

February 10,2023

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Via Email: [Sean Gallegos \(SGallegos@losaltosca.gov\)](mailto:SGallegos@losaltosca.gov)

Subject: 236 Eleanor Avenue, Los Altos

Dear Mr. Gallegos:

The 1914 farmhouse at 236 Eleanor Avenue is listed as the C.W. Morris House in the Los Altos Historic Resource Inventory. The house is recognized as one of the few farmhouses remaining in the City.¹ The original owner is not identified, and the property is known to have belonged to Charles Wadsworth Morris and his family, wife Alice, daughter Dorothy and son David, in 1921. Morris was retired from the hardware sales business where he was the manager of W.W. Montague Company, in San Jose and the family moved to the Fremont District (Los Altos) in 1921. ¹ Charles W. Morris passed away in 1932 and his family-later his sone continued to live on the property. A lot split created a flag lot with the 1914 house on the back parcel where it is accessed by a driveway from Eleanor Avenue.

Purpose of the study: Recently the property sold to a new owner who wishes to expand the living space of the house to accommodate the family. Urban Programmers was asked to review the rehabilitation plans prepared by Chapman Design Associates for compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Methodology: We first looked at the integrity of the house and setting. Research added to the knowledge about the C.W. Morris family but did not identify the original owner.¹The house has several alterations, yet appears to retain the aspects of location, overall design, materials, workmanship. However, the feeling of a farmhouse is not present due to the loss of acreage and the historical setting is also not present because the house is now on a back parcel flag lot and not facing the street. The aspect of association is also diminished because the Morris family were not the original owners who developed the house and for the most part, Charles was retired and did not contribute in a significant way to the history of the area. The conclusion is that the design, materials, and workmanship of the Craftsman Style house is sufficient to consider that the house retains integrity. The next step was to consider the proposed addition to the building by comparing the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* to the proposed architectural plans prepared by Chapman Design Associates. Because of the flag lot parcel, we also looked at the Los Altos Zoning Code for orientation or a view corridor.

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Executive summary: Following the methodology above, we concluded that the rehabilitation plans prepared by Chapman Design Associates, met the intent of the “standards.” Standard 10-states that an addition could be removed and the rear of the house reconstructed in wood, without substantial damage to the front of the historic building. This removal of the addition is highly unlikely.

Photographs of the existing house taken 2022.



Photograph 1 236 Eleanor Avenue, Los Altos

View: An aerial view shows the house with raised garden, otherwise surrounded by crushed stone. The house faces toward Eleanor Avenue but is located behind a newer house on a rear flag lot. While the orientation of the house is to the east and Eleanor Avenue, it cannot be seen from the public way. The entry has been along the side of the front parcel creating a functional front or entry orientation of the parcel to the north



Photograph 2 236 Eleanor Avenue, Los Altos

View: The primary east front facade showing a full width covered porch and projecting entry porch on the first level. This level is raised. The first level is sheathed in stucco that appears an alteration of the original horizontal wood siding. The second story shows a cross gable roof with a second story gable. East facade (privacy wall in front of the gable and over the porch is an addition) South side facade with chimney continues the Craftsman details of knee braces under the eaves, and exposed rafter and cut shingles of the second level.



Photograph 3 36 Eleanor Ave., Los Altos

View: Front entry porch showing the low base for the paired columns and the 6 stairs to the main porch. The entry door is off set to the left.



Photograph 4 236 Eleanor Avenue, Los Altos
View: The north side façade showing the window alteration to fill the side of the porch and the second level gable. A carport is under the pergola structure and the entrance to the rear of the house..



Photograph 5 236 Eleanor Avenue, Los Altos
View: Rear façade showing the pop out addition to the original design. The view shows the shed dormer on the rear second level.



Photograph 6 236 Eleanor Avenue, Los Altos
View: Rear and north side showing the rear additions and deck addition. A shed is behind the house and the carport on the left (north) side.

