



CAREY & CO. | A TreanorHL Company

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Carey & Co. / a TreanorHL Company

Project Analysis for Adherence to  
The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

221 North Mathilda Avenue Sunnyvale, CA

## Introduction

This report was commissioned by the project developer, 221 N. Mathilda LLC, to determine whether the rehabilitation treatments proposed for the historic house on the property at 221 North Mathilda Avenue, Sunnyvale, meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. The project team, the Smith Group JJR (SGJJR), Simpson Gumpertz & Heger (SGH), Carey & Co., a TreanorHL Company, and the developer has met to shape a preservation strategy and treatments for the historical element of the larger commercial development project. This report reflects the outcome of the meetings and analyzes the project approach for adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Properties, Rehabilitation.

This report reviews two previous reports for adequacy and completeness. The first is the "Historical and Architectural Evaluation" by Archives and Architecture LLC (A&A), (dated June 23, 2015) which offers the historical background of the property including the roles of historic persons, the architectural significance of the house, the historic integrity of the property, and the properties historic status. The second report by SGH is the "Preliminary Building Enclosure and Structural Assessment" (dated August 29, 2016) which is an in-depth survey of the physical state of the house including recommendations for the work required for its rehabilitation for re-use. Finally, the report content is based, in part, on direct observations made during a site visit by Carey & Co. on September 3, 2016. (Historic photo from "Cottages, Flats, Buildings and Bungalows" by George Espinola, 2016 photo by Carey & Co. / a Treator HL Co., Drawings by SGH and SGJJR).

## Site and House Description

**Site.** The property is located between Sobrante Way to the west and North Mathilda Avenue to the east. To the north and south it is bound by a developed site containing three industrial buildings and California Avenue. The site is a surviving example of the earliest turn of the twentieth century residential development in Sunnyvale. Originally the property was divided into the residential side facing Mathilda Avenue to the east and a larger tract to the west containing an orchard. Between the house and the orchard are several outbuildings of varying ages.

**House.** The house is unusual in that, while very modest in size, its classical revival scheme is articulate and skillfully designed and detailed. It clearly stands apart from similar vernacular houses of the period. The architectural office of Wolf & McKenzie of San Jose, designed the house in 1906, and it was included in a portfolio of their work titled "Book of Designs" published the following year.

The residence is a single story wood framed cottage with a double hipped roof. It is approximately 48 feet long and 30 feet wide. The roof is clad in composition shingles over the original wood shingles. Hollow wood gutters, (most of which are missing), were mounted at the roofs perimeter. The finished floor is above a crawl space that is approximately 5 feet high. A slender red brick chimney extends from grade in the crawl space to several feet above the roof. The front, or east side, facing North Mathilda Avenue, is the primary elevation. This facade is composed of an entry porch at the southeast corner with a curved ceiling (in plan) and fascia. Adjacent to the porch is a prominent curved bay in the center of the elevation, above which is an attic dormer in the form of a pediment. The roof is rectilinear, and it caps the curved plan elements beneath broad overhangs. The foundations are red brick with an 8 inch exposure.

The walls are vertically divided into a three part composition with a 4 foot high base clad in narrow teardrop siding capped with a water table molding. Above the base is the "field" or main wall area containing the windows, also clad in teardrop siding. This portion ends at the window heads in a narrow molding. The uppermost section of wall is between the window head and soffit, and is a fascia clad in a flush tongue and groove siding creating a flat surface. The intersection of the wall and soffit is articulated with a dentil molding. The corners of the house and the porch opening are defined by Tuscan pilasters which bear on the water table molding and end at the window head line. Additional ornament includes three console brackets between the wall and soffit - one centered on the porch, and two at the curved bay. The windows serving the main rooms also have a three part division with the top third being fixed multi-lite sash and the bottom two thirds being single lite moveable sash. The attic pediment contains a multi-lite window, and the rear of the house contains one over one double hung windows. The windows throughout are surrounded with molded trim and sills. At the rear of the house is a deteriorated wood entry deck serving the back door (figs. 1 & 2).



fig. 1. Photograph of the front elevation in 1907



fig. 2. Photograph of the front elevation in 2016

Close inspection of the house revealed several additional conditions.

