



## Memorandum

Date: March 5, 2020

For: Sean Gallegos, Associate Planner  
City of Los Altos  
Department of Community Development  
Planning Division  
1 North San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

Client: Eric and Lauren Albert  
1757 Pilgrim Avenue  
Mountain View, CA 94040

Project Name and Address: Project Analysis Comments Response  
725 University Avenue  
Los Altos, CA 94022

IR Project No: P2019-067

## Introduction

At the request of Danielle DiVittorio of DiVittorio Architecture and Design, Interactive Resources is responding to comments relative to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards Project Analysis Report (January 28, 2019) which addressed alterations to 725 University Avenue. The comments below were questions generated by Sean Gallegos, the planner assigned to the project by the City of Los Altos. These were transmitted to Interactive Resources via E-mails from Danielle DiVittorio on February 24 and March 2, 2020. All background information including the project description and Secretary of the Interior's Standards Project Analysis are incorporated into this memorandum by reference.

## Comments / Response

February 24, 2019 – a letter was requested by Sean Gqallegos from Interactive Resources commenting on the proposed exterior finishes including:

### Existing / Proposed exterior paint color.

*Comment:* The house was recently painted, and the painted surfaces and paint adhesion are in excellent condition. The coloration is appropriate to the house period with distinctions between the field or wall color and trim and exposed structural elements like rafter tails. There are no plans to re-paint the entire house, rather painting will only occur to those areas where there are alterations and roof additions. The paint scheme for the new work will match the existing color scheme. The design team is researching the current paint colors from the latest re-painting to get accurate color matches.

### Existing / Proposed wall covering material.

*Comment:* The existing wall cladding is wood shingle. In addition, the substantial multiple additions of later dates at the rear or north of the house are also clad in wood shingles. The new work includes a new dormer / wall extension located on the roof planes toward the rear of the house. In terms of new wall square footage, it is minimal, and essentially not visible from the street. New dormer wall sides will be clad in wood shingles matching the existing original wood shingles, and the wood shingles of the subsequent additions to the back of the house.

### Stairs being resurfaced – proposed tile / floor finish.

As the Analysis Report states, the front porch extending across the front of the house is not original and has been altered several times. There are three existing concrete stairs with side pillars leading to the finished first floor level. One flight is located at the front entry and the other two are on the east addition. All three are similar in design, and the concrete work appears to be not older than the 1960's. It is likely that they are non-historic alterations. The existing yard was landscaped within the past several years, and on all walking surfaces tan colored concrete or stone pavers were installed. The project proposes using the same material to clad the existing concrete steps and porch surface. Because these features are not called out in the DPR forms as character defining features, and because the proposed cladding will be visually like the existing poured concrete, cladding the existing steps and porch surface will not compromise the character of the house.

### Window trim.

*Comment:* The window trim is minimal reflecting the quantity of work proposed. The trim will be wood of the same dimension and thickness as the existing conditions. It should be a weather resistant western red cedar or redwood. Composite trim materials will not be used. It will be painted the same color as the existing trim.

### Door trim on new French door.

*Comment:* The French door trim will match the door trim typically used throughout the house. The comment for “window trim”, above applies

### Door and window products.

*Comment:* The products used for new doors and windows will be solid wood reflecting the existing material conditions. It is not necessary to custom build new doors and windows because proprietary wood products are available, historically appropriate, and commonly accepted in this situation. The major brand names in use for historic buildings include Pella and Marvin. A generic specification includes:

- Solid wood
- Factory primed
- Windows operable as needed (casement, double hung, or fixed)
- True divided lights if the design requires divisions

Inappropriate products and conditions include:

- Vinyl windows
- Vinyl clad wood windows
- Aluminum windows
- Aluminum clad wood windows
- Steel windows
- Sliding windows or doors
- Clip on or faux divided lights

