Historic Preservation Board Report

CASE No.: **ADM26-00657**	CASE NAME: **260 N Center St (COA Appeal)**
Appellant:	Alicia Rodriguez
Appellant Legal Counsel:	N/A
Location of Request:	260 N Center St
Site Size:	0.174 acres (7579.44 sq. ft.)
Existing Zoning District:	DC – Downtown Core with HD – Historic District Overlay
General Plan Designation:	Downtown
Council District:	District 4
City Staff:	Matthew Kriegl, Historic Preservation Officer
Hearing Date / Time:	September 1, 2026 / 5:00 p.m.
Request:	Consider an appeal of a Decision of the Historic Preservation Officer issued on August 10, 2026, regarding the denial of a Certificate of Appropriateness ("COA") for the installation of unpermitted gable and porch details
Staff Recommendation:	DENY the appeal and UPHOLD the Historic Preservation Officer's Decision

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Board deny the appeal and uphold the Historic Preservation Officer's decision to deny the requested modifications to the 2025 Certificate of Appropriateness (ADM26-00657).

A. Factual Background

The Subject Property is located at 260 N Center St within the West Second Street Historic District (the "District") which has a period of significance from 1883 to 1959. The zoning designation for the Subject Property is Downtown Core ("DC") with an Historic District ("HD") overlay. This house was constructed in 1945 and is classified as contributing to the District.

The request by the applicant includes alterations to a COA approved in June 2025 (described below), including the installation of arches on the front porch, construction of

a small pony wall along the front porch, and complete removal of the dog-ear trim from the gables.

On June 11, 2025, the applicant received a COA to rehabilitate the original structure and construct a small, one-story rear addition (Exhibit 01). The approved work included replacing the roof, front door, damaged windows, and other elements that were damaged beyond repair.

The applicant was also approved to extend the front porch to six feet in depth and extend it north along the façade. New wood porch columns, matching the existing square posts, were approved to support the revised porch design. All other existing materials were to be retained and, if damaged beyond repair, replaced in-kind, including the dog-ear trim in the gables and the gable vents.

In conjunction with the work approved through the 2025 COA, the applicant also planned for interior and exterior abatement of the entire home, including the removal of asbestos and lead-based paint and plumbing work.

Over the past several months, the applicant was in contact with staff regarding proposed revisions to the 2025 COA. Below is a summary of discussions between the applicant and staff, regarding the 2025 COA and the request to modify it, wherein staff explained that the proposed alterations were not appropriate, would not comply with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* (the "Standards"), and therefore did not meet the criteria for administrative approval.

1. **May 28, 2025:** Staff received an application from the applicant's husband for the 2025 COA at 260 North Center.

2. **June 9, 2025:** Based on previous conversations with the applicant, staff sent correspondence to the applicant regarding the proposed scope of work and project description for the 2025 COA (Exhibit 04). Staff proposed all the following: (a) the then-entire home be abated for lead and asbestos, (b) the existing rear addition be removed and replaced with a new addition at roughly the same location, (c) the roof be repaired as needed and the shingles replaced, (d) the decorative dog-eared wood elements in gables be retained or replaced in-kind, (e) other wood trim be repaired or replaced in-kind, (f) damaged stucco be replaced with smooth stucco, (g) windows (all either damaged or not original) be replaced, (h) front porch be extended and deepened (for continued functionality), (i) new porch columns be installed on the extended porch to match existing (square posts), (j) new sliding glass door be installed at the side of the house, and (k) new door be installed to replace the existing nonoriginal front door.

   The applicant responded with their own proposal that was substantially the same as staff's but noted: "The decorative dog-eared wood elements in the gables will be

possibly replaced in-kind, if they can be found to be made with material that will be weatherproof" (Exhibit 04).

Staff responded by noting the need to "ensure that that gable treatment either remains intact or is replaced appropriately," to which the applicant responded that they would "prefer not to have the gables as they serve no purpose other than aesthetics [sic] but if we have to replace every few years due to weathering that is an expense we do not want to incur," and questioned the gables originality to the house (Exhibit 04).