- Scar trace from the now missing front porch columns appears on the porch ceiling where the columns are located in the historic photograph of 1907.
- Turn of the twentieth century hardware original to the house survives in several locations. The front door appears to be original and contains a mechanical rotary doorbell, a bronze lockset and pull, and while the screen door is missing, the spring hinges are still mounted on the right side. Additional doorknobs and escutcheons are still in use on the inside.
- The interior appears to have been altered mid-century with the additions of a bathroom and a toilet room as well as a shower. The wall containing pocket doors between the Parlor and Dining Room that appears on the floor plan published in 1907 is missing.
- The 1907 plan shows a recessed back porch within the footprint of the roof. This was enclosed at an unknown date.
- There is a “California Cooler” set into a wall perpendicular to the back wall – a relic from when the recessed back porch was open.
- A door was cut into the north elevation at an unknown date. Its design and detailing does not match that of the original house.
- A pile of refuse in the back yard contains two original interior five panel wood doors with hardware. There are also two glazed cabinet doors that appear to be original.

### Historical Status

The “Historical and Architectural Evaluation” report by Archives and Architecture states that the property is currently listed on the City of Sunnyvale’s Historic Resources Inventory. It is also listed on the California Register of Historic Resources with the Status Code 3S, indicating that it appears eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.

## Review of Archives and Architecture Report

Carey & Co, a TrearorHL Company reviewed the “Historical and Architectural Evaluation” report by Archives and Architecture for content and completeness. Their evaluation is in the prescribed format covering:

- Methodology Statement
- Listing of previously completed Surveys
- Historical Status
- Findings Summary
- Policy and Regulatory Context at the Local, State and National levels
- California Environmental Quality Act
- Integrity Statement

In addition the report includes complete State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation, Primary Record Forms (DPR523).

The missing element is the identification of the structure’s Character Defining Features. While the features are identified in the DPR form’s narrative under section P3a – Description, the accepted format is to isolate the features as a list for the sake of clarity.

## Proposed Project Description

The house has been empty for some time. It is generally in fair condition, and is an excellent candidate for rehabilitation including the restoration of its unique character defining features. The proposed project will rehabilitate the historic house for use as a stand-alone meeting facility, as an adjunct to the larger office development to the west. The project will also restore the exterior of the house to its 1907 appearance.

Relocation and Rehabilitation. The work includes the relocation of the house within the existing property to a location approximately 100 feet to the north, and slightly to the west. It will retain its original cardinal orientation, and will continue to face Mathilda Avenue. The details of the work are as follows:

Relocation:

- Move the house to its new location and pour new foundations providing seismic resistance and code compliance. Repair understory framing as required. The new foundations will be designed so as not to impinge on the root systems of the trees which will remain on site.
- Remove the existing brick chimney. Construct a brick veneer chimney above the roof line at the original location to serve as a mechanical vent. The chimney will match the height and dimensions of the original.
- Abandon and demolish the existing, non-historic concrete porch, steps and iron railing. After the move, construct a wood porch and steps and install two Tuscan columns following the plan and photograph published in 1907.
- Abandon and demolish the existing, non-historic back entry steps and deck. After the move, construct a new accessible, A.DA - compliant back entry deck (figs. 3 & 4).

