

TREANORHL

156 CRESCENT AVENUE, SUNNYVALE, CALIFORNIA  
SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR STANDARDS COMPLIANCE REVIEW

*Revised*

March 27, 2023



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### 1. INTRODUCTION

The following is an evaluation of the proposed project at 156 Crescent Avenue in Sunnyvale (APN 211-35-009). The existing two-story residence on the subject parcel, along with the adjacent house at 148 Crescent Avenue, was evaluated for historic significance by TreanorHL in August 2021. It was found eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and on the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR), while the adjacent house at 148 Crescent was not found to be significant. The single-family house at 156 Crescent Avenue is also listed on the City of Sunnyvale’s Heritage Resources Inventory as a heritage resource.



This report includes an analysis of the proposed design, which consists of the rehabilitation of 156 Crescent Avenue, and the demolition of two utilitarian structures and the house at 148 Crescent Avenue to accommodate the construction of two new multi-family buildings. TreanorHL staff reviewed the proposed designs for compliance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, and proposed recommendations for improving the project's historic compatibility. The design was revised based upon those recommendations, and the report concludes with a discussion of the revised design.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The following documents were reviewed in preparing this report: the 148 Crescent Avenue Sunnyvale, California drawings by Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture dated November 9, 2022; TreanorHL's Historic Resource Evaluation dated August 27, 2021; and existing plans and elevations of 156 Crescent Avenue by AsBuilt Services dated August 30, 2022. Revised concept drawings by Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture, dated March 2, 2023 were created in response to our initial SOIS evaluation.

## 3. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Following a thorough review and compatibility assessment of the proposed project provided by Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture, TreanorHL finds that the proposed repairs for the existing house at 156 Crescent Avenue are acceptable, as very little work is proposed on the exterior. In our initial report, from February 2, 2023, we found the details on the new building design to be too literal in their attempt at compatibility with the historic house. We also recommended that the massing be rethought to break up the linearity of the structures. Specifically, we recommended that setbacks and projections be implemented to articulate and define the various townhouse units. The design was revised to eliminate many of the "historical" details that were proposed for the new structures.

## 4. SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

According to the Historic Resource Evaluation from August 2021:

The single-family house at 156 Crescent Avenue appears individually eligible for listing in the NRHP and CRHR under Criterion C/3 at the local level as an exemplary extant illustration of a Craftsman style dwelling with a unique roof shape. The period of significance under Criterion C/3 is the year of construction, 1927. The house retains sufficient physical integrity to convey its significance as an individual resource. The single-family house also appears eligible for listing on the *City of Sunnyvale's Heritage Resource Inventory* under criterion (c). None of the accessory structure on the parcel appear eligible for listing on the federal, state, or local inventories.<sup>1</sup>

Character-defining features of the property include the following:

- Two-story, roughly rectangular massing
- Broad, gable roof with a wide overhang
- Exposed rafters
- Chamfered gable ends
- Projecting porch with chamfered gable roof
- Knee-brace brackets supporting the gable ends
- Wood-sash, double-hung windows
- Exposed chimney

### 156 Crescent Avenue (APN 211-35-009)

The following property description is sourced from the HRE from August 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> TreanorHL, *148 & 156 Crescent Avenue, Historic Resource Evaluation*, August 27, 2021.

This parcel contains a two-story single-family Craftsman-style house and four one-story accessory structures at the rear. A paved driveway runs to the west of the house.

The house is rectangular in plan and features a broad, asphalt shingle-clad gable roof with chamfers at the gable ends, and exposed rafters at the sides. Knee-brace brackets support the overhanging gable ends. The main entry is accessed via a projecting porch centered on the primary (north) elevation, which is covered by a similarly chamfered gable roof. A slight projection at the west elevation also features a chamfered gable. An exposed chimney graces the west side. Horizontal vinyl siding clads the house. Windows are double-hung wood sash with aluminum screens.

On the primary elevation, a pair of double hung windows are centered in the gable end. Larger double hung windows flank the entry porch. The entry door is a solid, paneled wood door covered by an aluminum screen door. Sidelights with vertically striated glass flank the door.

