

2. SANTA FE HISTORIC DISTRICT ORDINANCE

In the last chapter we discussed where “Santa Fe Style” came from and touched on the governing body that regulates design in the Historic District, the Historic Design Review Board. I’d like to discuss further that Ordinance No 1957-18 that changed the way Santa Fe would present itself to the world forever.

The purpose of the creation of this ordinance in it’s own words was; “In order to promote the economic, cultural and general welfare of the people of the city and to insure the harmonious, orderly and efficient growth and development of the municipality, it is deemed essential by the City Council that the qualities relating to the history of Santa Fe, and a harmonious outward appearance which preserves property values and attracts tourists and residents alike, be preserved; some of these qualities being: The continued existence and preservation of historical areas and buildings; continued construction of buildings in the historic styles, and a general harmony as to style, form, color, proportion, texture and material between buildings of historic design and those of more modern design.” This original purpose statement is intact almost verbatim in our existing 1995 Santa Fe City Code. Looking at this purpose statement shows: 1) The importance of tourism and residents alike. 2) The importance of preserving existing historical buildings. 3) The importance of maintaining and creating a harmonious look to Santa Fe.

It appears that all three of these items have been carried out successfully. As of item #1 has been under constant question; Do we want more tourists or residents? I’m not sure anyone can control this seeing as all individuals in our country are guaranteed the right to move about freely and live where they wish. Certainly by carrying out #2 and #3 we are making the city more attractive and thus physically attracting new tourists and residents by our own city ordinance. A bumper sticker I’ve seen around town can’t help but shed some light on Santa Fe’s continuing history; “Santa Fe - 300 Years of Tourism”. I think this really could be changed to 600 years or more considering the fact that Native Americans migrated and traveled through this same area for trade, hunting and relocation purposes.

The specific rules of the ordinance have been evolving over the years with the influx of new larger scale developments. The ordinance specifies an “Old Santa Fe Style” character-

ized by adobe bricks and include “Pueblo, Pueblo-Spanish, Spanish-Indian or Territorial, and Recent Santa Fe Style” which is defined as a “development from, and an elaboration of the old Santa Fe style with different materials and frequently added decorations”. From their definitions we can see that our forefathers saw that existing old structures carried with them an older style while new buildings had a more modern style. This definition of two different yet harmonious styles allows for some variation in new construction vs. renovation of old existing structures. This ordinance thus was not written so every building looks the same but that a healthy variation can and may occur within the structure of this ordinance.

This control has further been defined by classifying existing buildings as either significant, contributing or non-contributing. This is achieved first by age, the building must be 50 years or older to be considered any of the above classification and secondly by it’s condition related to how much it has been altered. If a building is over 50 years old, has documented historical past and is largely unaltered on the exterior it may be classified as significant, if a building has a documented historical past but has been altered yet some important details exist it may be classified as contributing, a building with no historical significance and that has been altered significantly will probably be classified as Non-Contributing. These classifications become very important when proceeding with a renovation. If a building is considered significant it will probably be not allowed to change the exterior in anyway and any additions will not be permitted on a primary facade. Any additions square footage shall also not exceed 50% of the square footage of the existing footprint. The above applies to both Significant and Contributing structures, but typically if a structure is Non-Contributing you will be allowed much leeway in the alteration or addition to the structure.

There are many other rules and regulations that pertain to glazed area allowed, colors allowed, heights allowed and if you talk to anyone that has gone through the process it is recommended that first city staff be contacted to review any proposed changes or additions by your designer or architect, and secondly you are clear in your presentation to the Historic Review Board and thirdly and most importantly exhibit patience, the process could involve from one to four months.