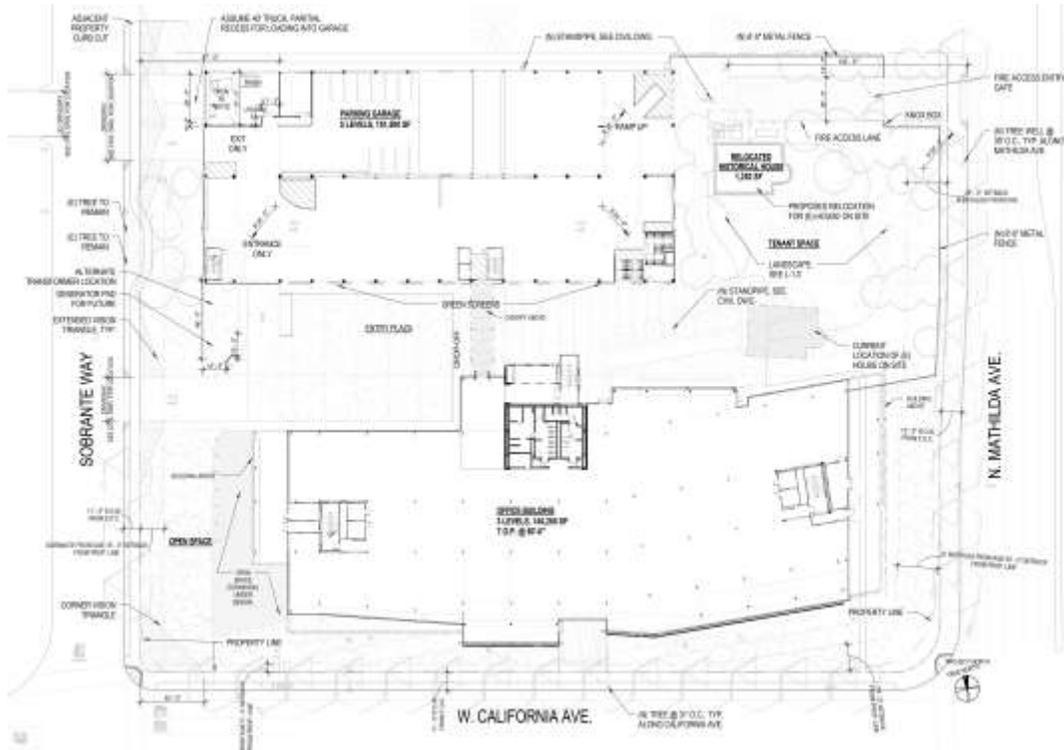


fig. 3. Site Plan showing full site development. The historic house is at the upper right.

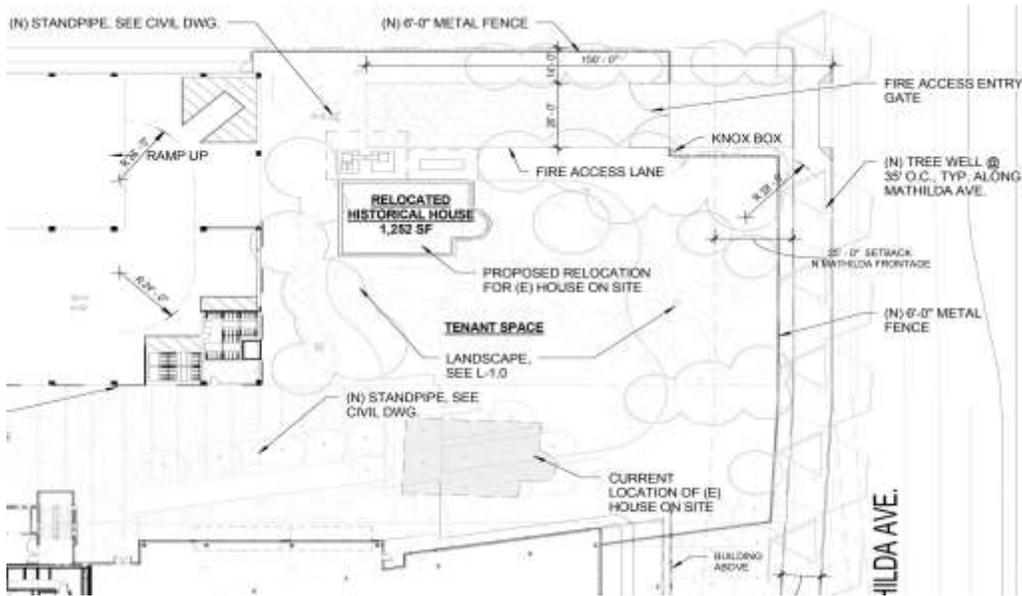


fig. 4. Site Plan detail showing the existing and proposed historic house locations

#### Exterior Rehabilitation

- Roof - Repair deteriorated framing as required. Install new wood shingle or composition shingle cladding, depending upon fire code requirements. Replace missing or deteriorated wood gutters in-kind with material and profiles to match the historic condition.