236 Eleanor Avenue, Proposed Rehabilitation Plans

The two story historic house of 1,790 sq.ft. is proposed to have an addition attaching to the back utility porch area (remodeled). The addition is proposed to be 2,157.41 Sq.Ft. in two-stories. The historic house is shown to remain as is the landscaping with rose gardens and most trees.

All architectural drawings were provided by Chapman Design Associates, February 10,2023

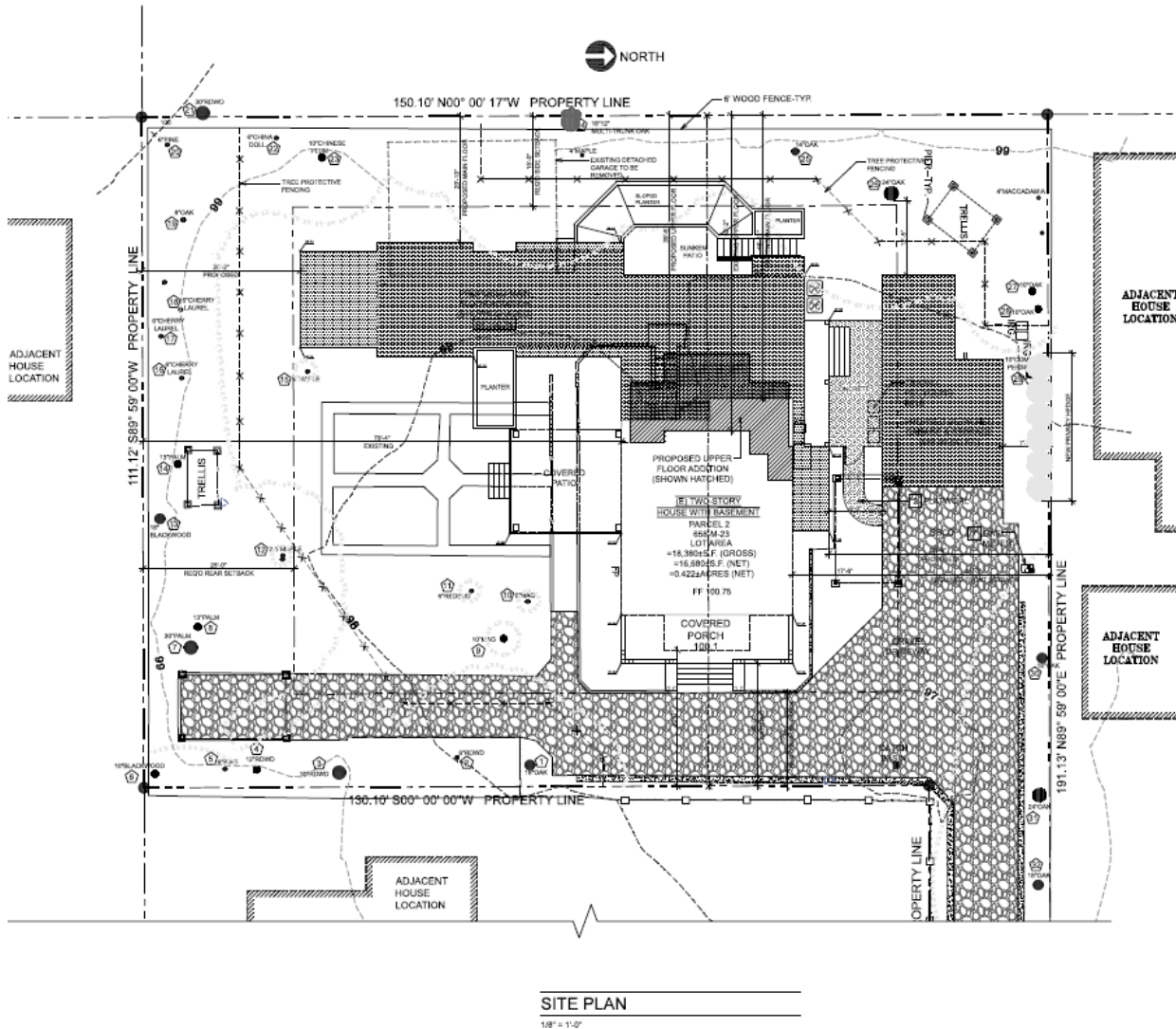


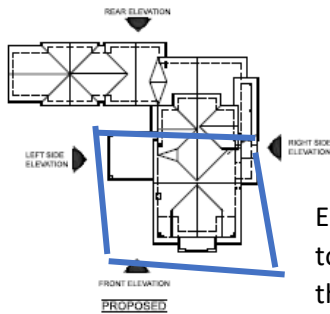
Figure 1 236 Eleanor Avenue -Rehabilitation Plan
View: The site plan shows the existing house in white and the proposed addition to the rear of the house connecting on the rear façade, extending to the north facade, and the location of a new garage where an existing pergola (carport) is located.

Source: Chapman Design Associates, Jacobsen/Parmacek Residence Sheet A10



Figure 2-A 236 Eleanor Avenue - Rehabilitation Plan
View: Existing front facade

EXISTING FRONT ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"



Existing historic house to remain in front of the addition.



PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

Figure 2-B 236 Eleanor Avenue - Rehabilitation Plan
View: Front Facade showing the existing house in white, and the proposed addition is set back to the rear from the front portico. The historic house and front roof structure are shown to remain. The proposed addition will attach to the existing roof structure and have compatible materials. The differentiation that will be in course laying pattern. An example is hanging the shingles in an offset providing a different appearance for the new construction using compatible materials
Source: Chapman Design Associates, Jacobsen/Parmacek Residence Sheet A4.0

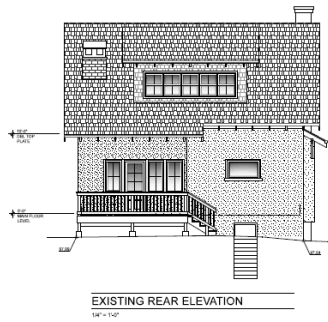


Figure 3-A 236 Eleanor Avenue -
Rehabilitation Plan
View: Existing rear elevation

