

CITY OF LAREDO

HISTORIC DISTRICT/LANDMARK BOARD

MINUTES OF REGULAR MEETING OF NOVEMBER 13, 2025

The Historic District/Landmark Board of the City of Laredo convened in a regular meeting on Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 12:00 noon, at the City Council Chambers at City Hall at 1110 Houston St., in Laredo, Texas 78040, to consider the following:

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chair Narvaez called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, called roll and verified **quorum** existed.

Members present: Chair Johnny Narvaez
Vice Chair Francisco Barrientos
Jorge Santana
Ana Villarreal (1st Meeting)
Wayne Nance
Priscilla Iglesias

Members absent: Sara V. Garza (Excused)
Teresa Barker (Excused)
Marc Gonzalez (Excused)

Staff present: Vanessa Guerra
Deidre Garcia
Vanessa Fresnillo

Others present: Rick Solis
Victor Montes
Teresa Fonseca
Joshua Black
Leonel Garza
Carmen P. de la Rosa
Sofia Santos

Chair Narvaez requested a motion to excuse Members not present.

Board Member (Bm.) Barrientos made a motion to **excuse** Members not present.

Second: Bm. Nance

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For: 6
Against: 0
Abstain: 0

Motion carried unanimously

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. CONSIDER APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF:

A. Regular Meeting of August 14, 2025.

Board Member (Bm.) Iglesias made a motion to **approve** the minutes of August 14, 2025.

Second: Bm. Barrientos
For: 6
Against: 0
Abstain: 0

Motion carried unanimously

5. CITIZEN COMMENTS

None.

6. PUBLIC HEARING AND CONSIDERATION OF THE FOLLOWING:

- A. **Public hearing and consideration of a motion to consider façade improvements to the Plaza Theater, which includes exterior alterations, new construction, demolition, and restoration of Lots 2, 8, 9, and the west one third of Lot 3 (approximately 2,057.75 square feet), Block 46, Western Division, located at 1018 and 1012 ½ Hidalgo Street and 1013 and 1017 Farragut Street. This property is within the Old Mercado Historic District.**

HD-001-2026

District VIII

Deidre Garcia, Planning Staff, provided a brief overview on the item.

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, clarified that Building A, the demolition is for all of the building, except the façade.

Staff Recommendation: Staff **supports** the proposed scope of work for the following reasons:

- 1). Alterations, Renovations, and Repairs that will Alter the Existing Exterior Façade:
 - a. The replacement of skeletonized lighting, chrome hardware, canopy reconstruction, and lighting fixtures will reflect the Art Moderne architectural style. As per the Secretary of the Interior, the historic character of the Plaza Theater will be retained and preserved. (Standard 2: Historic Character)
 - b. The proposed scope of work appropriately restores the historic building while incorporating new materials such as stucco, a flat TPO roof, and metal that complement the existing character, materials, and spatial relationships of the property, as per the Secretary of the Interior. (Standard 9: New Additions)
- 2). Repairs and Renovations that will not Alter the Exterior Façade:
 - a. The proposed repairs, such as cleaning, replacement of grout, wood sanding/refinishing, repairing metal panels, are consistent with historic preservation standards and maintain the architectural integrity of the Plaza Theater. (Standard 2: Historic Character)
 - b. The proposed scope of work includes repair of teal tile, terrazzo flooring, and wood doors in a manner that maintains integrity and preserves all character-defining features, as per the Historic Urban Design Guidelines. (Chapter 3: Treatment of Character-Defining Features)
- 3). Partial Demolition of Building A (1012 ½ Hidalgo Street - building adjacent to the Plaza Theater)
 - a. The proposed partial demolition of Building A does not destroy historic materials, as the Plaza Theater will remain intact, as per the Secretary of the Interior. (Standard 9: New Additions)
 - b. The proposed partial demolition of Building A will maintain the streetscape and will preserve the façade materials of Building A, as per the Historic Urban Design Guidelines. (Chapter 3: Preserve Façade Materials)
- 4). New Construction to the Rear of Building A (1012 ½ Hidalgo Street - building adjacent to the Plaza Theater):
 - a. The new construction is compatible in scale, materials, and massing without creating a false historical appearance, as similar materials such as stucco, metal, and a flat TPO roof are being used, as per the Secretary of Interior. (Standard 9: New Additions)
 - b. The addition for the Plaza Theater expansion recedes approximately 15 feet from the street, is distinguishable from the existing historical environment, and remains visually compatible to the Plaza Theater as per the Historic Urban Design Guidelines. (Chapter 3: Additions to Historic Buildings)

Staff General Comments:

1. Any improvements which are approved by the Historic District Landmark Board shall also comply with all Building Code requirements and other regulations as provided in the Laredo Land Development Code.
2. Approval by the Historic District Landmark Board does not guarantee approval of a building permit or any other permit which may be required.
3. It is recommended that all existed improvements utilize the following resources as a guide:

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- The Secretary of the Interiors' Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
 - City of Laredo Historic Urban Design Guidelines
 - City of Laredo Historic Preservation Plan
4. No other improvements, changes to the building, site or new construction on the property shall be permitted without prior review and approval by staff and/or Historic District Landmark Board, to meet compliance.
 5. As per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, all proposed scope of work should be physically and visually compatible to the original materials and features of the historical structure.