Four accessory structures are also found on the parcel. One is an L-shaped one-story structure with a gable roof over the long arm and a hipped roof over the shorter arm of the "L." The building has horizontal wood cladding, and metal casement and vinyl windows. Painted graphics on the building include a man, chickens, and flowers. A second accessory structure is a one-story metal warehouse building with a shallow gable roof. This structure has vertically ribbed metal cladding. It features large garage/loading doors. A third accessory structure is a square-plan hipped roof garage, with horizontal wood cladding, that appears to be of similar vintage to the house. This structure has a hipped roof, a large garage door on its primary elevation, and a person-door on its side elevation. The fourth structure is a large shed, with a barn door and exposed rafters. It features a low-sloped shed roof with exposed rafter tails, aluminum slider windows, and smooth, vertically placed plywood panels.<sup>2</sup> (Figures 1-5)



Figure 1. The front (north) and west façades of 156 Crescent Avenue.

<sup>2</sup> TreanorHL, *148 & 156 Crescent Avenue, Historic Resource Evaluation*, August 27, 2021.



Figures 2 and 3. The accessory structure and the warehouse at the 156 Crescent Avenue property.



Figures 4 and 5. The one-story garage and the shed on the 156 Crescent Avenue property.

## 5. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The proposed project includes minor alterations to the residence at 156 Crescent Drive, and the construction of two new townhouse-style condominiums to the south and southwest of the house. The house and garage at 148 Crescent Avenue, and the car port and two utilitarian buildings at the rear of 156 Crescent Avenue will be demolished. None of these structures appeared to be eligible historic resources in the previous study. The house at 156 Crescent Avenue will be preserved, and will undergo repairs to the exterior and minor alterations to the interior. On the exterior, the house including the front and back doors will receive new paint, and where necessary, siding will be repaired or replaced in kind and gutters will be repainted or, if necessary, replaced. The interior floors will be refurbished, the bathroom will be updated, and the interior completely repainted.<sup>3</sup>

Two new multi-family buildings, Buildings 1 and 2, will be constructed south of 156 Crescent Avenue. The new buildings essentially mirror each other. However, Building 1 includes 10 units, while Building 2 has 8, for a total of 18 condominium townhouses. The garage elevations face each other, creating an internal courtyard that is essentially the driveway for the complex. The main entries to the units are located on the outward-facing elevations, which appear to be accessed by long, narrow pathways.

The previous design:

Windows include single hung, sliders and fixed, all multi-lite. The window material, and the type of divided lite is not described. In plan, the buildings are long, linear rectangles, clad in stucco and horizontal siding. Roofs are shallow-gabled composite-shingle-clad, with cross gables introduced above some projections. The west elevation of Building 1 (east elevation of Building 2) features shallow one-story projections with gable roofs at the first and third floors, differentiated from the stucco wall with horizontal siding. The gable ends feature board-and-batten siding and a centered, narrow

<sup>3</sup> Samir Sharma to Nancy Goldenberg, Attached document of email, "Proposed Project Description, 148 & 156 Crescent Ave, Sunnyvale, CA 94087," January 12, 2023.

outlooker, or bracket. A pent roof spans the length of the first floor, interrupted by three gabled entryways. Sheltered beneath the roofs are nine two-panel doors and multi-lite windows with stucco-over-foam surrounds. Fenestration on the second floor includes a mix of single, paired, and grouped multi-lite windows with the same surrounds. Projecting bays with gable roofs sit between single and paired multi-lite windows on the third floor. Some multi-lite windows incorporate non-functioning shutters.

The second and third floors project over the first floor on the east elevation of Building 1/west elevation of Building 2. 10 two-car garages span the first floor (Building 2 includes 8 garages). Multi-pane windows are repeated across the second floor. Full-height multi-lite windows with false-balcony railings and non-functional shutters dominate the third floor. The wide, third-floor four projecting bays feature much smaller board-and-batten gable ends with outlookers.

A layered wall of shallow projecting and recessed sections with two gable ends comprise the north façades of both buildings. A single door is tucked into a recessed entryway with a small divided lite window to the west. Three other doors sit to the west on the first floor. Divided lite windows with shutters are on the second and third floors. The south elevations feature a single door, and five divided lite windows (figure 9).