3. **June 10, 2025:** Staff responded to the applicant by indicating, "There will always be a need to strike a balance with buildings located within historic districts. No two buildings are the same and each is therefore treated based on its own specific merits (design, integrity, location, etc.) and specific situation. The balance here is to weigh the continued use of the building with retention of historic character defining features and material with overall impacts to the historic district as a whole." Staff also noted that "In this case, the extension of the porch will ensure that the building will have continued use and functionality. However, since so much of the other decorative features on this building have deteriorated beyond repair, the intact historic features/material of the home (such as decorative features in the gables) have achieved greater importance and should not be removed or altered" (Exhibit 04).

   Staff then let the applicant know that the wholesale removal of the gable treatments did not meet several of the Standards (1, 2, or 3), essentially to retain character defining materials and features and to repair rather than replace (or remove completely) materials and features that have been damaged. And that the applicant was free to replace the damaged material with a more durable material as long as the look remained the same (Exhibit 04). Staff also noted that in 2002, despite all the previous alterations, the house was determined to be contributing to the Historic District as part of the National Register nomination inventory form (Exhibit 07).

   Staff then told the applicant that the project would be administratively approved on the stipulations outlined in the 2025 COA. Staff followed with, "Staff understands that during the renovation/remodel of a historic building, unforeseen issues may arise. If there are questions about the details of the COA and/or the materials, please let me know and I would be happy to help you find a solution that is both historically appropriate and compatible as we work through this project" (Exhibit 04).

   The applicant responded: "Thanks Matt, Looking forward to receiving the CoA and getting started. I appreciate all your help" (Exhibit 04).

4. **June 11, 2025:** An approved COA was granted to the applicant (Exhibit 01) based on the approved plans submitted by the applicant (Exhibit 02).

Upon receiving the approved COA, the applicant responded with: “Thank you Matt ! This process was so much enjoyable than my last experience so I’m really appreciative !” (Exhibit 08).

5. **March 31, 2026:** The applicant reached out to staff to request to add arches and permanently remove the “dog ear decorations” (Exhibit 04).

6. **April 6, 2026:** Staff was appreciative of the update, but noted that, “Unfortunately, as previously discussed, the wholesale removal of historic material and the addition of unsubstantiated architectural features/design is inappropriate and does not meet our review criteria for approval” (Exhibit 04).

   Staff then indicated that “We may be able to work with you on some of the issues, but arches will not remedy what you have described and the short wall may make things worse. Regardless, these changes are too significant for just a simple sign off. You will need to submit a new application highlighting the proposed changes. But based on what I noted above, unless your project meets criteria, we will not be able to approve it. As always, we are open to discuss your project further so that we may come up with a solution that works for you and that stays within the confines of the review criteria” (Exhibit 04).

   Staff also listed out five Standards the proposed alterations did not meet:
   - A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships
   - The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
   - Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
   - Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
   - Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.

   The applicant responded with: “You got it Matt” (Exhibit 04).

7. **July 9, 2026:** Historic Preservation staff noticed that unauthorized work that exceeded the COA may be underway. A few days later, Historic Preservation staff visited the site to confirm if any unauthorized work was taking place. Upon confirmation, Historic

Preservation staff sent an email to the Building Official indicating that the project at 260 N Center St was not following the approved plans or COA (Exhibit 06).

8. **July 13, 2026:** Staff was told an inspector would visit the site and follow up with any questions (Exhibit 06).

9. **July 22, 2026:** The applicant sent a letter to the Planning Director and Development Services Department Director disagreeing with staff's feedback on the proposed project and requesting modifications to the 2025 COA (Exhibit 09). The applicant also included requests outside the jurisdiction of this Board and the City is processing these through its standard process (Exhibit 09).

   August 4, 2026: Staff conducted an in-person meeting with the applicant lasting approximately one hour. During the meeting, the applicant and staff discussed the proposed modifications to the 2025 COA. The meeting concluded with an understanding of the two available paths forward:

   Option 1: The applicant may submit a new COA application. However, if the scope of work remains unchanged from the current proposal, staff will issue a denial, which the applicant may then appeal to the Historic Preservation Board.