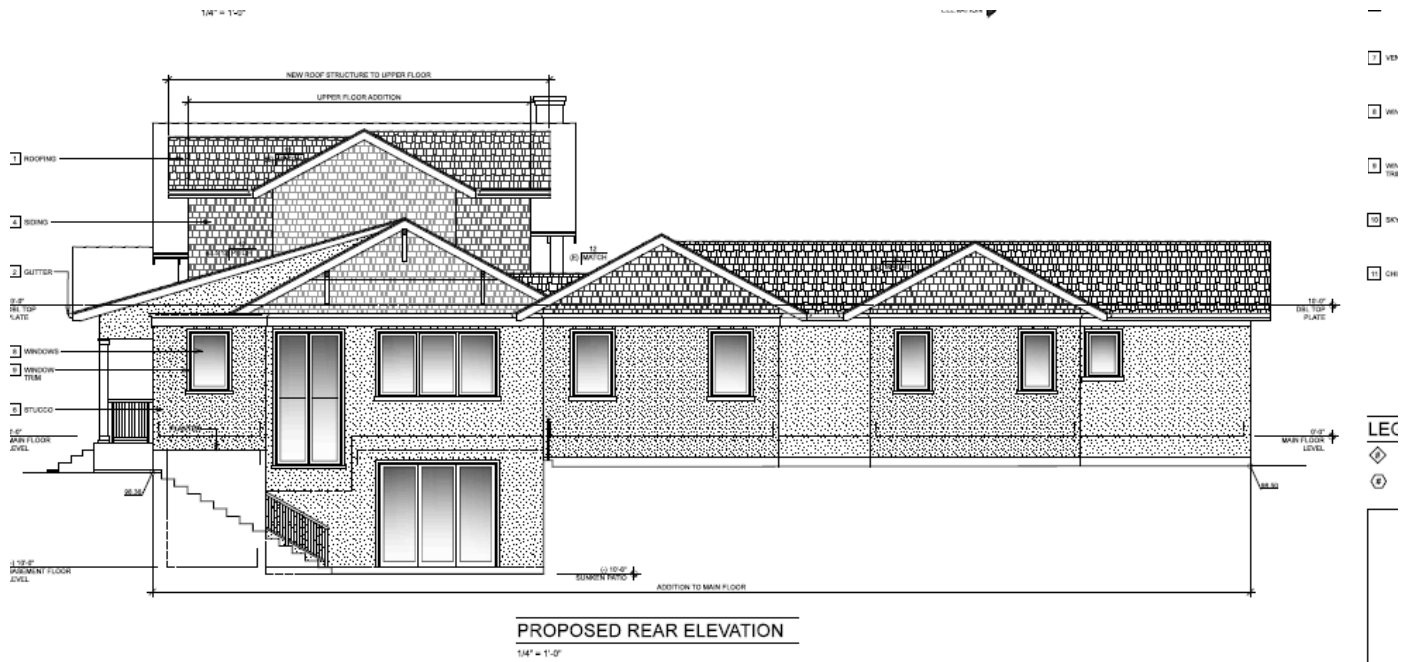


Figure 3 -B 236 Eleanor Avenue- Rehabilitation Plan
View: Rear Facade showing the proposed rear and side additions. The rear of the house had previously been remodeled and was not the original design. Maintaining the elevation of the floor plate in historic house into the addition provides consistency with the raised elevation of the historic house.
Source: Chapman Design Associates, Jacobsen/Parmacek Residence Sheet A4.0

