street that has changed substantially since 1945.

3. Softly rounded edges beneath the porch beam. A radius of approximately six inches by ten inches at the top corners of the porch openings. They echo the original interior arched openings of this house, which a third-party appraiser photographed in April 2025, before our work began.

None of the three changes the footprint, the roofline, or any feature the City itself identifies as character-defining for this property. Attachment 1 of the June 11, 2025 approval states that the character-defining elements of this Ranch-style house are the shallow front porch and the broad front facade. Neither is altered by any of these three items.

I would also ask the Board to weigh one fact about the record. On June 11, 2025, the Historic Preservation Office evaluated this project against the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and marked every applicable Standard "Consistent," including Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, the same five now cited against us. Only Standard 8, archaeological resources, was marked not applicable. That checklist is Attachment 2 to the approval and is reproduced as Appendix B.

Exhibit A responds to each of the five Standards the City cites. I respectfully ask the Board to reverse the denial and approve all three items. If the Board concludes that a dog-eared profile should be re-established in the gable, I ask in the alternative that it be approved in a durable, non-wood material as the Certificate of Appropriateness already contemplates, rather than in dimensional wood on a house with documented termite damage.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Alicia Rodriguez
Owner, 260 N. Center Street

EXHIBIT A

SUMMARY OF STAFF CONCERNS AND OWNER RESPONSES

The denial rests on Mesa Zoning Ordinance Section 11-74-3(C) and on five of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, numbers 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6, as set out in the City's letter of August 5, 2026. Each is answered below.

One point applies to all five. On June 11, 2025 the Historic Preservation Office reviewed this project and marked every applicable Standard "Consistent" on Attachment 2 of the Certificate of Appropriateness, including all five now cited. Standard 8 alone was marked not applicable. For the gable item, which was squarely within the scope described in that approval, the August 10, 2026 decision reverses the City's own finding on the same permit. The pony wall and the rounded edges were not described in the June 2025 project description, so for those two items this is a first review rather than a reversal, and we ask the Board to judge them on the merits under Standards 9 and 10, both of which the City has marked "Consistent."

A second point applies to the gable item. The approved project description in Attachment 1 states that the decorative dog-eared wood elements in the gables "will be retained or replaced in-kind or with a similar more durable material." The letter of August 5, 2026 describes that same approval twice, and each time the durable material clause is absent: staff "previously approved replacement of these elements with in-kind materials," and the June 11, 2025 approval "authorized replacement of specified features with in-kind materials and designs." The operative approval is broader than the later description of it, and we relied on the operative approval. Both documents are before the Board as Appendices A and B.

Secretary of the Interior's Standard 1

> *A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.*

Staff comment. The dog-ear trim and the porch's simple design, including its square posts, are defining characteristics of the house and of this architectural style generally, and should not be substantially altered.

Owner response. Standard 1 is about keeping a historic building in continued use with minimal change to its defining characteristics. Two points follow. First, the City has identified the defining characteristics of this property, and they are the shallow front porch and the broad front facade, not the gable ornament. Second, staff itself wrote on June 10, 2025 that extending the porch "will ensure that the building will have continued use and functionality," and the City approved extending that porch from roughly four feet to six feet in depth and further north across the facade. The pre-purchase appraisal sketch records the original porch at about four feet deep. If a fifty percent increase in the depth of the one porch feature the City calls character-defining satisfies Standard 1, a thirty-four inch wall and a six-inch curve on that same new porch cannot fail it.

Secretary of the Interior's Standard 2

> *The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.*

Staff comment. The distinctive dog-ear gable trim and simple porch design are visible in the property's 2002 historic inventory photograph and appear to be original to the structure; their removal or substantial

alteration should be avoided, and replacement materials should replicate the historic design and appearance as closely as possible.

Owner response. The staff comment rests on a 2002 photograph and on the words “appear to be.” When the Historic Preservation Officer sent us that photograph on June 10, 2025, he described it in his own words as “a photo of the home from the National Register nomination (2002).” A 2002 image establishes that the trim was present in 2002. It does not establish that the trim was original to the 1945 construction, and the City has offered no other evidence of origin. In the same sentence the Officer notes that the building was determined to contribute to the district even with its previous alterations. As to the material itself, there was nothing left to retain. Staff agreed after a site visit that it was damaged beyond repair, and the August 5, 2026 letter states that the dog-ear gable trim was determined to require replacement. What replaced it is the durable material the approval authorizes.

Secretary of the Interior’s Standard 3

> *Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.*

Staff comment. Changing or removing the dog-ear gable trim could create an inaccurate representation of the property’s historical design, and adding wider porch columns, a pony wall, or rounded or arched porch features would be atypical of the house’s architectural style and could create a false sense of history.