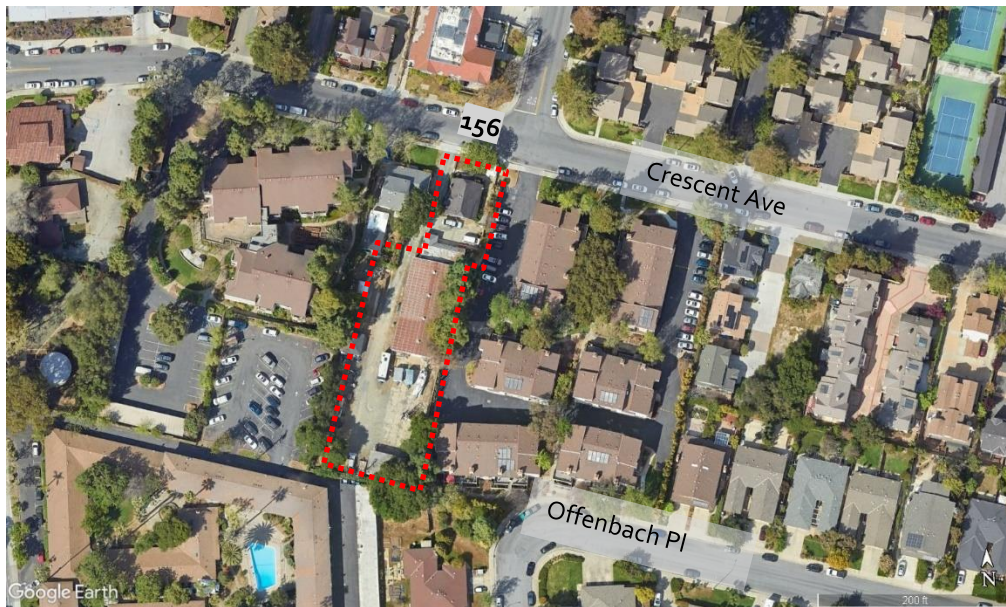


Figure 6. Aerial view of the subject building, parcel outlined in dashed red (Google Earth, imagery date March 2022).



Figure 7. View from Crescent Avenue of the 156 Crescent Avenue with the proposed new buildings.



Figure 8. The proposed site plan with new buildings labeled in red, and the existing house at 156 Crescent Avenue blocked out in red (Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture, November 2022).



Figure 9. View of all elevations of Building 1 (Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture, November 2022).