### Standard #9

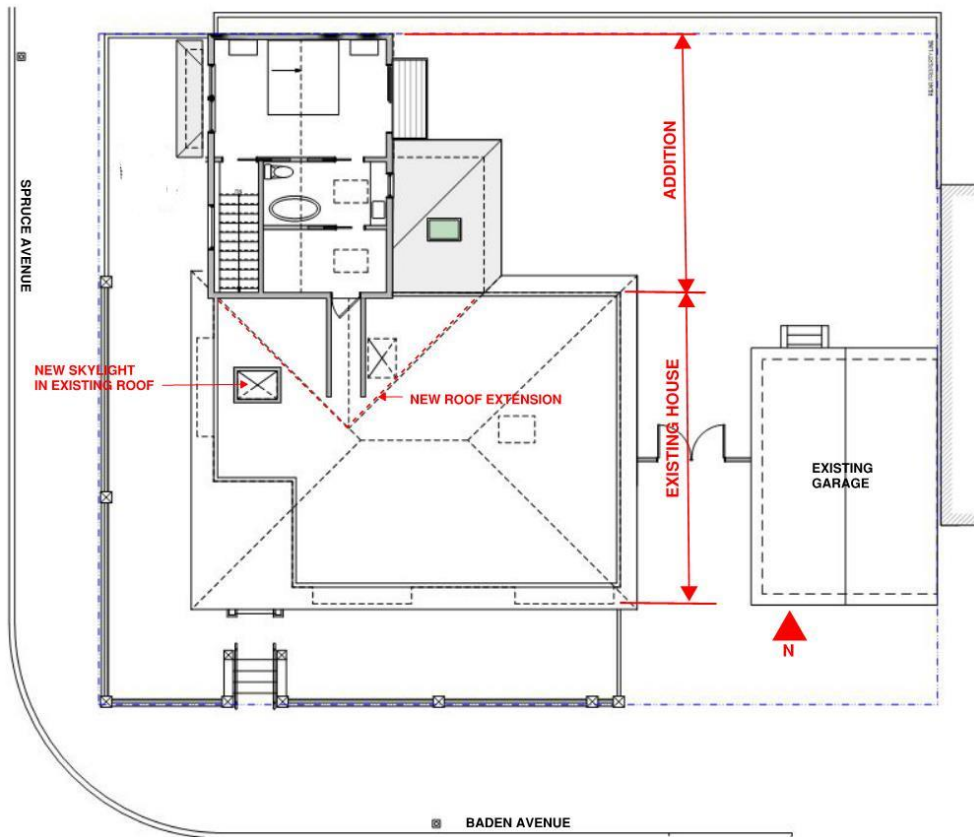
*Comment:*

On Monday March 2<sup>nd</sup>, the property owner, Eric Albert and Assistant Planner Sean Gallegos met to discuss the project. Mr. Gallegos asked for a commentary on how the new work would be distinct from the existing to informed observers. This request is pertinent to Standard #9:

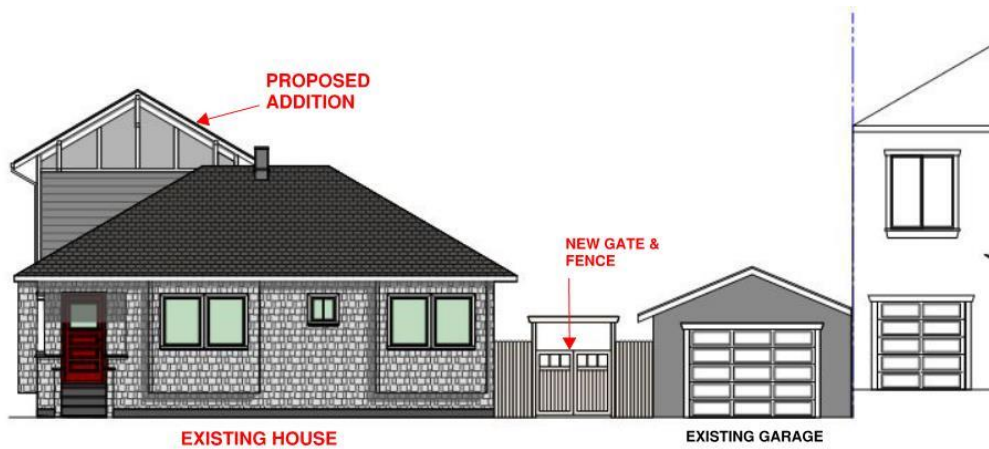
*“New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction shall not destroy historic materials that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and shall be compatible with the massing, size, scale, and architectural features to protect the historic integrity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

This standard seeks to discourage “false historicism”; however, implicit in this standard is the idea of scale and quantity. The application is commonly understood to address larger additions with additional footprint, or additions that add substantial height. For example, the following project involves a rear, connected two story addition to a small, simple craftsman house constructed in 1906. The application of this standard is rigorous in creating distinctions between the original house and the addition using a diminished footprint, mass, cladding materials and color. The task is to allow the original house to predominate while clearly making a distinction

between new work and the historic house. The application of this standard works at the scale of the entire property.

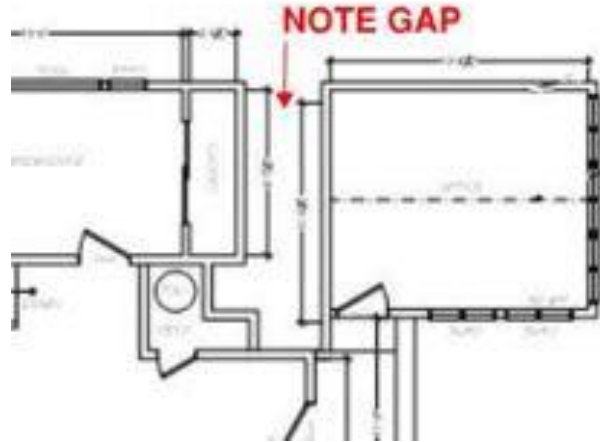


Second Floor Plan



Street Elevation (front)

The project at 725 University Avenue is comprised of disparate elements located out of view, for the most part at the heavily altered rear of the property. Because there is no single addition or additional footprint, and the alterations are small in scale it is architecturally difficult to make a distinction between the original fabric and the new work. For example: the project proposes connecting the discontinuous spaces at the northeast corner of the second floor which requires a new wall that aligns with the two original walls:



Existing Second Floor



Proposed Connection and Enclosure

To use a differ cladding material to make a distinction at this type of architectural condition at this scale serves no purpose relative to the intent of Standard #9. Similarly, the proposed window removal to be replaced with a French door on the rear elevation, does not lend itself to an observable or material distinction. The only option for making a distinction would be to use a sliding glass door which is not compatible with the architectural language of the house.

On the other hand, the original design proposed a dormer at the front elevation, observable from the street. Based on the character defining features described in the DPR forms, the main roof lines are important and the addition at this location would compromise the building's character and add an observable inappropriate feature. The design team opted for the use of skylights at this location as an alternative. This decision complies with Standard #9 in that it makes clear that this feature is new, very low profile, and architecturally neutral in terms of the architectural language.



East Elevation Showing New Skylights

I will be happy to answer any additional questions or address concerns. We believe that this project is well conceived, and fully meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties – Rehabilitation Treatment.

Handwritten signature of Charles G. Duncan in blue ink.

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