



**HISTORIC PRESERVATION MANUAL  
CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS REVIEW**

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Date: **March 5, 2026**

Project: **“Mercer Street Paseo” Project, Dripping Springs, TX 78620**

Applicant: **City of Dripping Springs**

Historic District: **Mercer Street Historic District**

Base Zoning: **CS**

Proposed Use: **Pedestrian pathway and amenities connecting the Stephenson Building and Mercer Street**

Submittals:  Current Photograph    Concept Plan    Exterior Elevations  
 Color & Materials Samples    Sign Permit Application

The following review has been conducted by the City of Dripping Springs to determine compliance and consistency with the City of Dripping Springs CODE OF ORDINANCES, Title 2 BUILDING AND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, Chapter 24, BUILDING REGULATIONS, Article 24.07: HISTORIC PRESERVATION, Section 24.07.014: “CRITERIA FOR ISSUANCE OF CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS.”

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**Project Type & Description:**

**The City proposes to construct a new pedestrian pathway “paseo” between the Stephenson Building and Mercer Street, adding benches, landscaping and other pedestrian amenities to the site.**

**Review Summary, General Findings: “Approval”**

**General Compliance Determination-**  **Compliant**    Non-Compliant    N/A

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**Staff Recommendations / Conditions of Approval:**

The submitted renderings and site plans appear to follow the Mercer Street Historic District design guidelines, which promote pedestrian scale activities and amenities, and require the use of native stone.

**Case History / Findings of Fact:**

The proposed location of the paseo project is part of the Stephenson Tract property owned by the City of Dripping Springs connecting Mercer Street with the Stephenson Building, which is currently being used for public restrooms, service deliveries to local businesses, and a commercial dumpster. The City is requesting a Certificate of Appropriateness to construct a new concrete sidewalk, relocate the commercial dumpster to an adjacent location, and add limestone step stone pavers, limestone quarry block seating, landscaping, trash receptacles, and lighting to the site.

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**CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS- Staff Review Summary:**

**Historic Resource Background /Survey Information:**

**Mercer Alley Historic Resource Preservation Priority Rating: “NA”**

**Project Overview:**

**This scope of this project includes:**

- Relocating existing dumpsters to an adjacent location, creating a new shared dumpster with an architecturally compliant, landscaped enclosure.
- Adding the following design elements:
  - Limestone pavers
  - Mercer Street stone benches, limestone quarry seating blocks, and screened trash receptacles
  - Mercer Street dark sky compliant light poles with fixtures and banners
  - Two (2) small shade trees and planting areas for native grasses and groundcover

\* \* \*

**Design Standards Consistency: “Mercer Street Historic District**

**Character/Vision:** “Historic Main Street; Foster a Community Focal Point; Preserve Historic Resources- Rehab & Adaptive Reuse; Promote Revitalization”- The proposed design will foster a community Focal Point around the Stephenson Building, connecting the adaptive reuse of this community center to the Historic “Main” Mercer Street.

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**Design Principles:** “Protect Historic Pedestrian Scale & Main Street Character; Promote Walkable Scale & Sidewalk Activity Zones; New Construction shall be compatible with surroundings” – The new pathway complements the scale and character of the adjacent properties and buildings, adding pedestrian connections to Vintage Soul, the rehabbed Stephenson building, the Mercer Street Public restrooms, and the Mercer Street shops and cafes. The proposed use of limestone and native stone materials, as well as the Mercer Street light poles, banner signs, and trash receptables, are also compatible with the pathway’s surroundings.

**Preferred Uses:** “Pedestrian Activities” - This project is encouraging of pedestrian scale and walkability, as it will provide a resting place.

**Site Planning & Building Placement:** "Mercer St. Frontage: 0’ Setback; Side yard: 0’ Setback” - This project complies with the 0’ front and side yard setbacks for properties in the Mercer Historic District

**Parking Arrangement:** N/A

**Building Footprint / Massing / Scale:** N/A

**Street Frontage / Articulation:** N/A

**Porches:** N/A

**Roofs:** N/A

**Materials:** “Native stone or wood on all walls, and wood porch structures and trims” – The design incorporates the use of limestone pavers and native stone blocks and benches

**Color Palette:** “Muted, rustic, earth tone hues allowed” – The proposed design features neutral stone elements and dark hues for the pedestrian amenities on site, tying into the existing materials in the Mercer Street Historic District.