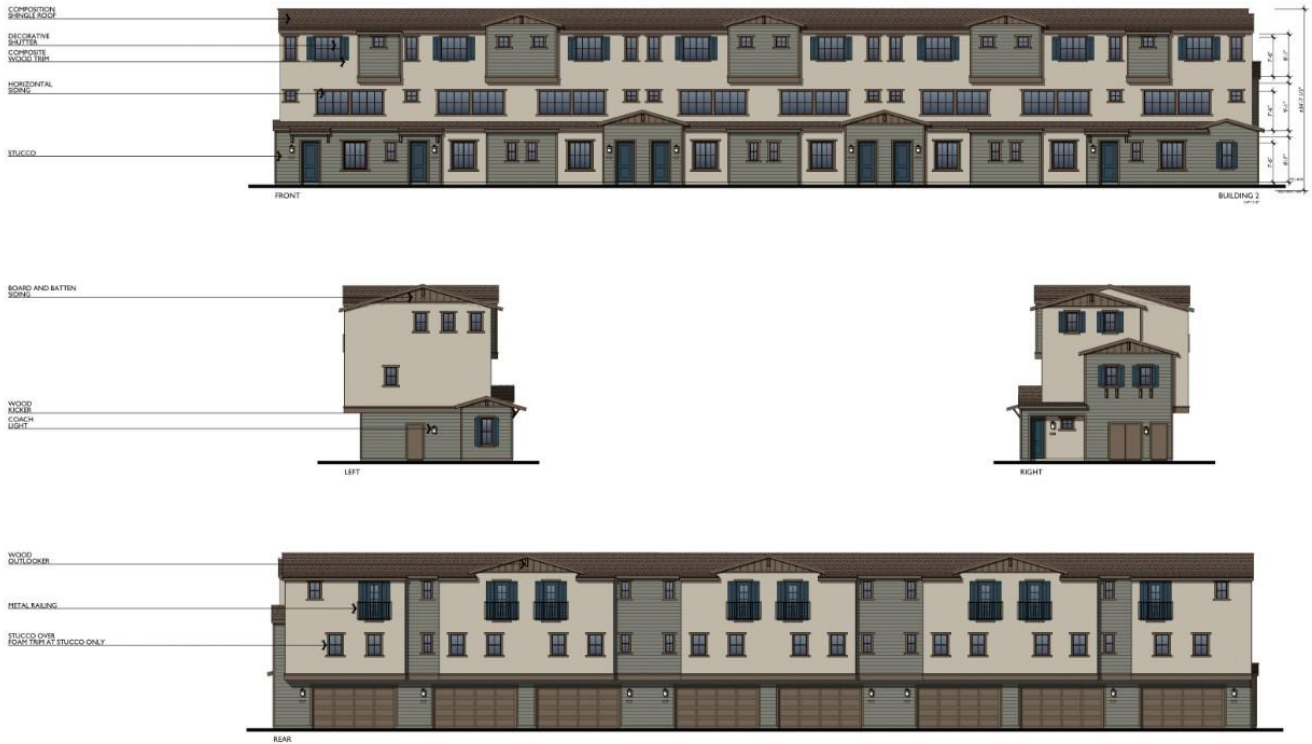


Figure 10. View of all elevations of Building 2 (Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture, November 2022).



Figure 11. Rendering of a street view from Crescent Avenue, view of the existing building and the 2 proposed buildings (Bassenian/Lagoni Architecture, November 2022).



## 6. SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS ANALYSIS

The building at 156 Crescent Avenue appears individually eligible for listing in the CRHR and NRHP. Therefore, the proposed project must comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Since the exterior of 156 Crescent Avenue will receive only maintenance-type work, such as painting and siding repair, a full Secretary of the Interior's Standards evaluation is not required. Should more exterior alterations eventually be proposed, an SOIS evaluation of the house itself should be undertaken.

The proposed new buildings will provide a new contextual backdrop for the existing house. Since context is one of the seven components of integrity that are evaluated during a historical evaluation, these buildings must be evaluated for their relation to the existing historic house. For a contextual evaluation, Standards 3, 9 and 10 are the most significant.

### Standard 3

*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.*

Analysis: The two proposed new structures include many features that appear to be Craftsman style, such as the outlookers beneath the gable ends, and the board-and batten detailing in the gable ends. There are also several generic "historic" details, including the non-functional shutters, the decorative balcony railings, and the divided lite windows. We assume that this was done to relate to the historic house. However, 156 Crescent is a simple Craftsman bungalow, that depends on its massing and symmetry to create a harmonious effect. To be compliant with Standard 3, the new buildings should have simpler, more contemporary detailing than the historic house. Instead of trying to apply Craftsman or generic historic detailing to the new structures, the buildings should take inspiration from the historic house, utilizing massing and proportion to a greater extent.

The qualities of the new buildings that are successful do just that. The simple, gently sloping rooflines, for example, relate to the gable roof of the existing house without trying to mimic it. If the new buildings had the same slope as that of the existing house, the buildings would be much too tall – the gentler gables allow the buildings to relate but not to dominate the site. We also appreciate the layering effect found on the design of the Crescent Avenue-facing elevations. This layering allows the buildings to visually step up from the scale of the historic house to the three-story height of the new buildings. However, again, the too-literal detailing found on these elevations is less successful.

### Standard 9

*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.*

#### Massing:

The proposed new buildings are basically three-story linear rectangles, sited perpendicular to Crescent Avenue. They feature gable roofs, which soften the massing somewhat, and relate to the gable-roofed house without literally copying its roofline. The Crescent Avenue-facing elevations are layered, which helps to transition the massing from the one-and-one-half story historic house to the three-story multi-family buildings. We also appreciate the introduction of horizontal board siding in some parts of the buildings, which relate to the siding on the historic house.

However, the massing of the linear rectangles could be improved. Since the units will essentially be townhouses, perhaps the design could articulate the unit divisions with setbacks and projections, which would help to break up the linearity.