- Windows - Retain historic glazing. Remove windows for repair and installation of new glazing compound.. Reinstall windows and make all moving sash operable.
- Walls - The walls are generally in good condition. Where damaged or deteriorated the wood siding will be replaced in-kind with matching materials and profiles. A non-historic door on the north elevation will be removed and the opening patched with in-kind wood siding.
- Painting and Ornament - The house has many layers of paint that in particular obscure the details in the architectural ornaments and moldings. The original paint will be carefully removed with particular care given to ornamental elements to preserve the definition of their forms. The house will be primed, patched and repainted (figs. 5, 6, 7 and 8).

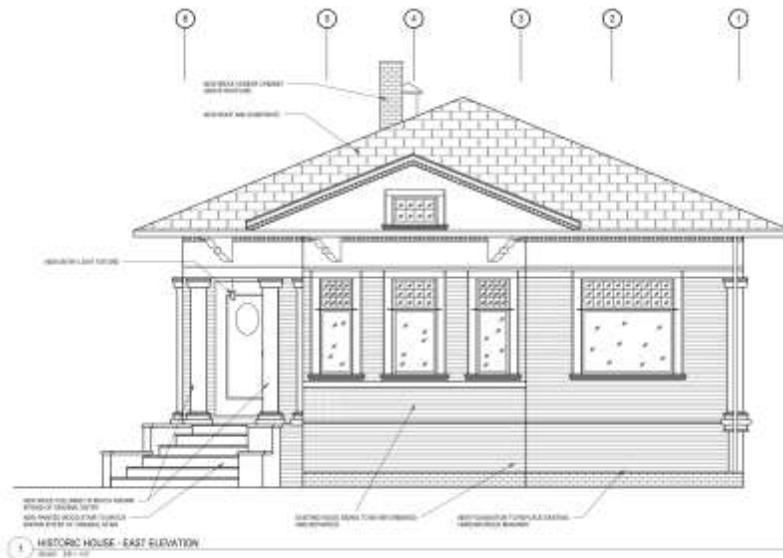


fig. 5. Front or East Elevation facing North Mathilda Avenue showing restored porch

