

MEMO

To: Sean Gallegos, Los Altos Planning Department

From: Bonnie Bamburg, Urban Programmers

Subject: 236 Eleanor Avenue-Response to comments on the Historic Report DPR and Review of Rehabilitation Plans

Date: April 12, 2023

General Response to Methodology.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the treatment of Historic Property and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation require an analysis of the character-defining features of a historic resource prior to beginning the rehabilitation plan. When this house was analyzed, it was apparent there had been many alterations and changes. The alterations are a mix of including existing details and new elements that were based upon Craftsman styles. We believe the designer studied the building and the styles and was not just a contractor remodel. The SOIS further requires a ranking or consideration of the primary and lesser character-defining features. This house exhibited the primary character-defining features to be primarily on the front facade, some on the side and less on the rear due to previous alterations.

To allow the owners additional living space and modern conveniences while maintaining the character of the Craftsman style, the rear façade was identified for the addition because it had the least character-defining features and original and as it had been remodeled. This allows for continued use and preserves the dramatic (although somewhat altered) front facade) and character of the side facades, although there is a loss of some historic materials and the side roof line... The rehabilitation plan was designed to require the least removal of character-defining features and historic materials. These are proposed to be removed as part of the rehabilitation addition.

Character defining features and original materials of the rear and side facade.

Rear Façade Historic materials and Character-defining



The rear façade has been significantly altered from the original design of a farmhouse in a variation of the Craftsman style.

Alterations that previously removed historic material include the protruding section that has a multi-pane glass door and three wood windows that are not original to the location and probably not to the building. The rear facade of an orchard would have the utility porch with a wood back door that might have had a glass panel in the top. Stairs usually were to the side. This is the pattern of the existing foundation. Windows would be small and plain frames. All windows appear to be from a previous remodel. The rear of the house was not used for recreation but was utilitarian with, clotheslines, a barn and other ancillary buildings behind. Windows on the rear were also less formal, but operable.

Although this may be the original style roof framing it would be unusual. Typically the roof was straight across and a second shed roof covered the utility portion. The roof appears to have been extended over the protruding section carrying the design of exposed rafter tails.

While the Craftsman style may include a shed dormer, the style seen on the front would have dictated a cross gable or gable dormer would have occurred on this house. The shed dormer is out of proportion with the rest of the house. It appears to have been installed to create a bedroom in the attic storage area. Although the shed roof incorporates exposed rafter tails and a knee brace - Craftsman elements- these are not original to the building. Looking to the front and sides of the house, a dormer would have had a gable and not a shed roof. The shed roofed dormer is not original and because of the scale it has not gained significance, and is not a character defining feature of this house.

The windows in the protruding section are not original to the location and not likely the house. Recycling windows during a remodel is not a new concept and may have happened although the frames do not appear early twentieth century. The small, almost square windows (rear of the house) may or may not be an original frame and lugsil. Prior to central heat and ventilation was important and kitchen windows particularly would have been operable to expell kitchen odors and circulate air into the kitchen. The fixed pane kitchen window may have been relocated to this area or is a feature of remodeling. It is not a character defining element.

The deck has also been added and is not a character defining feature of the house.

In summary, the rear of this house has been remodeled with original materials and style changed. The characteristic elements to be removed are; roof slope with exposed rafter tails is a defining element of the Craftsman style and siding on half the rear wall appears to be original and is typical of the Craftsman Style and this house.

The rehabilitation plan shows these elements will be removed. This will change the design and rear character of the house.

Side Façades Historic material and features. This is discussed in the report and expanded here. The side exhibits character-defining features in the roof slope, fenestration with windows exhibiting small panes above a larger pane in a casement style, and siding. There is a loss of historic material on the side and rear roof framing (composition roofing materials are not historic and are not character defining elements) where the addition connects to the main building and the loss of windows that are characteristic of the Craftsman style, and siding. The loss of characteristic windows on the first level is unfortunate yet placing the addition to the rear and connecting the roof frame and rear side facades appears to provide the addition with the least loss of historic fabric and features.

Responses to the questions and comments in the Summary of Comments on the Historic document Historic Report 236 Eleanor Ave.

Standard 2

Sean Gallegoas: There is no discussion of any potential character defining features, which are being removed/demolished due to the addition along the rear of the house.

At a minimum, the historian should be discussing the defining features along the rear elevation and whether the features or materials are relevant character defining features for the existing Craftsman style building.

In the report, the historian states: "the rear face with the pop-out addition to the original design. The view shows the shed dormer on the rear second level." If the historian does not believe the rear of the elevation is not historic due to addition not being historical significant or a character defining feature in its own right, it must discuss this issue in their response. While I agree the existing Craftsman design is retained along the front and the majority of the sides. This requires a more detailed discussion than the conclusory statements (without supporting analysis) which is provided in this response.

Finally, why is the applicant or the historian not utilizing the potentially historic windows or other features being removed from the rear of the house in the new house design. If a historic feature can be preserved, staff would expect the historian to require the preservation of any features, which could be preserved.

Urban Programmers Response. Above is the detailed description of the rear facade of 236 Eleanor Avenue.

Standard 3

Sean Gallegos. The historian states material textures will be offset or use different texture. Staff has identified stucco will be matching the existing house, and staff does not see the offset or the difference in texture. The historian should provide a greater discussion of the addition not creating a false sense of historic development.

Urban Programmers Response. Standard 3 and treatments were discussed with the architect Walter Chapman. Textures and colors would be included in the specifications. We did not see the color board. This would have been more appropriately stated that the architect will provide specifications and samples of color and textural differences to be approved by the Planning Staff.

Standard 4

Sean Gallegos. The historian states "the rear are not historically important." Why? If the rear elevation is not historic, the historian must provide a detailed explanation for the reasons under the City's historic preservation standards for the rear elevation not being historically important

Urban Programmers Response. This should have been explained in more detail as it is above.

Standard 5

Sean Gallegos. *While I understand an addition to the rear of a historic house is less impactful to the historical integrity and significance of the house, the historian is discussing the distinctive features being removed from the rear elevation. At a minimum this should be discussed by the historian, and the historian should outline the reasoning why the loss of the features are not significant under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.*

Urban Programmers Response. This is discussed in detail above.

Standard 9

Sean Gallegos. *There is no discussion of any potential character defining features, which are being removed/demolished due to the addition along the rear of the house. At a minimum, the historian should be discussing the defining features along the rear elevation and whether the features or materials are relevant character defining features for the existing Craftsman style building.*

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While I agree the existing Craftsman design is retained along the front and the majority of the sides. This requires a more detailed discussion than the conclusionary statements (without supporting analysis) which is provided in this response. In your response, you state the stucco is slightly different and differentiates from the historic materials. However, the applicant's materials board shows the stucco will exactly match the existing stucco finish. Therefore, your original statement is not consistent with the proposed plans and materials. Staff requests a discussion of the proposed materials and their consistency under the SOISR.

Urban Programmers Response. The discussion and explanation of the affected facades is above.

Reuse of materials should always be a consideration. If it is not possible to reuse them in the rehabilitation, they could be recycled through a company or donated to a preservation organization such as Preservation Action Council San Jose or a history museum that recycles building materials. Characteristic elements are also exchanged on the internet.