   Option 2: The applicant may attempt to remove her properties from the Historic District.

   Staff committed to providing the applicant with the necessary documentation and procedural instructions for both options (Exhibit 05).

   Following the meeting, the applicant sent an email to staff requesting additional information.

10. **August 5, 2026:** Staff responded to the applicant's email providing all of the requested information and again indicating that the new proposed alterations did not meet Standard 1, 2, 3, 5, or 6 (Exhibit 5). Furthermore, staff described in detail the reason why each element did not meet the particular Standard(s). As possible alternatives for the applicant, Staff also indicated the COA submission requirements and the chapters in the Mesa Zoning Ordinance detailing the process for removing a property from a historic district. Lastly, staff clarified that all building inspections would continue on all permitted portions of the project (Exhibit 05).

11. **August 10, 2026 at 4:17 PM:** The applicant followed up with an additional email requesting further clarification for appealing (Exhibit 05). At this point, however, a formal decision had not yet been issued**.**

12. **August 10, 2026 at 7:40 PM:** Staff responded to the applicant with the official decision letter of the denial of the requested modifications to the COA (ADM26-00657) (the "Decision Letter") (Exhibit 03). Staff also responded to the applicant's requests for information received earlier that day, regarding the appeal process. As stated in the

Decision Letter and analyzed in more detail below, the proposal to modify the 2025 COA was denied because it does not meet Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6.

13. **August 12, 2026:** The applicant submitted her formal appeal of the Decision Letter for ADM26-00657 (Exhibit 05). The applicant also supplied a folder of documents as supporting materials. The appeal and materials submitted by the applicant to staff on August 12 are available to the Board with its agenda for this meeting.

B. City Regulations and Mesa Zoning Ordinance

Section 11-74-3(C) of the MZO outlines the City's review procedures for Certificates of Appropriateness. Section 11-74-3(C)(1) states, "the decision of the HPO shall be based upon compliance of the request with the United States Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" appearing in 36 CFR Part 68 (Exhibit 10). Additional guidelines, as proposed by the Historic Preservation Board and approved by the City Council, may also be used by the HPO, provided the guidelines are not inconsistent with the Secretary's Standards."

C. Summary of the Applicant's Request

As indicated in the COA for project ADM26-00657, the applicant requests to modify the 2025 COA to do all the following:

a) Front Porch Arches: Installation of framed arched features at each porch column to create arched openings across the front porch.
b) Front Porch Pony Wall: Construction of a 34-inch-tall pony wall situated between the columns along the front porch.
c) Gable Trim Removal: Removal of the existing wood dog-ear trim from the gables, and replacement with the previously approved smooth/sand-finish stucco to match the rest of the exterior.

D. US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Staff Analysis

The previously approved rehabilitation work with the 2025 COA allows for substantial replacement of deteriorated and damaged materials where necessary to make the structure safe, habitable, and structurally sound. Staff has not required that all existing historic materials be retained regardless of their condition. Rather, the approved work permits damaged or deteriorated exterior materials to be replaced in-kind or with a similar, more durable material, while maintaining the historic exterior design and architectural character of the residence.

The distinction is important. Replacement of deteriorated materials is not the same as altering the historic design or introducing architectural features that were not present historically. The proposed arches, pony wall, and complete removal of the dog-ear gable trim are not necessary replacements resulting from deterioration. Instead, they

constitute changes to the building's exterior design and architectural character. As a result, these alterations must be evaluated based on whether they retain the property's historic character and are consistent with the Standards.

- **Standard 1 provides that a property shall be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.**

The proposed alterations are inconsistent with Standard 1 because they introduce additional changes to the property's distinctive features and spatial relationships that are not required to accommodate its continued residential use. The previously approved COA already provides for substantial rehabilitation necessary to make the residence safe, habitable, and functional. The proposed arches and pony wall would further alter the configuration and character of the front porch, while removal of the dog-ear gable trim would eliminate an existing distinctive feature. These additional changes are not necessary to accommodate the property's continued residential use and therefore do not represent the minimal change contemplated by Standard 1.