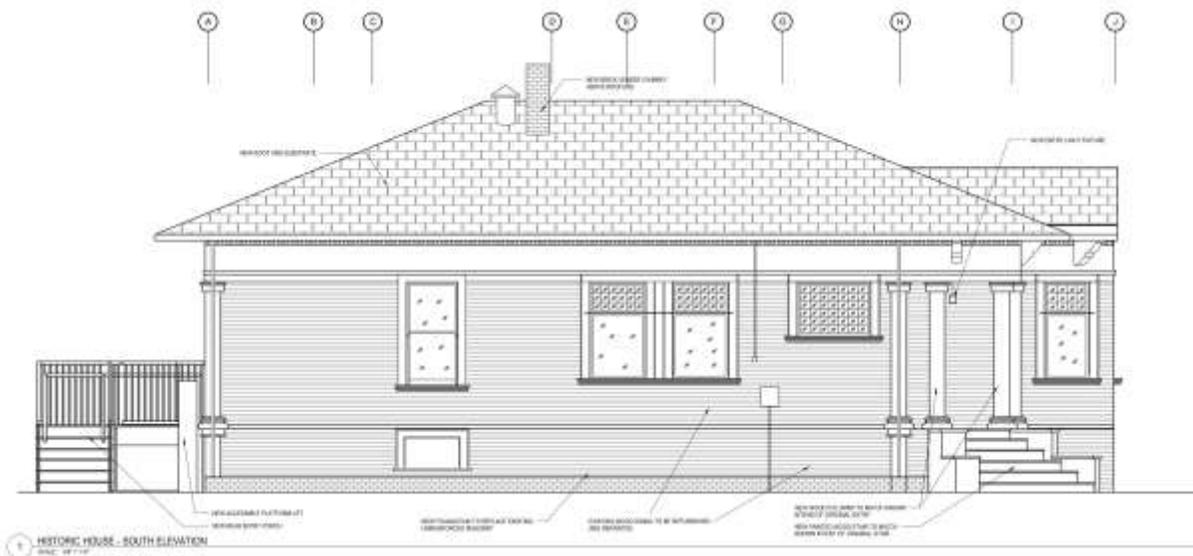


fig.6. South Elevation facing North Mathilda Avenue showing restored porch



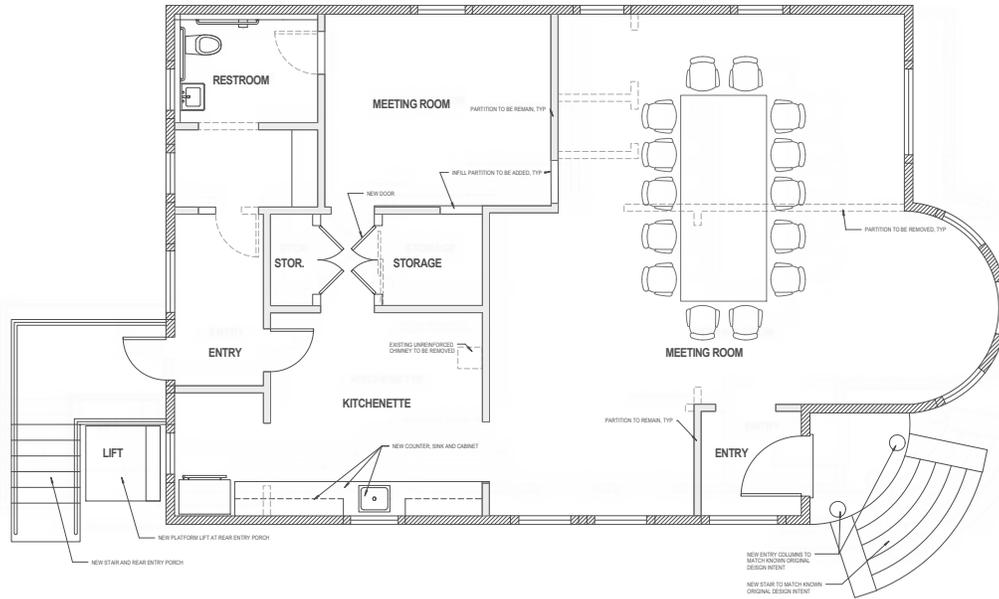


fig. 9. Plan showing interior alterations

#### Miscellaneous

- All historic elements such as interior doors, fixtures or cabinetry not used in the rehabilitation project will remain with the house including the two cabinet doors and two, five panel interior doors currently in the back yard. They will be placed in secure protected storage beneath the house.

#### Project Adherence to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties

Four different treatments comprise the Secretary's Standards which are used as mandatory guidelines to maintain the historic character of historic or potentially historic buildings when a construction project is proposed. The four treatments include Preservation, Rehabilitation, Reconstruction, and Restoration. Of the four, Rehabilitation is the most appropriate choice for the work at 221 North Mathilda Avenue. The Rehabilitation Standard is as follows:

Definition of "Rehabilitation" The Secretary of the Interior defines rehabilitation as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural value.

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.