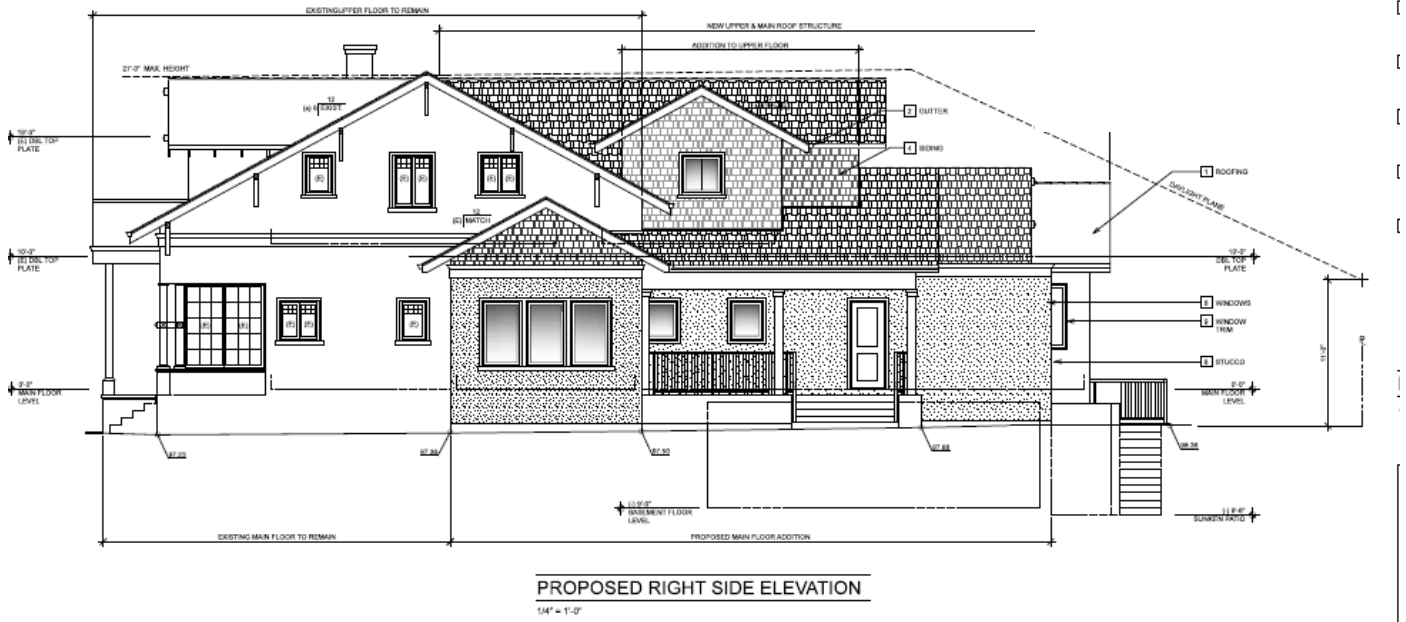


Figure 4 236 Eleanor Avenue- Rehabilitation Plan
 View: North (right) Side Facade showing the side of the proposed rear addition and where the roof of the addition meets the historic roof structure. The roof intersection maintains the existing height of the historic building. A simple gable roof (without brackets or braces) is added to the rear as part of the new roof structure. Shingles will be off-set in pattern to distinguish the new from the old. The stucco will be similarly slightly different to distinguish the different sections.

Source: Chapman Design Associates, Jacobsen/Parmacek Residence Sheet A4.0



Figure 5-A 236 Eleanor
Rehabilitation Plan

View: Existing Historic
Building, Left or South
elevation.



Figure 5 -B 236 Eleanor Avenue- Rehabilitation Plan
View: Left (South) Facade showing the proposed connection of the new wing. The historic house and front roof structure are shown to remain at a height above the proposed addition. The roof structure is intersected with the new roof structure to create a cross gable in the second story.
Source: Chapman Design Associates, Jacobsen/Parmacek Residence Sheet A4.0

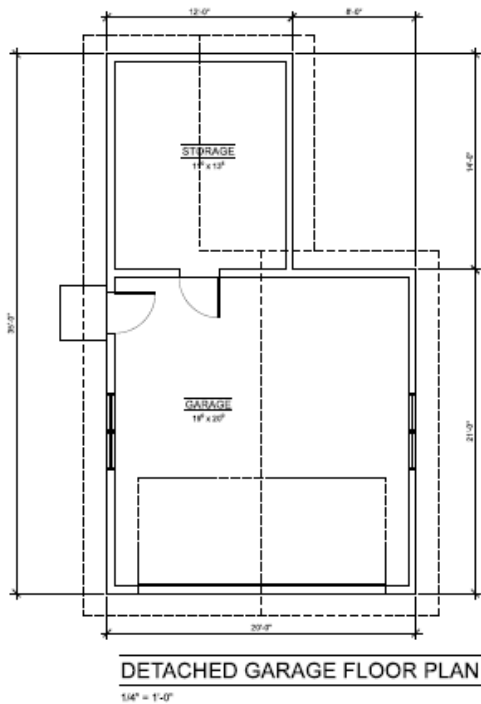


Figure 6-A 236 Eleanor Avenue -Rehabilitation Plan
View: Floor plan for a new detached garage.