**Tree Preservation:** “Replace trees over 8ft; Preserve heritage trees over 18 ft<sup>1</sup>” – No trees will be removed for this project, however two (2) small shade trees will be added to the site.

**Landscape Features:** “Preserve historic walls, gates, fences, outbuildings, cisterns, and notable landscape features” – No notable landscape features will be removed for this project, however several native plants will be added to the site.

**CRITERIA FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS**  
**(SECTION 24.07.014)**

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<sup>1</sup> Updated Landscaping and Tree Preservation ordinance requires the preservation of all Heritage trees over 18 ft.

- (a) **STANDARDS & DESIGN GUIDELINES OBSERVED:**  
Project is guided by applicable Historic Preservation Standards and Design Guidelines.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (b) **MINIMAL ALTERATION:**  
Reasonable efforts made to adapt property requiring minimal alteration of building, structure, object site & environment.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (c) **ORIGINAL QUALITIES PRESERVED:**  
Distinguishing original qualities or characteristics not destroyed. Removal or alteration of historic material or distinguishing architectural features avoided.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (d) **PERIOD APPROPRIATENESS:**  
Buildings, structures, objects, sites recognized as products of their own time. Alterations without historic basis or creating an earlier appearance discouraged.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (e) **CUMULATIVE & ACQUIRED SIGNIFICANCE:**  
Cumulative changes with acquired and contributing significance are recognized and respected.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (f) **DISTINCTIVE STYLISTIC FEATURES & CRAFTSMANSHIP:**  
Distinctive stylistic and characteristic features and examples of skilled craftsmanship are retained where possible.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (g) **DETERIORATED ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:**  
Deteriorated architectural features repaired rather than replaced. Necessary replacements reflect replaced materials. Repair or replacement based on historical evidence not conjecture or material availability.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable
- (h) **NON-DAMAGING SURFACE CLEANING METHODS:**  
Surface Cleaning Methods prescribed are as gentle as possible. No sandblasting or other damaging cleaning methods.  
 Compliant  Non-Compliant  Not Applicable

- (i) **ARCHEOLOGICAL RESOURCES PRESERVED:**  
Reasonable efforts made to protect and preserve archeological resources affected by, or adjacent to project.  
 Compliant    Non-Compliant    Not Applicable
  
- (j) **CONTEMPORARY DESIGN- CONTEXT SENSITIVE & COMPATIBLE:**  
Contemporary alterations & additions do not destroy significant historical, architectural, or cultural material and are compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property, neighborhood or environment.  
 Compliant    Non-Compliant    Not Applicable
  
- (k) **RETROVERSION- ESSENTIAL FORM & INTEGRITY UNIMPAIRED:**  
Future removal of new additions & alterations will leave the essential form & integrity of building, structure, object or site unimpaired.  
 Compliant    Non-Compliant    Not Applicable
  
- (l) **PAINT COLORS- HISTORICAL BASIS:**  
Paint colors based on duplications or sustained by historical, physical or pictorial evidence, not conjecture.  
 Compliant    Non-Compliant    Not Applicable
  
- (m) **HISTORIC DISTRICT CONTEXT- OVERALL COMPATIBILITY:**  
Construction plans are compatible with surrounding buildings and environment vis. height, gross volume and proportion.  
 Compliant    Non-Compliant    Not Applicable

**APPLICATION FOR CERTIFICATE OF APPROPRIATENESS (SECTION 24.07.015)**

- (g) **EXPEDITED PROCESS FOR SMALL PROJECTS: ELIGIBILITY = “Not Eligible”**  
Expedited process for small projects (cumulative costs < \$10,000); must be “No” to all:
 

<b>Building Footprint Expansion/Reduction?</b>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Façade Alterations facing Public Street or ROW?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Color Scheme Modifications?</b>	Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
<b>Substantive/Harmful Revisions to Historic District?</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

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Please contact svarvarigos@cityofdrippingsprings.com if you have any questions regarding this review.

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Reviewed By: Sara Varvarigos, AICP, City of Dripping Springs



**Paseo: “Current Conditions, view from the ROW in front of Stephenson Building”**. Staff images, 2025.

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Paseo: "Current Conditions, view from Mercer Street". Staff images, 2025.

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