*Analysis: The proposed project converts the house from a residence to a small, stand-alone meeting facility associated with the tenancy of the commercial office development. This is a common compatible re-use for historic houses in that it involves minimal change to the fabric of the building and is a low impact use commensurate with residential design. The residential nature of the house and its character defining features will remain. Missing or deteriorated elements will be replaced in-kind. Inappropriate additions, such as the concrete entry steps will be removed and the house will be restored to its 1907 appearance through drawn and photographic documentary evidence.*

2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.

*Analysis: To accommodate the larger commercial office structures the house will be moved to the north by approximately 100 feet and slightly to the west. The new siting will maintain the original cardinal orientation with the front elevation (west) facing North Mathilda Avenue as it was historically.*

3. Each property will 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 elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.

*Analysis: No features will be added creating a false sense of historical development. The rehabilitation is guided by the intact architectural features as well as photographic documentation in the form of a 1907 photograph published in George Espinola's book "Cottages, Flats, Buildings, and Bungalows" (2004) which catalogs the work of Wolfe & McKenzie Architects.*

4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.

*Analysis: The house has had several changes over time – none of which contribute to the character or significance of building. First, the original wooden entry steps and two Doric columns that framed the entry porch were removed, likely in the 1940's or 1950's. They were replaced with concrete steps and an iron handrail. When the house is moved, the concrete steps will be demolished and the entry porch will be reconstructed to the original design. Second, a door was cut into the north elevation at an unknown time, but is different in design from the architectural language of the house. In addition there is no porch or evidence of a porch at this location, and the door leads to nowhere. The door will be removed and in-kind wall cladding will fill the opening. Finally the original design of the house had a recessed unenclosed back door entry beneath the roof hip. This was enclosed at an unknown time and will remain so as part of this project. An uncovered back deck was built subsequently and is severely deteriorated. It will be replaced with a design that is contemporary but compatible with the house.*

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

*Analysis: The house is an excellent example of a modest residence with well-conceived design and detailing. All character defining distinctive materials, finishes, craftsmanship, and construction techniques will be preserved.*

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

*Analysis: The primary area of deterioration and missing historic fabric is at the roof, gutters and soffits. All materials requiring replacement either from deterioration or the desire to adhere to the documented 1907 appearance will be replaced in-kind with the original materials including wood gutters, wood tongue and groove soffits, and wood siding with a narrow teardrop section. The original roof was wood shingle, and survives in deteriorated form under multiple subsequent roof coverings. It is our intention to clad the roof in treated fire resistant wood shingles. If the building code disallows the use of wood shingles the roof will be clad in a heavy profile, composition "class A" shingles in a color that approximates that of wood. Where fire resistance is a concern, the use of composition shingles is a generally accepted substitute for historic houses.*

7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.

*Analysis: The house is heavily encrusted with over a century of paint. This condition obscures the definition of character defining details. The paint will be stripped or low pressure washed using the gentlest means possible via experiments in unobtrusive locations to test for the most effective but least damaging product and method. Abrasive paint removal methods will not be used.*

8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

*Analysis: This site has been disturbed, and it is unlikely that archeological resources will be found. If, however, resources are discovered during the course of foundation work, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*

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

*Analysis: Apart from the reconstruction of the front entry steps and porch columns to the 1907 appearance, and reconstruction of the back entry deck, no additions to the house are contemplated in this project.*

10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will 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.

*Analysis: The only new addition is the reconstruction of the deteriorated back entry deck which will also incorporate accessibility features. The porch does not impinge on the historic fabric of the original house, and its removal will not compromise the historic character or integrity of the house.*

Source: Weeks, Kay D. and Anne E. Grimmer. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with guidelines for preserving, rehabilitating, restoring and reconstructing historic buildings. Washington, D.C.

## CONCLUSION

We believe that the proposed rehabilitation of the historic house at 221 North Mathilda Avenue adheres strictly to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties – Rehabilitation Standards. Since the proposed project meets the Standards, there will not be a substantial adverse change. Historic preservation aspects of the project will meet CEQA requirements, and therefore a mitigated neg. dec. may be issued in lieu of an EIR.

END REPORT