Owner response. Standard 3 guards against a viewer being misled into thinking an invented feature is original historic fabric. The rounded edges are a radius of roughly six inches by ten inches on new porch framing, plainly new work on a plainly new porch. No observer would take them for a 1945 feature. They are also not borrowed from another building. They repeat an arched form this house already had: the appraisal prepared for our lender, effective April 3, 2025, photographed the original interior of this dwelling and its living room, dining room, and kitchen each show a rounded arched opening. Those photographs are Appendix E, and they were taken by a third party before our work began. Beyond this house, the City’s own contributing property list for this district catalogs numerous contributors in styles defined by the arch, among them 148 N. Macdonald (Mission Revival), 136 W. 2nd Street and 215 N. Robson Street and 204 N. Macdonald (Spanish Eclectic), 128 N. Macdonald (Spanish Revival), and 46 W. 2nd Street (Pueblo Revival). Attachment 1 of our own approval describes this district’s architectural character as “eclectic and diverse.” Most directly of all, the house immediately next door at 250 N. Center Street, built the same year and classified by the City as contributing, has arched porch openings that are original to its 1945 construction and have never been altered. The City reviewed that property in 2023 and recorded that its front facade would remain unchanged. A rounded opening on a 1945 house on this block is therefore not invented and not borrowed from another building or another period. It is original fabric fifty feet away, on a property the City has reviewed and preserved. We do not argue that a National Folk house and a Ranch house share one design vocabulary. We argue that a form which existed here in 1945, which the City protects as original next door, and which this house already had inside it, cannot create a false sense of historical development at a few inches of radius on plainly new porch framing. Finally, Standard 3 was marked “Consistent” for this project on June 11, 2025.

Secretary of the Interior’s Standard 5

> *Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a historic property shall be preserved.*

Staff comment. The dog-ear gable trim and simple porch design are distinctive architectural features and examples of craftsmanship associated with this house and its architectural style; removal or replacement with a substantially different design would be inconsistent with this standard.

Owner response. Standard 5 protects features that can be preserved. This one could not be. The City agreed to that twice in writing, in June 2025 after inspecting the house and again in August 2026. The pre-purchase appraisal photographs, taken in October 2024 before we owned the property, are captioned "DAMAGED WOOD TRIM" and "DAMAGED EAVES," and the City's own approval records that failed windows had allowed water infiltration and termite damage to the structure. We are preserving the features the City actually identified as character-defining, the shallow front porch and the broad front facade, and we have replaced the failed elements in the durable material the approval permits.

Secretary of the Interior's Standard 6

> *Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials.*

Staff comment. Historic features should be repaired whenever feasible; where deterioration makes repair impracticable, replacement features should match the original in design, color, texture, visual appearance, and, where possible, material.

Owner response. Standard 6 permits replacement where the severity of deterioration requires it, and it qualifies the matching requirement with the words "where possible." The City applied exactly that qualification to this house. On June 10, 2025 the Historic Preservation Officer wrote that under staff's interpretation of in-kind, "other (sometimes more durable) materials are allowed to be used," and the approval issued the next day authorized these elements to be "retained or replaced in-kind or with a similar more durable material." That is the authorization we relied on. Requiring dimensional wood instead, on a building the City's own record describes as having sustained termite damage, would set up a repeating failure and a recurring cost for every future owner. Stucco is durable, it is already approved across this building, and it is the material the approval contemplates. If the Board would prefer a dog-eared profile in the gable, we ask that it be approved in a durable non-wood material such as fiber cement or cellular PVC, finished to match, which is what "a similar more durable material" means in practice.

Consistency

We are not asking to be treated better than our neighbors. We are asking to be treated the same, and the clearest comparison is the house we live in. 250 N. Center Street was built in 1945, sits on this same block, is classified by the City as contributing to this same district, and has arched porch openings that are original to its construction and have never been altered. We did not build them. When the City reviewed that property in 2023 under Case ADM23-00081, it approved a rear addition and recorded that the north, east, and south facades of the existing house would remain unchanged. We are not claiming that case approved new front-facade work; none was proposed. We are pointing out something we think matters more. The City looked at a 1945 contributing house on this block with original arched porch openings, described its character-defining features, found the work before it consistent with every applicable Standard, and left those arches in place as fabric to be preserved. A form the City preserves as original at 250 cannot be a false sense of history at 260.

Two smaller points of the same kind. Attachment 1 of the 250 approval describes that house as one that "lacks high-style detailing" and calls the simplicity of its design unique within the district, which the City treated as a virtue. At 260, the presence or absence of applied decorative trim has become the basis for

denial under five Standards. And the pre-purchase appraisal photograph of 260 N. Center taken in October 2024 shows a picket fence and gate already standing along this property's front line, so a low barrier at the street edge is not a new idea here either.

Request

Read against their own text, and against the City's own approval for this property, the five cited Standards do not prohibit these three details. Each is small, non-structural, and reversible. We respectfully ask the Board to reverse the denial and approve all three items, and in the alternative on the gable item, to approve a durable non-wood replacement profile with the material identified in the Board's motion.