Chairman Narvaez opened the public hearing.

Rick Solis, Partner with Able City, and Victor Montes, Project Manager, addressed the Board and expressed their support for the proposed project. Mr. Solis stated that the goal is to modernize the building while preserving its historic integrity and respecting its original character. He explained that the proposed demolition work would allow for the installation of ADA-compliant restrooms, an elevator, and exit stairs, all without affecting the Plaza Theater itself.

Mr. Montes presented images of the proposed neon lighting to provide the Board with an example of the color and design, demonstrating that it would match the proposed aesthetic for the building.

Board Member Santana expressed his enthusiasm for the project and stated that he was pleased to see the work moving forward, noting that the building represents an important part of the community's history.

Mr. Montes explained that the proposed sign would utilize a skeletonized lighting system. Mr. Solis added that the design would transition from traditional neon to an LED skeletonized system due to the high cost and maintenance associated with neon lighting. He noted that the proposed system would use the same anchor points as the existing sign, making the differences between the two systems difficult to detect.

Board Member Santana commented that the systems appear nearly identical while also consuming less energy.

Mr. Montes further explained that the contractor would utilize the existing connection points where current neon lighting is damaged or disconnected in order to minimize the need to create additional holes in the structure. He also noted that other neon lights throughout the building are frequently vandalized and that neon tubing is costly to replace. For this reason, the proposal includes the use of Incision Prime Green skeletonized LED lighting, and he presented several examples for the Board's consideration.

Board Member Villarreal asked staff whether the proposed ordinance under Item 6C, which addresses the prohibition of illuminated signage within the Historic District, would affect the proposed project.

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, informed the Board that the applicants should already have obtained the necessary permits; therefore, the project would be considered vested under the previous ordinance.

Board Member Santana asked whether another building with similar signage installed approximately eighty (80) years ago would be considered grandfathered.

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, explained that if documentation exists demonstrating that the signage was installed prior to the adoption of the ordinance, it would be considered grandfathered.

Chairman Narvaez, requested a motion to close the public hearing and action for HD-001-2026.

Bm. Iglesias made a motion to close the public hearing and **approve** HD-001-2026. The motion includes to consider façade improvements to the Plaza Theater, which includes exterior alterations, new construction, demolition, and restoration.

Second:	Bm. Barrientos
For:	6
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

Motion carried unanimously

B. Public hearing and consideration of a motion to consider façade repair and restoration on Block 10, Western Division, located at 217 San Agustin Avenue. This property is within the San Agustin de Laredo Historic District.

HD-002-2026

District VIII

Vanessa Fresnillo, Planning Staff, provided a brief overview on the item.

Staff Recommendation: Staff **supports** the proposed scope of work, for the following reasons:

1. Sixty (60) windows are to be replaced with insulated windows.
 - a. The proposed installation of insulated windows will maintain the original window design and proportions, ensuring no visual change to the façade or historic character of the Santa Monica Parish Hall. Any window replacement shall not

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- alter the exterior appearance or compromise the historic character of the building. (Historic Urban Design Guidelines)
- b. The replacement with insulated windows in the Santa Monica Parish Hall will help with the long- term sustainability of the building while retaining its character. Work undertaken to meet energy efficiency and sustainability goals should be compatible with the historic character of the building, replacing windows may be appropriate when thermal performance is necessary for long-term building function. (Secretary of Interior Standards)
- 2. Repair and restoration of fourteen (14) window frames using reclaimed Longleaf Pine or species to match existing per material testing.
 - a. Repairing the wood windows using reclaimed Longleaf Pine or a similar fine-grained species maintains this intent by retaining or reusing authentic materials. (Chapter 3: Design Guidelines for Historic Properties)
 - b. The proposed use of reclaimed Longleaf Pine aligns with this philosophy-it repairs the feature using materials that are either identical or as close as possible in species and grain to the original. (Standard 6)
- 3. Salvage and replacement of forty-six (46) window frames using Clear Ponderosa Pine or suitable fine-grained lumber.
 - a. Clear Ponderosa Pine or a suitable-grained lumber is an appropriate replacement that will ensure visual continuity. Similar wood species-those with comparable grain, color, and finish-are appropriate substitutes when exact matching materials are unavailable.
 - b. Using a compatible fine-grained lumber such as Clear Ponderosa Pine fits this provision, provided that the finish, detailing, and joinery replicate the original appearance. When original materials are not available, the Standards allow “matching the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials.” (Standard 6)