#### Size and scale:

While these buildings are taller than the historic house, the layering of the street-facing facades helps to transition from the smaller single-family house to the taller multi-family house. While the detailing is too literally "historic," this layering is effective. We also appreciate that roofs will be gabled with a lower slope than that of the existing house. The designers tried to further break up the roofline with small cross gables perpendicular to the main roofline. We find this less effective

than the overall roofline, although the idea of introducing cross-gables is fine. It is just that the elevation detailing below these cross-gables is less effective. On the west elevation of Building 1 (east elevation of Building 2), for example, these cross gables are located above shallow projections that are primarily black walls with two small windows. On the east elevation of Building 1/west elevation of Building 2, there are larger projections with small gables over tall windows with faux shutters and balconies. The relationship of the gable ends with the much wider projection is rather awkward.

*Features:*

As mentioned under Standard 3, many of the details found on the proposed new buildings are too literal in their attempt to establish a historic feeling and therefore, compatibility. Here again are the character-defining features of the existing house:

- Two-story, roughly rectangular massing
- Broad, gable roof with a wide overhang
- Exposed rafters at the side elevations
- Chamfered gable ends
- Projecting porch with chamfered gable roof
- Knee-brace brackets supporting the gable ends
- Wood-sash, double-hung windows
- Exposed chimney

In most cases, the design of the proposed buildings includes more "historic" details than found on the existing house. For example, the existing house has simple, one-over-one double or single hung windows. The new buildings, however, feature a variety of window types, but all are multi-lite. Generally, a better strategy is to simplify.

*10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction shall be undertaken in such a manner that if*  
Compatibility Analysis:

The two new proposed buildings are standalone structures. The new buildings will not physically impact the character-defining features of the house. If the new construction were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the building and its environment will be unimpaired. Therefore, the proposed project complies with Standard 10.

## 7. DESIGN RECOMMENDATIONS

The following were recommendations made to the previous design.

1. Massing: Break up the linearity of the new buildings with more setbacks and projections. We suggest articulating the separate townhome units in this fashion. This will not only break up the massing but allow for better unit identity. It could also allow for the introduction of true balconies and/or porches.
2. Detailing: As stated above, the design includes too many literal historical references. The detailing should be simplified, and literal historical references avoided entirely.

## 8. REVISED DESIGN

The revised design (see attached elevation sheet) has eliminated most of the historical references that we felt were not in compliance with Secretary of the Interior Standard #3, which recommends that "each property shall be recognized as a physical record of its time, place and use." The previous design attempted to create a "Craftsman-Style" complex to coordinate with the adjacent Craftsman Style house. However, the existing house has very simple detailing, relying more on massing to convey its design. The proposed buildings applied many "historical" details that were more elaborate than anything on the historic home. We recommended simplifying the design of the new structures and relying more on massing than applied details.

The revised elevations now meet the Standards but are not necessarily good design. The previous version displayed a variety of window types – the revised design has only three – what appear to be sliders, one-over-one double hung windows, and small fixed windows. Roofs are composition shingle.

The outward-facing elevations (West, on the sheet that was provided) in the revised design are fairly successful. Materials include board and batten cladding, stucco, and horizontal cladding. Neither the board and batten nor the horizontal cladding are used in excess and are not contiguous on this elevation.

The other long elevation – the one facing inward, is less successful. This elevation also combines the materials listed above for the outward-facing elevations. Here, vertical, board-and-batten clad gabled sections alternate with stucco-clad areas. The board-and-batten extends from the gable tips to the ground. These gabled areas appear to be set behind the stucco areas, and at the ends the stucco portions overlap the vertical insets. We find the use of board and batten extending to the ground at these already tall, narrow insets to be visually disturbing. The use of board and batten cladding at the recessed base is fine, but a better result would be obtained by cladding these vertical, gabled insets with stucco, perhaps offsetting them from the projecting stucco areas with color rather than vertical cladding.

The short elevations – and particularly the north elevation, which faces Crescent Avenue – are even less successful. The north elevation juxtaposes horizontal cladding with board and batten, which we find visually disruptive. We preferred the earlier design for this elevation to the revision.

## 9. CONCLUSION

When designing infill, or contextual new buildings that are contiguous with a historic building, it is not necessary, nor is it recommended, to mimic the architectural style of the historic building. The building should be compatible with, but distinct from the existing building. This means looking at materials, massing, proportion, datum lines and other qualities of the historic building and reinterpreting them into a modern building that coordinates with the historic building but is clearly distinct. It should not try to recreate the historical style.

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