



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

TO: Historic Preservation Committee

FROM: Caitlin Beesley, MHP, Historic Preservation Specialist

DATE: September 9, 2025

SUBJECT: Case 25DR0500051

Case 25DR0500033: A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness for rehabilitation of a residential property located at 327 E. Bowman Avenue. The subject property encompasses approximately .13 acres, is zoned R-4 (Multi-Dwelling High Density) and is within the South Mesquite Overlay District. Submitted by James T. O'Brien, property owner. Residential property to be rehabilitated is an adobe casita, approximately 19x20 feet or 375 sq ft, with a new roof, parapet, and door and potentially new windows.

BACKGROUND

The subject lot at 327 E. Bowman Avenue is located inside the Original Townsite and the South Mesquite Overlay District (SMO). Historically, 327 E. Bowman was a large multi-unit property that was comprised of unit 327 alongside units 329 and 331 – this building configuration was extant in 1985 when it was identified in the National Register of Historic Places nomination form. The form and attached map identify the building as U-shaped with a courtyard in the center facing south.¹ The property was divided into two lots and two units by the related Trujillo and Saenz Families at an unknown date, potentially in 1966 – the earliest documented date when the eastern unit and lot were owned by a member of the Trujillo Family who did not also own 327. The unit at 327, the western-most unit, is all that remains of this earlier configuration – 329 and 331 having been demolished at an unknown date after their separation sometime following 1985. Subsequently, the lot at 329 has been vacant.²

The detached casita on the lot at 327 was constructed at an unknown date. The earliest date for the main building configuration is 1908, from the Dona Ana County Assessor's Office, but the building was first documented in a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1927.³ The early configured building is depicted as a rowhouse – the southern rooms were likely added at a later, unknown date. The Sanborn map shows the property is a one-story adobe dwelling with a composite, non-combustible roof and two porches on the southwest façade and east façade of the building. The casita was likely constructed around 1940, identified in the National Register nomination listing as "A small, low-gabled, stuccoed adobe with metal casement windows...situated just west of the structure...an associated building on a property that includes the west wing at 327 W. (sic) Bowman."⁴

¹ National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, "Mesquite Street Original Townsite Historic District," Betsy Swanson, Las Cruces Planning Department, for National Park Service, August 1, 1985, 130.

² Dona Ana County Assessor's Office, 327 E. Bowman Ave, Account Information, Transfers.

<https://assessor.donaanacounty.org/assessor/taxweb/account.jsp?accountNum=R0206212&doc=>

³ Ibid; Sanborn Map Company, "Las Cruces, Dona Ana County, New Mexico," May 1927, 5. See Attached.

⁴ National Register, "Mesquite Street," 6.

The original configuration of the building at 327 (327-331) was contributing to the National and State Register listings for the Mesquite Historic District.⁵ The casita was a supporting structure in the 1985 document; as the designation “supporting” is no longer used in historic documentation, the casita could be interpreted to be contributing to the historic district if the design does not change drastically during the rehabilitation. The National Register nomination specifically calls out the metal casement windows, and so those should not be removed if the property owner desires to retain historic integrity and have the casita potentially listed as contributing in an update to the 1985 nomination. Additionally, if the property is determined to be contributing by the state Historic Preservation Division and National Park Service, the rehabilitation project would be eligible for the state and federal tax credit programs.

The applicant is proposing to restore the casita, with a new roof, plastered exterior following targeted application of adobe stabilization to existing structure; the casita also needs a new door and doorframe. The applicant has provided a site plan, elevation, and several renderings showing that proposed construction will have a stucco finish exterior that is suitable for design in the neighborhood. The final design of the new roof consists of a hump-silhouette parapet with flanges on either end. A clerestory shed roof with south-facing windows is proposed for the north side of the roof, to be partially hidden from the street by the raised parapet. The new dwelling will meet all setback requirements of the South Mesquite Overlay and the subject property still meets the density requirements of the overlay as well. All other building and development codes of the City of Las Cruces will be required to be met by the new dwelling.

The proposed rehabilitation project is in a predominantly residential area of the City of Las Cruces and South Mesquite Neighborhood. The rehabilitation will be consistent in appearance and design to neighboring dwellings and other residences found throughout the neighborhood. The new design and materials used are compatible with that of the casita’s original design and of the surrounding historic district.

DECISION CRITERIA

To ensure quality property development and renovation and to protect the historic character of the neighborhood, HPC shall evaluate and determine the exterior design appropriateness of proposals for new construction, additions, exterior alterations, and rehabilitation of properties within the historic district.

Applicable development must ultimately utilize architectural styles, methods, and materials that are visually compatible with surrounding structures (especially where new construction is proposed), and the overall character of the historic district. This should not be interpreted as a requirement to mimic existing styles or construction materials, but as a means for these types of projects to result in a visually compatible transition between old and new structures within the general neighborhood and/or on a single parcel of land. In addition to the standards stated in the 2025 Realize Las Cruces Development Code, as amended, and the Historic Preservation Ordinance projects shall be reviewed based

⁵ With half the main building (the configuration that was determined contributing to the historic districts) gone, it is unknown if the current iteration of the main house at 327 E. Bowman would be contributing to the district.

upon *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitation, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, and *The New Mexico Historic Building Inventory Manual, 1980*.⁶

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff has reviewed this request and recommends **APPROVAL** of the project based on the following finding:

1. The proposed rehabilitation retains the building's historic materiality, design, and use.
2. The proposed rehabilitation will utilize materials consistent with the character of the existing structure and other structures found in the surrounding South Mesquite Neighborhood.
3. The proposed rehabilitation will revitalize an underutilized building, achieving the primary standard for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse.

The retention of the metal windows, casement or otherwise, should also be considered when deliberating over the case. The property is potentially contributing to the National and State-listed historic districts, with the casita's metal casement windows being mentioned in the nomination. The loss of the casement windows may mean the building would no longer be considered contributing to the historic district. The retention of casement windows does not preclude the introduction of removable storm windows to the exterior of the property, or the addition of "indows" to the interior, if the property owner is interested in maximizing energy efficiency.

NOTE: Decisions by the Commission must be based on "findings". The findings presented in this document may be used to support APPROVAL decisions only. Findings for *DENIAL* of the permit should be articulated by the Commission and may be based on policies of the Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan, purposes of the Overlay District or other provisions of the 2001 Zoning Code, the Historic Preservation Ordinance, policies of the Mesquite Neighborhood Plan and/or South Mesquite Neighborhood Design Plan, or other City Plans and policies. Findings may also be based on information presented at the public hearing or information obtained through a site inspection.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Aerial Map
2. Applicant's Documents

ATTACHMENT 1 **AERIAL MAP**

⁶ For more information on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, please follow this link: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/secretarys-standards-rehabilitation.htm>



Figure 1: Lot at 327 E. Bowman is bolded; casita is highlighted in red.

ATTACHMENT 2
APPLICANT'S DOCUMENTS

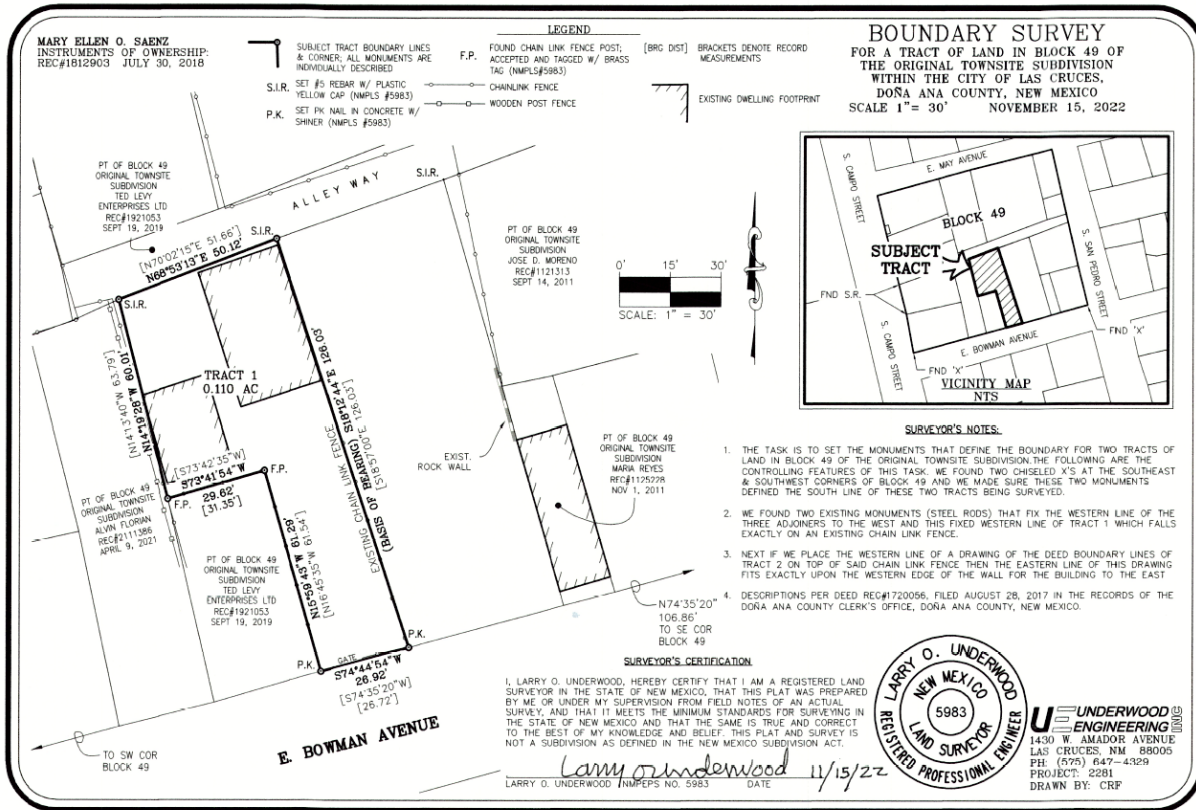


Figure 2: Tract survey from Underwood Engineering, produced for property owner.

La Casita

Average ht $8' @ 14.5$
 $8' @ 12.0$
 $8' @ 11.0$

 12.5

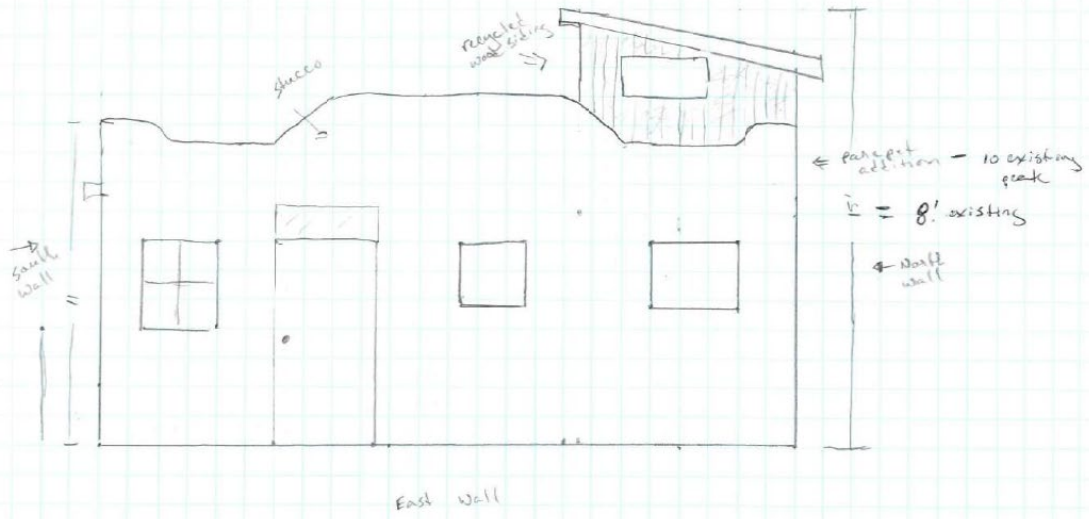


Figure 3: Elevation drawing of rehabilitated casita.



Figure 4: Artist's rendering of casita at 327 E. Bowman Ave.



Figure 5: Artist's rendering of casita at 327 E. Bowman Ave, approximately from a distance comparable with the distance from the street to the casita.



Figure 6: Current building configuration between the casita and the main house with rendering applied to the casita.



Figure 7: Image of another New Mexico residence with a clerestory shed roof, visible above the parapet – a facsimile of what the property owner envisions for 327 E. Bowman Ave.



Figure 8: Potential front door for the rehabilitation.

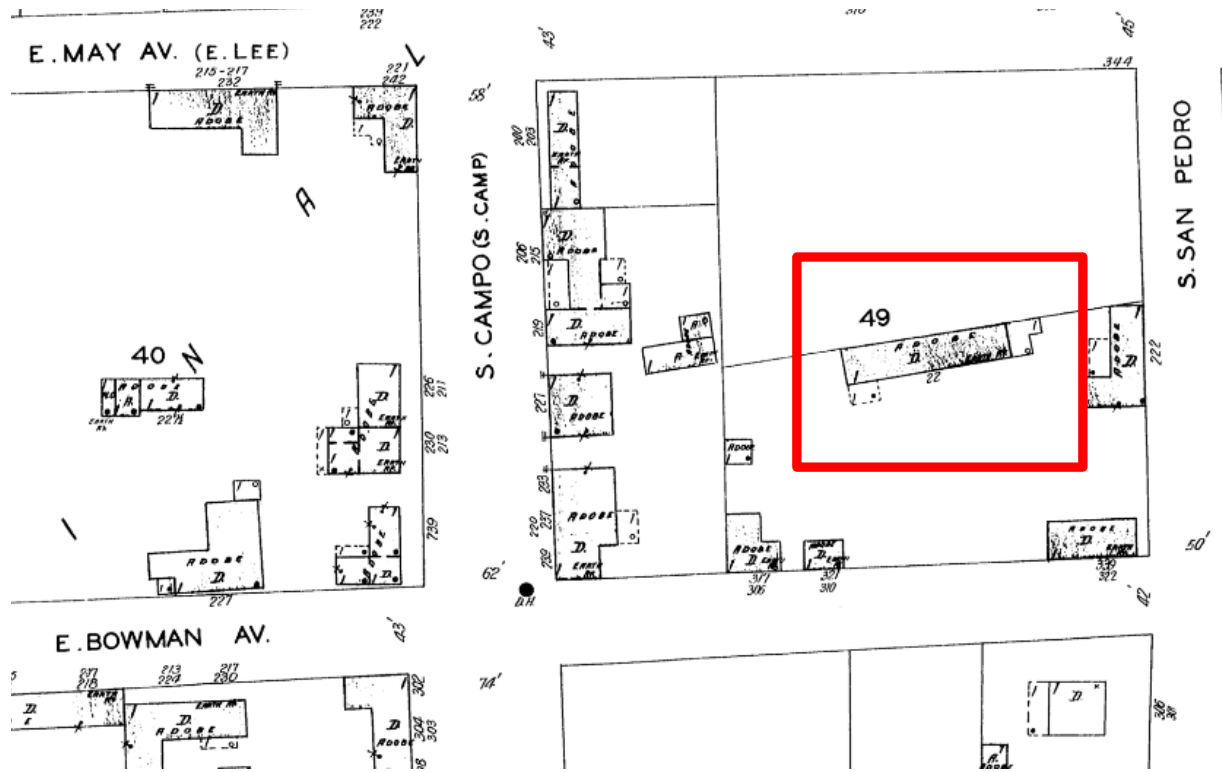


Figure 9: Property identified on a screenshot of the Sanborn Map Company's 1927 publication for Dona Ana County, page 5. Accessed via ProQuest from City of Las Cruces Library Reference and Research materials, September 3, 2025.