Staff Recommendation: Staff **does not support** the proposed scope of work for the following reasons:

- 4. Aluminum cladding of forty-six (46) window frames that will be painted to match historic color(s) of existing windows as per material testing
 - a. The Historic Urban Design Guidelines identifies aluminum-clad windows as inappropriate for historic buildings, therefore the proposed usage of aluminum-cladding on the windows introduces a non-historic material inconsistent with the original character and intent of the Historic Urban Design Guidelines.
 - b. Aluminum, being non-porous, reflective, and machine-finished, fails to replicate the tactile texture, warmth, and matte quality of wood, resulting in an incompatible appearance. (Secretary of Interior Standards)
 - c. The cladding is a permanent alteration that prevents inspection and maintenance of the underlying wood-contrary to preservation practice favoring reversible interventions. (Secretary of Interior Standards)

Staff General Comments:

1. Any improvements which are approved by the Historic District Landmark Board shall also comply with all Building Code requirements and other regulations as provided in the Laredo Land Development Code.
2. Approval by the Historic District Landmark Board does not guarantee approval of a building permit or any other permit which may be required.
3. It is recommended that all existed improvements utilize the following resources as a guide:
 - The Secretary of the Interiors' Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings
 - City of Laredo Historic Urban Design Guidelines
 - City of Laredo Historic Preservation Plan
4. No other improvements, changes to the building, site or new construction on the property shall be permitted without prior review and approval by staff and/or Historic District Landmark Board, to meet compliance.
5. As per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings, all proposed scope of work should be physically and visually compatible to the original materials and features of the historical structure.

Chairman Narvaez opened the public hearing.

Teresa Fonseca, Project Architect, provided a brief presentation outlining the proposed project. She explained that the building contains approximately 300 windows, many of which are beyond repair. As a result, the proposal includes replacing the north-facing second and third floor windows with aluminum clad wood windows manufactured by Marvin. She noted that the proposed windows are designed to match the existing window profiles and that the aluminum cladding would serve to protect the wood. Ms. Fonseca also stated that any materials that can be salvaged from the north second and third floor windows would be reused to repair and restore windows on the south second and third floor elevations.

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, informed the Commission that while health and safety considerations are important, staff must adhere to the adopted historic preservation guidelines. She noted that, according to the guidelines, the use of cladding on historic windows is generally not recommended.

Chairman Narvaez, requested a motion to close the public hearing and action for HD-002-2026.

Bm. Nance made a motion to close the public hearing, support Staff recommendation and **approve** Item No's 1 through 3, and go against Staff recommendation and **approve** Item No. 4 in HD-002-2026.

Second:	Bm. Santana
For:	6
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

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Motion carried Unanimously

C. Amending Chapter 28 of the City of Laredo Code of Ordinances, Article II to prohibit illuminated signage for all properties located along all Right-of-Ways (ROW) abutting designated historic plaza; providing a severability; establishing an effective date; and providing for publication.

Vanessa Fresnillo, Planning Staff, provided a brief overview on the item.

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, informed the Board an asterisk (*), has been added to the legend explaining “Illuminated signage shall be prohibited on all properties located along the right-of-way abutting the perimeter of designated plazas in accordance with Section 28-41 (c)”.

Staff Recommendation: Staff supports the proposed ordinance which will prevent illuminated signs on properties located along the Right-of-Ways abutting the perimeter of, in and adjacent to the following City of Laredo designated plazas – San Agustin Plaza, Jarvis Plaza, El Mercado Plaza, Bruni Plaza, and St. Peter’s Plaza.

Chairman Narvaez opened the public hearing.

Chairman Narvaez requested a motion to close the public hearing and action on the proposed ordinance.

Bm. Nance made a motion to close the public hearing and supports Staff’s recommendation.

Second:	Bm. Villarreal
For:	6
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

Motion carried Unanimously

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, introduced and welcomed Ana Villarreal to the Board. She also expressed her appreciation to Vanessa Fresnillo, Planner, for drafting her first ordinance and commended her for the work completed.

Board members discussed the importance of educating property owners on the rules and regulations that apply to properties located within the historic districts.

Vanessa Guerra, Planning Director, informed the Board that staff remains available to meet with property owners to address any questions or concerns. She further noted the City has invested significantly in several incentive programs intended to assist property owners within historic districts, including the Neighborhood Empowerment Zone (NEZ), the Façade Improvement

Program, and initiatives led by the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone (TIRZ) Board to support continued improvements in the downtown area.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Narvaez requested the meeting be adjourned at 12:59 p.m.

Bm. Villarreal made a **motion** to adjourn the meeting.

Second:	Bm. Nance
For:	6
Against:	0
Abstain:	0

Vanessa Guerra,
City Planning Director

Johnny Narvaez
HDLB Chair