The existing front porch was historically designed with simple square posts and an open character. Adding arches and a pony wall would change the porch's existing configuration and spatial relationship without a demonstrated functional need related to the property's continued residential use. Similarly, removing the dog-ear gable trim would alter the historic exterior design without being required to accommodate the residence's use.

While the approved rehabilitation work under the 2025 COA represents the type of intervention contemplated by Standard 1, the proposed additional alterations go beyond what is necessary to maintain or adapt the residence for continued use. For these reasons, the proposed alterations are inconsistent with Standard 1 and were therefore denied.

- **Standard 2 provides that the historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved and that the removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property shall be avoided.**

The house is a modest 1945 Minimal Traditional/Ranch residence whose character is derived largely from its simple form, modest scale, restrained detailing, and straightforward front porch. Unlike a highly ornamented residence with numerous decorative elements, this house has relatively few exterior features that provide architectural distinction.

The existing dog-eared gable trim treatments are therefore particularly important to the building's historic character. Their complete removal would eliminate an original architectural feature that contributes to the visual identity of the residence.

The proposed arches and pony wall would have the opposite effect: rather than removing an existing feature, they would introduce new architectural elements that change the historic appearance of the porch. The simple square porch posts would no longer read as the primary architectural treatment of the porch, and the pony wall would change the open relationship between the porch and front yard.

The cumulative effect would be a significant change to the character of the primary façade: an original decorative feature would be removed, while new decorative and architectural features would be introduced.

This is fundamentally different from replacing rotted siding, trim, or other deteriorated materials. Replacement restores the building's existing architectural character; the proposed work changes that character. For these reasons, the proposed project is inconsistent with Standard 2 and was therefore denied.

- **Standard 3 provides that 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 elements from other historic properties, shall not be undertaken.**

The proposed arches and pony wall are inconsistent with Standard 3 because there is no evidence that these features were historically present on this residence.

Staff understands that similar features may exist on other historic houses in Mesa or within the same general architectural period. However, the presence of a feature on another historic property does not establish that it was historically appropriate for this particular property.

The house should be understood and rehabilitated based upon its own historic design and physical evidence, rather than by incorporating architectural elements that may be associated generally with other houses.

Adding arches to a porch that historically consisted of simple square posts would give the residence an architectural expression that it did not historically possess. Likewise, constructing a pony wall where the historic porch was open would introduce a feature that is not supported by the property's known historic configuration.

The same principle applies to the proposed removal of the dog-ear gable trim. Removing an original feature and replacing the resulting simplified gables with a different architectural treatment, or otherwise altering the gable design, would obscure the physical evidence of how the house was originally designed.

Standard 3 is particularly relevant here because the proposed changes are based on what may be found on other houses rather than evidence that the features existed on this

house. Historic rehabilitation should not reconstruct or modify a building based on what might have been there when the available physical evidence demonstrates otherwise.

For these reasons, the proposed project is inconsistent with Standard 3 and was therefore denied.

- **Standard 5 provides that distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.**

Again, the dog-ear gable trim treatments are particularly important under Standard 5.

Staff is not asserting that every piece of original exterior material must remain in place regardless of condition. The previously approved rehabilitation specifically allows damaged and deteriorated materials to be replaced. Standard 5 instead addresses the features that contribute to the property's architectural character.

The dog-ear gable trim treatments are one of the few intentional decorative features of this otherwise restrained residence. Their complete removal would eliminate an identifiable element of the original architectural design.

The porch is similarly characterized by its simple square posts and open configuration. While the square posts themselves may be repaired or replaced if deteriorated, their basic design and relationship to the porch should remain. Installing arches changes the character of those posts, while adding a pony wall changes the character of the porch as a whole.

Consequently, the issue is not whether the applicant may replace deteriorated materials. The issue is whether the replacement or rehabilitation retains the historic feature's design and character. Replacing a deteriorated square post with a new square post is consistent with that approach. Replacing or modifying the porch with an arched treatment is not.

For these reasons, the proposed project is inconsistent with Standard 5 and was therefore denied.

- **Standard 6 provides that 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, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.**

Standard 6 is particularly important because the applicant's proposed changes would not replace deteriorated features with matching features.