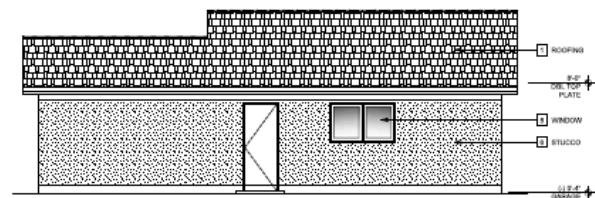
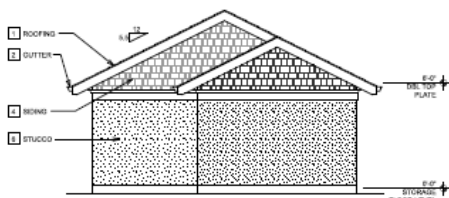
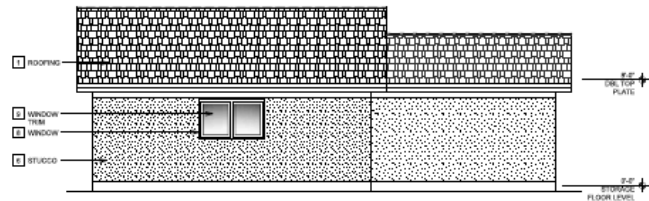
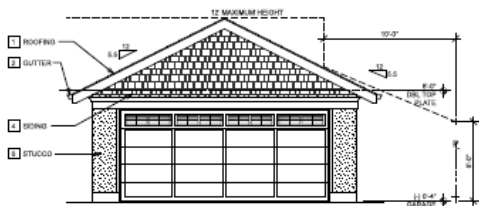


Figure 6-B 236 Eleanor Avenue- Rehabilitation Plan
View: Proposed new detached garage. The form is basic to garage structures that are wood frame with a pitched (gable) roof. No stylistic or decorative embellishments have been added.
Source: Chapman Design Associates, Jacobsen/Parmacek Residence Sheet A4.1

Character defining features of the Craftsman Style and Craftsman Bungalow

Although not a classic version of the Craftsman style, most of the distinctive design elements are present in the house at 236 Eleanor Avenue.

Coming from the Arts and Crafts Movement, the style features a natural use of materials and exposes the design, structure, and construction skill with exposed beams, rafters and a mix of shingles, stucco and timbers for the front paired posts of the porch..

1. Wood construction and partial wood siding, including shingles
2. low-pitched gable (triangular) roofs
3. overhanging eaves with exposed rafters and beams
4. Knee braces under the eaves, at the corners and along the eave line (This is a carryover from barn construction and often appears in farm houses of the period)
5. heavy timber, paired columns at the front porch
6. patterned windowpanes on the upper sections of the sash
7. Full width covered front porch with a low or half lower wall.

Integrity: The seven aspects of integrity were identified by the National Park Service to be; Location, Design, Materials, Workmanship, Setting. Feeling and Association.

While there have been alterations to the house there is sufficient historic fabric to make a finding of integrity- the house communicate its reason for being designated a historic resource because it is a variant of the Craftsman style. Although the aspects of setting feeling and association are not present the design, materials and workmanship from c. 1919, remain enough for the understanding of historical importance ascribed to the building.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation – Guidance for Changes to historic buildings that preserve the character of the historic buildings while allowing modernization and additions that enhance the longevity of the historic resource.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings were created by the National Park Service, Cultural Resources Division in 1978 to provide a framework to guide rehabilitation work for projects that were Certified Historic Structures and applied to use investment tax credits. Since that time, the "Standards" have been expanded by introducing element-specific recommendations in the "Guidelines." These standards and guidelines have been adopted by many governmental agencies to promote the same level of preservation to projects that are determined to be local landmarks and/or historic resource properties. For buildings that are eligible for or are listed in the California Register of Historical Resources, compliance to the "Standards" is generally accepted to reduce the impact of a project to less than a significant adverse impact.

*"Rehabilitation" is defined as "the process of returning a property to a state of utility, through repair or alteration, which makes possible an efficient contemporary use while preserving those portions and features of the property which are significant to its historic, architectural, and cultural values."*⁴

⁴ <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm>

The Standards are to be applied to specific rehabilitation projects in a reasonable manner, taking into consideration economic and technical feasibility.⁵

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

The property retains its historic use as a single-family residence

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

The existing historic character of the Craftsman design and construction in the building is retained in the proposed rehabilitation plan.

3. Each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

No conjectural features were added to the building. The addition uses compatible forms without stylistic decoration. Where similar materials to the historic building are used they are off set or textured to show the different eras of construction.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

The historic building did not represent artistic or significant changes and the alterations, particularly to the rear are not historically important.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property shall be preserved.

