



CITY OF LAS CRUCES

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMITTEE

May 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The following are minutes of the Historic Preservation Committee Meeting held February 18, 2026, at Council Chambers, City Hall, 700 N. Main Street, Las Cruces, New Mexico.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Norma Chairez-Hartell, Vice-Chair
Ernie Campos
Jeffrey Shepherd, PhD
Rosanna Torrez

MEMBERS ABSENT: Dr. Jerry Wallace, Chair
Fernando Baeza

STAFF PRESENT: Caitlin Beesley, Historic Preservation Specialist
Henry Becker, Deputy City Attorney
Romulo Valdez, Assistant City Attorney
John Castillo, Urban Planner

OTHERS PRESENT:

David Lundy	Kyle McGrogan	Topher Lininger	Gabriel Gamboa
Stephanie Villnueva	Paul Deason	Marcie Chavez	Tasia Chavez-Villa
Ana Flores	Alice Chavez-Villa	Tory Woods	James Woods
Teresa Armendarez	Rose Garcia	Faith Hutson	John Verploegh
Alma Hutson	Bobbie Hutson	Xan Muza	David Senk
Patrick Vigil	Guadalupe Vigil	Greg Shervanick	Tanner Gaskey
Phobe Gaskey	Sara Thomas	Ruth Gallardo	
Chris Hinojosa	Denali Wilson		

1. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Chairez-Hartell called the meeting to order at 6:02.

2. CONFLICT OF INTEREST INQUIRY

There was no conflict of interest.

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

There were none.

1 **4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

2
3 **4.1 Approval of April 18, 2026, HPC Minutes**

4
5 Motion to approve by Ernie Campos; seconded by Jeff Shepherd. Motion
6 passed unanimously.
7

8 **5. DESIGN REVIEW AND CASE RECOMMENDATIONS**

9
10 **5.1 Certificate of Appropriateness certification for WIA restoration**
11 **project, located at 340 N. Reymond Street in the Alameda Depot**
12 **Historic District**

13
14 Caitlin Beesley stated this is a design review project for a city owned
15 building. Building was built in 1927 funded by Women's Improvement
16 Association. It was originally a clubhouse and a mail-order library for the
17 public and was later purchased by the city. The city has had meetings with
18 the public and neighborhood association regarding the building's
19 restoration/preservation project. This project recently received \$900,000 in
20 capital outlay from the state. It is a contributing property to the Alameda
21 Depot Historic District in the state and national registers. The landscaping
22 will include new trees, native plants, and the fountain from 1968 will remain
23 and fixed. Full window restoration. Some wood on the exterior will be
24 replaced in-kind. Stucco will be patched and redone. It has been decided
25 to keep the pueblo revival informed design. SHPO recommended not listing
26 this building individually because it is already listed as part of the historic
27 district. The project came to Beesley with a proposal to remove the ADA
28 ramp from the front and construct a new ramp to the rear. Removing the
29 ramp from the front to the rear would only serve to list the building
30 individually and it is not necessary. The back entrance to the building
31 cannot accommodate the ramp without creating a new ADA entrance there,
32 which would demolish historic fabric. The ramp on the front of the building
33 does not put the building's designation at risk. The compliance coordinator
34 with accessibility mentioned the ramp itself is within compliance, it is only
35 out of compliance currently because of the handrails on the ramp itself
36 instead of on the support structure for the ramp. Recommend a ramp be
37 retained or redesigned to the front, put in place where it is either wide
38 enough that it accommodates the handrail or grab bars are put on the
39 current ramp for more maneuverability. The National Park Service
40 produces preservation briefs for the maintenance and preservation of
41 historic buildings, Beesley referenced the brief that discusses accessibility
42 and historic buildings. Making historic properties accessible have various
43 choices, ramps, lift, landscaping. The ramp was placed 2003-2004, also
44 the bathrooms were updated and accessible, and expanded the kitchenette.
45

1 Board Member Ernie Campos mentioned that the ramp appears to work and
2 it seems fine in its current location. Vice-Chair Chairez-Hartell rhetorically
3 asked "why fix it if we do not need to."
4

5 Greg Shervanick stated he attended all the meetings concerning this
6 building. His concern is that Parks and Recreation is involved. And if this
7 is a strategy to mend Pioneer Park with prior proposed concepts. Also was
8 there anything learned about the Armijo House. He mentioned that the WIA
9 building is below grade and now adding a bunch of plant life. Believes the
10 board should take its time before it votes to accept anything.
11

12 John Verploegh agrees with the previous comment about the building being
13 below grade. He stated water pools up next to the building. He thinks there
14 are structural issues with the portal, the way it is anchored, and hopes this
15 is addressed in this project.
16

17 All mentioned issues will be brought forward.
18

19 Motion to approve by Rosanna Torez; seconded by Ernie Campos. Motion
20 passed unanimously.
21

22 **5.2 No. 26ZO1000018 - case recommendation to Planning and Zoning**
23 **Commission allowing additional land use for auto sales or rental use**
24 **of a property located at 801 E. Amador Avenue, zoned C-2**
25 **(Commercial Medium Intensity).**
26

27 John Castillo stated there is additional land use at 343 S. Esperanza/801 E.
28 Amador Avenue. The property is within the South Mesquite Overlay Zone
29 Legacy District. It does have a sub-zoning designation of C-2 which is the
30 Commercial Medium Intensity zoning district, which usually allows for
31 medium intensity type development such as offices, businesses, small
32 scale businesses, or local businesses. It is located at the northwest
33 intersection of Amador Avenue and Esperanza Street. It is a developed
34 property with a vacant building and parking lot. It is approximately half an
35 acre in size. It began as an auto dealership in 1977 and has been in
36 continual operation for over 30 years. The business relocated to 715 E.
37 Amador Avenue which is across the street and continued to operate at that
38 location until 2025 when the property was sold. The property has been
39 nonconforming use since the adoption of the South Mesquite Overlay Zone
40 in 2005. Applicant is seeking to continue the original business that stated
41 on the property and continue to provide for the community. Under code
42 Section 36-2.D4 IV under South Mesquite Overlay Zone Legacy District an
43 applicant can request an additional land use for a specific parcel that is not
44 already noted within the permitted use. They want to include for land use,
45 auto sales and/or rental in the C-2 Zoning District within the South Mesquite
46 Overlay Zone. All relevant agencies and departments supported the

1 proposed additional land use. And notice was sent to properties within 500
2 feet. There were no phone calls or e-mails regarding the additional land
3 use. There are no health, safety, or welfare issues identified. The proposal
4 is not out of line due to history of use. Amador Avenue is a principle arterial.
5 Staff recommends approval with conditions. The recommendation is in
6 concert with Elevate Las Cruces Comprehensive Plan. Conditions are that
7 the business will be required to bring the property into compliance with the
8 2025 Land Development Code, and all companion codes. The business
9 will also need to through the minor platting process to vacate a property line
10 to become one lot instead of two separate lots. Staff felt the special use
11 process was the appropriate process for this as this is not a zone change,
12 variance, or waiver.

13
14 Gabriel Gaboa of Casa de Autos gave some history of the business. And
15 he just wants to continue doing business as he has since 1977.

16
17 Motion to approve by Jeff Shepherd; seconded by Ernie Campos. Motion
18 passed unanimously.

19 20 **5.3 City of Las Cruces Register of Cultural Properties case** 21 **recommendations to City Council**

22
23 Caitlin Beesley introduced the register by giving an abbreviated version of
24 the presentation she shared with City Council during a work session earlier
25 in the month. A register is an official list or database of properties that have
26 been evaluated as worthy of preservation or designation for their historic or
27 architectural significance. There is the National Register of Historic Places,
28 the State Register of Cultural Properties, and many municipalities have a
29 way to designated properties locally; for Las Cruces, Beesley is referring to
30 it as the local register, which was established when we became a certified
31 local government in 2021. Historic registers assists people who
32 administrate preservation objectives at the municipal level, or federal level,
33 or state level. Registers also boost recognition of individual properties.
34 Increases public awareness of preservation, afford various protections
35 against improper alteration or demolition, reinforces local ordinances, and
36 encourages designation through economic or other incentives. What can
37 be listed are buildings, structures, sites, objects, or districts. The property
38 has to be identified as significant through various methods using different
39 criteria, which include significant events, significant persons, distinct style
40 or the work of an architectural master, or potential for new information
41 general archeological sites. The city register has a few additional criteria,
42 however owner consent is required for the city register as well as state and
43 national registers. Nominations can be produced by property owners with
44 assistance from staff or local register subcommittee. This process is being
45 condensed into an annual. Designation at the national and state level it
46 means identifying buildings that are worthy of preservation. Designation at

1 the local level involves protections under local ordinances, including plan or
2 design review for alterations done to the buildings, or review in advance of
3 demolition permits. Public information is available on these buildings.
4

5 Tonight is the designation process. A nomination draft is produced. Public
6 HPC meeting for discussion of the property nomination is established. The
7 final step is City Council's action which requires resolution, granting or
8 denying property designation with a simple majority.
9

10 **No. CPD2026-001 - Rio Grande Theatre**

11
12 The Rio Grande Theatre turns 100 this year. Designed by Otto Thorman of
13 Thorman and Frazier, El Paso architecture firm. Designed in Italian
14 renaissance revival style. It is a two-story abode building, which Beesley
15 states is rare. There was a preservation project undertaken by the Doña
16 Ana Arts Council between 1998 - 2007. The restoration work returned the
17 building to its former glory for functional use and as a landmark for the
18 community. Glenn Schwaiger helped with the tile work. The nomination
19 was produced by City of Las Cruces Community Development Co-op
20 Jordan Gladson. Staff is recommending that this be nominated and
21 elevated to the local register. It is already in the National and State
22 Registers.
23

24 Israel Chavez thinks this is great and glad to see the city doing things for
25 historic preservation. None of this comes with any help to any of the private
26 owners of any of these properties. He commented that the city invests
27 heavily in the Alameda District which historically was the segregated, white
28 part of town. And the city continues to lack the investments required for the
29 brown and black neighborhood of Mesquite Street. He is fine with largely
30 symbolic designations. The city has failed to apply for any grants which are
31 only available to CLG entities and not individuals. He stated the reason
32 two-story adobes are rare is because the city tears them all down. The city
33 needs to apply for money to continue to save properties. There are
34 buildings east of Main Street that need restoration/improvement.
35

36 Board Member Ernie Campos mentioned a workshop to discuss and save
37 some of those buildings.
38

39 Motion to approve by Rosanna Torrez; seconded by Ernie Campos. Motion
40 passed unanimously.
41

42 **No. CPD2026-002 - Branigan Cultural Center**

43
44 Beesley invited Kenneth Podhajecki, CLC Co-Op, up to present the
45 Branigan Cultural Center nomination as the author. Podhajecki stated the
46 building was built in 1935. Designed by Percy McGhee, Jr. who also

1 designed the Doña Ana County Courthouse. This was the first dedicated
2 library in Las Cruces. The only privately funded library constructed in New
3 Mexico during the great depression, all other libraries were publicly funded.
4 First municipal run museum in 1979, transferred from a library to a cultural
5 center. It is nominated for its significance to local history, and for being
6 distinctive architecture, pueblo revival style, and also work of a master
7 architect. Restoration was done in 2022-2023 of the vigas and portals, and
8 stained glass window on the east side of the building. Staff
9 recommendation is approval.

10
11 Motion to approve by Ernie Campos; seconded by Jeff Shepherd. Motion
12 passed unanimously.

13 14 **No. CPD2026-003 - Railroad Museum**

15
16 Caitlin Beesley stated the Railroad Museum was built as a depot in 1910.
17 It is the second railroad depot in Las Cruces. It is in the Spanish Mission
18 Revival style. Some of the elements of the specific building were likely
19 informed by the location. Used as a passenger depot until 1960s. It was
20 purchased by the city in 1992 and transitioned to municipally run museum
21 in 2004. Nominated for reflection of community history, and for distinctive
22 architectural style. Nomination produced by former HPC Chair Dr. Judy
23 Berryman. The first depot was built in 1881. The surrounding neighborhood
24 came to reflect the influence of the railroad and what it represented;
25 incoming of new people, new materials, new architectural styles arriving in
26 Las Cruces at this time period. Depot Street became Las Cruces Avenue
27 and was the first paved road in Las Cruces. She has a few modifications
28 for this nomination following staff input that will be included prior to the
29 nomination going to City Council. It is currently in the National and State
30 Registers and retains sufficient historic integrity.

31
32 Dave Lundy, the exhibits manager for city museums, and building manager
33 at the railroad depot. He thinks this is an important building to the city.

34
35 Board Member Jeff Shepherd thanked for the comments. He asked if there
36 was something to explain the significance more regionally. Hard to
37 overestimate how impactful the railroads were for cities, cultures, and
38 communities, facilitating troop movement, displace and conquer indigenous
39 people in the area here, and for bringing people in, goods, commerce,
40 cultural ideas.

41
42 Vice-Chair Chairez-Hartell asked if the caboosie was being included too.
43 Caitlin Beesley stated the caboosie is not original, and not significant except
44 symbolically.

1 Motion to approve by Ernie Campos; seconded by Jeff Shepherd. Motion
2 passed unanimously.
3

4 **No. CPD2026-004 - Clara Belle Williams Property**
5

6 Caitlin Beesley stated this would include the whole plat, including two
7 buildings, the home and the duplex. The house was built between 1925-
8 1930. It is a craftsman with vernacular influences. Nominated primarily for
9 its association with Clara Belle Williams and her family. She was a notable
10 educator in the community. Also the first African-American to graduate from
11 New Mexico State University. The home currently belongs to Marcelina
12 Chavez, the widow of Arturo Chavez who ran a chile roasting business
13 along with other produce out of the home. Property is nominated for its
14 association with significant people. Nomination produced by Alice Chavez,
15 the daughter of Arturo and Marcelina. There are a few changes to the
16 building over the years. From the documents for nomination: "Clara Belle
17 Williams home is undoubtedly historic because of her extraordinary life and
18 her lasting legacy. For this connection the property at 722 N. Mesquite
19 Street is deserving of designation at the local level. The home was next
20 occupied by the Chavez family who participated in the expansion of chile
21 roasting, one of New Mexico's most prized cultural pastimes around the
22 Mesilla Valley and nearby communities. In light of this, recognition should
23 be given to the simple fact that this property's history continued past its initial
24 period of significance. Encouragement should also be made to view all
25 properties regardless of historic significance as bridges that connect
26 generations, families, and ongoing stories. A reminder that history
27 continues." Staff recommend approval.
28

29 Alice Chavez-Villa stated on August 13, 2021, the state of New Mexico
30 Cultural Properties voted unanimously to enter the home as part of the state
31 register. Her father came to the US as Spanish speaking only and learned
32 slowly through asking schoolmates. As a young boy he traveled and picked
33 produce with his siblings. Her father joined the Marine Corps. Her mother
34 was born and raised in Las Cruces. She spent her life in that house and
35 learned the value of hard work. A lot of parallels between the two families.
36

37 Vice-Chair Chairez-Hartell stated she has to abstain from voting on this as
38 she worked on the nomination. It was an honor to work with Alice Chavez-
39 Villa.
40