Where exterior materials are damaged or deteriorated, the previously approved approach is to replace those materials with in-kind or similar, more durable materials. For example,

deteriorated siding may be replaced with compatible siding, or deteriorated trim may be replaced with matching trim. The objective is to restore the existing architectural design while allowing the building to remain functional and durable.

The proposed work instead involves changing the design itself. For example:

- A deteriorated square porch post may be replaced with a new square post of compatible material.
- A deteriorated portion of dog-ear gable trim may be repaired or replaced to match the existing design.
- Deteriorated porch components may be replaced with similar components that retain the original porch configuration.

Those approaches are consistent with Standard 6. Conversely:

- Replacing the simple square-post porch with arched openings does not match the historic feature in design.
- Adding a pony wall changes the historic porch configuration rather than replacing a deteriorated component.
- Completely removing the dog-ear gable trim does not repair or replicate a deteriorated feature; it eliminates a distinctive historic feature altogether.

Furthermore, if the applicant's position is that the proposed arches or pony wall represent an historic or historically appropriate feature, Standard 6 requires documentary and physical evidence to substantiate replacement of missing features. General examples of similar features on other houses would not, by themselves, establish that these features existed on this particular property.

For these reasons, the proposed project is inconsistent with Standard 6 and was therefore denied.

E. Conclusion

Staff has invested substantial time collaborating with the applicant to identify strategies that align with the established review Standards. This collaborative process originally resulted in the approval of the 2025 COA (ADM25-00154). Compliance with that approved scope of work would have averted the current dispute.

Instead, the applicant sought to incorporate architectural elements that fall outside the approved 2025 COA and conflict with review Standards. Staff's position on these changes has remained unchanged since March 2026, when the applicant initially inquired about the modifications and was notified of their non-compliance. Over the subsequent five months, staff engaged in extensive email correspondence and hosted an in-person meeting to offer compliant alternatives. Despite this continuous feedback, the applicant chose to move forward with the unapproved alterations without authorization.

In July 2026, staff discovered non-compliant construction in progress and reported it to building inspections. Subsequently, all unpermitted portions of the project were stopped. Rather than returning to the approved plans, the applicant has elected to pursue this appeal.

The Historic Preservation Officer's decision adheres to the COA review criteria set forth in the Mesa Zoning Ordinance. The proposed installation of front porch arches, the construction of a porch pony wall, and the removal of the dog-ear gable trim treatment are fundamentally inconsistent with the Standards for the reasons detailed herein and in the official Decision Letter.

When considered cumulatively, these alterations would eliminate the property's few remaining distinctive historic features while introducing contradictory architectural elements unsupported by its historic design. The proposed work would result in a substantial, inappropriate alteration to the architectural character of the primary elevation.

Consequently, staff finds that the project fails to meet Standards 1, 2, 3, 5, and 6. Staff continues to emphasize that this determination does not mandate the retention of all original materials but rather enforces the requirement to preserve the historic design and character of the residence during repair or replacement.

Should the applicant abandon the proposed modifications and resume work under the originally approved 2025 COA, the project would return to compliance.

Based on the findings contained in this report, staff recommends that the Historic Preservation Board **deny** the appeal and uphold the Historic Preservation Officer's decision to deny the requested modifications to the 2025 Certificate of Appropriateness (ADM26-00657).

Exhibits

Exhibit 01 – ADM25-00154 COA (260 N Center St) - Approved COA
Exhibit 02 – Approved Plans
Exhibit 03 – ADM26-00657 COA (260 N Center St) - Denied COA
Exhibit 04 – 260 N Center St (ADM25-00154 COA) Email Correspondence
Exhibit 05 – Request to Resolve; Formal Letter Attached Correspondence
Exhibit 06 – Unpermitted work (ADM25-00154) Historic Preservation Office
Exhibit 07 – Inventory Form -260 N Center St
Exhibit 08 – 260 N Center St (ADM25-00154) Approved COA Correspondence
Exhibit 09 – Rodriguez Formal Complaint (260 N Center)
Exhibit 10 – The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation