

1111 Harrison Street
Statement of Justification for the Mills Act Historic Property Designation and
Reassessment

Dear Planning Staff and Historic and Landmark Commissioners,

When we initially looked at the house at 1111 Harrison Street, we were both captivated and intimidated. In purchasing it, we saw ourselves as not simply buying a property for our own use, but becoming stewards of something much older than ourselves. As its caretakers, we are excited to undertake the attached plan to maintain and restore this historic property, and to help maintain the fabric of this historic neighborhood.

This house in particular represents a fascinating picture of the development of this neighborhood. As described in the historic survey, it was originally occupied by a farmer, Jesse Alden, when this street was home to a number of Santa Clara's well-to-do businessmen and notables. As such, its design and ornamentation are in keeping with the homes on the adjacent block of Harrison Street, between Main and Washington. However, as the character of the neighborhood changed, this house was home to residents of very different social classes, including apparently functioning as a boarding house, probably for workers at the nearby canneries. The interior of the home reflects some of this variation in use – in particular, one of the upstairs bedrooms was clearly used as a kitchen for some time, with elements such as the inner end of a stove vent pipe remaining to indicate prior use patterns. Similarly, some changes have been made over the years to the exterior – principally the enclosure of portions of the two porches to create additional rooms, one as a laundry room, the other a storage or sewing room. However, the vast majority of the home remains as it was in its first decades, including a great deal of exterior decoration and numerous original double-hung windows.

We are particularly excited to begin the process of restoring these beautiful windows – in the entire house, as far as we can tell, there is only a single modern modular window. All the others are traditional wooden frames, either fixed panes or double-hung, many with the original glass panes. We are in the process of learning how to repair and restore these windows, and look forward to the day when they can all be restored to proper operation.

We are deeply grateful for the community here in the Old Quad that has welcomed us into this mission of caring for the historic built environment of Santa Clara. We have been delighted to volunteer as docents for the historic homes tour over the last two years, and we look forward to including our home in the tour in future. Acceptance under the Mills Act Historical Property Contract Program will facilitate our efforts to maintain and restore this property, and we are excited to work with the community and the City of Santa Clara throughout this process.

Sincerely,

Steven and Katherine Reeber
1111 Harrison Street