The original design and construction, workmanship and materials are preserved in the historic house and the addition is located on the rear of the building.

6. Deteriorated historic features shall be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature shall match the old in design, color, texture, and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Specifications are not available at this time. However, the historic house appears in very good condition requiring little reair..

⁵ ibid

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Specifications are not available at this time. However, there is not need for harsh chemicals or

8. Significant archeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures shall be undertaken.

An archeological survey was not conducted as part of this review. However, it appears from the past uses, and rather dense development around the property that it is unlikely to yield important information about prehistory or history. Should archeological material be uncovered State and local laws must be followed.

9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity of the property and its environment.

The new rear addition does not destroy historic materials that characterized the building. The addition is compatible with the historic building, using wood construction, shingles of a different off-set pattern, Stucco siding that is slightly different and differentiates the new from the historic materials. The addition is not taller than the historic building and is located on the secondary rear- which has been remodeled. This is compatible with the massing, size, and scale of the historic building. The addition does not diminish the feeling or presence of the historic building. The proposed detached garage is a simple gabled roof design without historicist ornamentation. The materials will follow those of the addition and not appear a historic structure.

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.⁷

Although highly unlikely, if the new addition were to be removed, the historic building could be repaired without significant damage to the historic envelope of the building. The alterations and addition are wood construction and therefore the original could be recreated in the roof and rear facades. The proposed new garage is a separate structure.

General Comments on the rehabilitation plans prepared by Chapman Design Associates.

The historic house was listed in the Los Altos Historic Resource Inventory in 1997, on a flag lot and is

⁷ <http://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/rehabilitation/rehab/stand.htm>

not visible from public street. We do not know the motivation for creating the flag lot- but they are not uncommon; often it was to provide a modern house in the front for a younger generation while maintaining a very close relationship to the older generation in the rear house or simply as a source of income as orchards became unprofitable. Some parcels were not legally divided, while others, when subdivided created unusual shapes or flag lots where the entrance is from the side or rear. Some parcels include historic resources that should be preserved, but these lots, and the location of historic buildings often do not comply with zoning or setback regulations making the preservation of a historic resource more difficult.

When the parcel at 236 Eleanor Avenue was created there was no accommodation given to preserving the historic resource, providing a view corridor to the historic building, or defining the orientation of the parcel. The orientation and footprint of the historic building on the parcel does not conform with the Los Altos zoning regulations for setback. Regulations that were approved after the flag lot was recorded.

In the case of the parcel at 236 Eleanor, the driveway from Eleanor Avenue enters the flag lot at the north side creating the arrival point and the functional front of the parcel. Previous landscaping has strengthened this as the new "front" by placing the pergola (carport) at the point of entry. For the same reason, this carport location would be the logical location for a detached garage. Although not conforming with the current Zoning regulations (setbacks), this continues the entry setting established when the lot was recorded, and allows a secondary structure that is compatible with the siting of the historic house.

State or National historic preservation criteria generally do not provide guidance in a situation where setbacks have been adopted because the overarching philosophy is to protect the historic resource and when necessary, use the best judgement to provide the most beneficial setting for the historic resource, thus contributing to the preservation of the historic resource. In some communities, historic buildings or properties are given a special overlay zone, with requirements to encourage the rehabilitation, use, and preservation of the historic buildings, or sites, The Los Altos Zoning code does not appear to contain this type of zoning regulation.

Conclusion: Urban Programmers determined that the rehabilitation plan provided by Chapman Design for 236 Eleanor Avenue, including the addition to the historic house and location of a new garage, complies with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings*. The property retains eligibility to be listed in the Los Altos Historic Resource Inventory.

Recommendation: An updated DPR should be prepared to identify the original owner and record changes that may be approved and completed as part of the current application.

Best regards,



Bonnie Bamburg