41 Board Member Jeff Shepherd appreciated the narration and research
42 shared. Should there be publishing of this story he would like to work on it
43 also.
44

45 Motion to approve by Ernie Campos; seconded by Rosanna Torrez. Motion
46 passed.

1
2 **No. CPD2026-005 - Phillips Chapel C.M.E. Church**
3

4 Caitlin Beesley stated this is located in the Mesquite Historic District located
5 at 638 N. Tornillo Street. It was built in 1911 as a physical representation
6 of the black experience in Las Cruces extending from the tradition of
7 worshiping in community members' homes. It is one of the oldest black
8 churches in New Mexico. Also served as the first segregated school in Las
9 Cruces for African-Americans following segregation. A major restoration
10 project between 2010-2014 by the community and students with the Doña
11 Ana Community College. It is nominated for its representation of community
12 history, for its association with the Hibler Fielder family, and authenticity of
13 materials. It was nominated by Faith Hutson. The restoration was done
14 entirely by volunteer work. It is currently on the National Register
15 individually and contributes to the State Register of Cultural Properties for
16 the Mesquite Street Historic District. Staff recommends approval.
17

18 Faith Hutson stated she was on the restoration project from start to finish.
19 She purchased an adobe home and took adobe restoration classes at
20 DACC. Thanked everyone for their hard work in nominating properties.
21

22 Vice-Chair Chairez-Hartell stated she was a small part of the restoration
23 and that was her first introduction into historic preservation.
24

25 Motion to approve by Ernie Campos; seconded by Rosanna Torrez. Motion
26 passed unanimously.
27

28 **6. STAFF AND COMMITTEE INPUT**
29

30 Caitlin Beesley stated there was a break-in and fire at 719 N. Mesquite Street late
31 last month. The fire was primarily to the rear of the property, only damaged the
32 roof. The property is technically for sale. The city's plans were to demolish the
33 building. She and an inspector looked and the building is not in bad condition
34 except for the roof. The city will board and secure the building and lien against
35 demolition of the roof only. There is a lot of interest in the building.
36

37 Members of the unhoused population have been sleeping under the luggage/crate
38 ramp to the south of the railroad museum. The structure is creosote soaked
39 railroad ties which helps prevent insect infestation, but not great with fire. There
40 was a fire. The city is assessing what to do with this right now. The ramp is fire
41 damaged but it thankfully did not spread to the building.
42

43 This is Historic Preservation Month. Doña Ana County Historical Society is having
44 regular lecture series. Tomorrow at 7:00 p.m. at the WIA building for a lecture.
45 Las Esperanzas putting on walking tour for the Mesquite Street Historic District,
46 this Saturday at 9:00 a.m. There are documentaries and movies going on at the

1 Rio Grande Theatre. Town of Mesilla is doing a Historic Preservation week next
2 week. There will be a tour of the Armijo House on May 26, evening at 6:00 p.m.
3 May 29th the New Mexico Historic Preservation Commission is giving the annual
4 awards at the National Hispanic Cultural Center in Albuquerque, at 1:00 p.m.
5 NMSU campus tour May 30th at 10:00 a.m. leave from the Conroy Honor Center.
6 Beesley will be attending the Santa Fe Historic Preservation Symposium on May
7 30th, from 9:00-5:00 at the New Mexico History Museum in Santa Fe.

8
9 Beesley is planning for city register nominations to come before City Council in
10 June.

11
12 Board Member Ernie Campos asked if the events are listed on the website. Some
13 are on Facebook and some on Instagram, not the website. Beesley stated that
14 next year they will have an event calendar for people to go to.

15
16 **7. ADJOURNMENT**

17
18 Motion to adjourn by Jeff Shepherd; seconded by Ernie Campos. Motion passed
19 unanimously.

20
21
22
23
24 _____
25 Chairperson