

**March 2, 2021**

**To:** City of Santa Clara, Historical and Landmarks Commission

**From:** Lorie Garcia, City Historian, HLC Historical Advisor

**RE: General Business - Item 3. 21-264**

Dear Commissioners,

In my role as the Historical Advisor to the Historical and Landmarks Commission, I wish to express my concerns and to submit the following comments on the project proposed for 1772 Main Street **(PLN2020-14724)**.

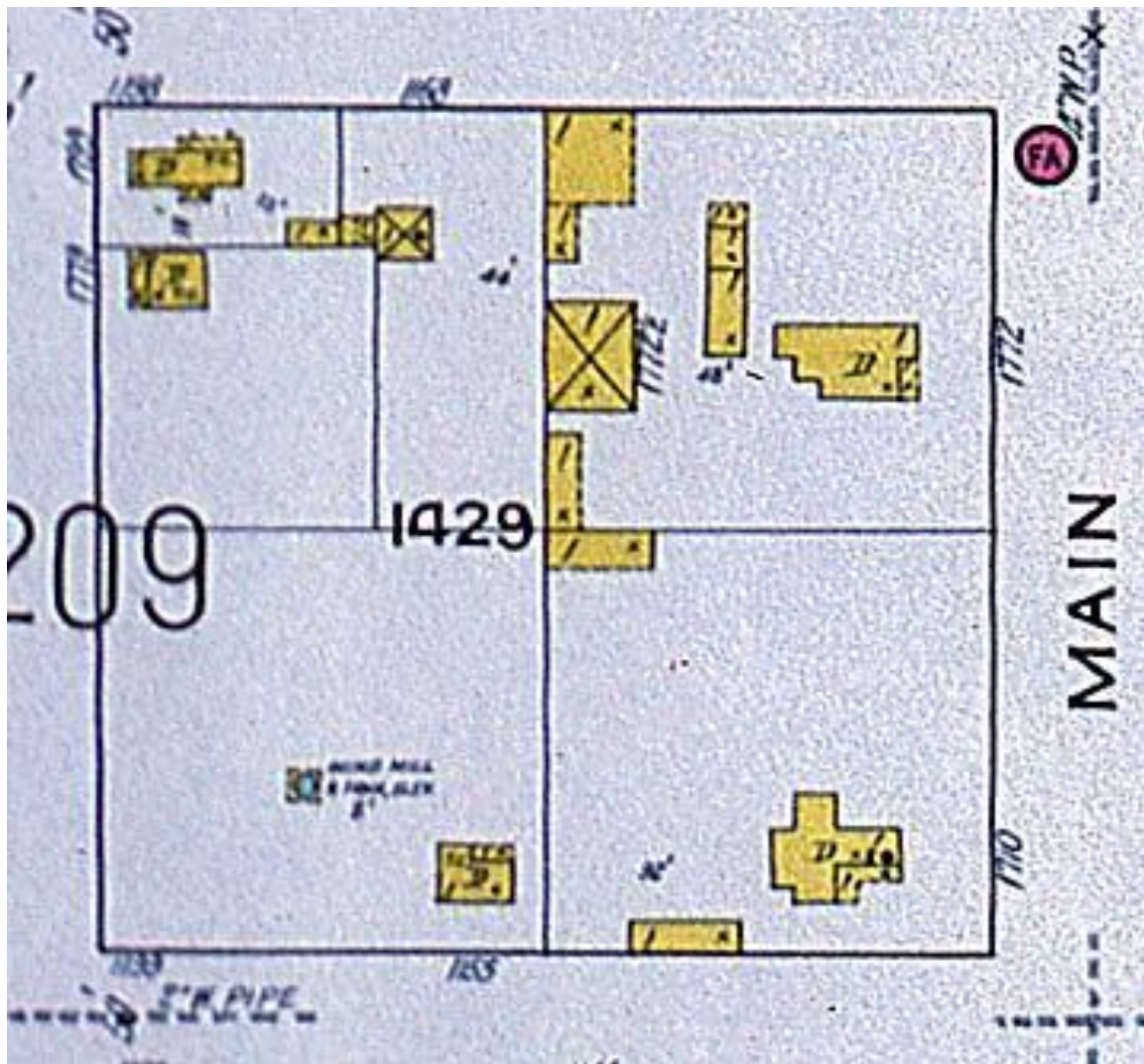
The neighborhood in which the subject property is located, is in an area of Santa Clara's "Old Quad" where, during the first decades of the Twentieth century, the majority of the Portuguese immigrants to Santa Clara settled. With most employed in agricultural-related jobs, i.e., working in the canneries, packing houses, and orchards, these working class immigrants tended to settle in areas where they could find homes, which were relatively inexpensive. As most of the homes in this area of Santa Clara were affordable for working class individuals, to either rent or purchase, this neighborhood provided the ideal location to meet their living needs. Here, they not only found affordable housing but as time went on, found members of their cultural group, leading to this neighborhood being recognized as the core of Santa Clara's Portuguese community.. Originally owned by an important member of this Portuguese immigrant community, this residence is representative of the development of this area of the Old Quad during the first part of the twentieth century.

The majority of the homes were constructed as small bungalows, reflecting the small working-class building styles of the era. This historic pattern with its up-and-down rhythm of the rooflines and the in-and-out rhythm of small detached garages set behind the main dwelling creates a unified appearance with enough variety for individual identification, which is considered the essence of good neighborhood design. The residence, located at 1772 Main Street is one of the two oldest homes on the block. It has only been minimally altered, and occupies its original footprint and location. Due to the fact that no significant changes to either the residence or its placement on the lot have occurred since its construction prior to 1910, this residence's architectural style, form, size, massing and character-defining features are all compatible with the neighboring and nearby historic homes in this area.

The project as proposed will substantially alter both the dwelling's historic architectural style and its significance. By attaching the new garage to the house, it will also impact the historic design pattern of the neighborhood. Due to the impacts the proposed project will have on both aspects of historic significance, I believe that before any approval be given the dwelling at 1772 Main Street needs to undergo an Historical Evaluation to determine its eligibility for the City of Santa Clara's List of Historically/and or Architecturally Significant Properties.

Sincerely, Lorie Garcia

Attachment -1915 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



1772 Main Street

**1772 Main, Proposed Addition**  
**Within 200 ft of Historic Resource**  
**PLN2020-14724     Agenda Item 21-264**

**Meeting of 3/4/2021**

Once again we are missing an opportunity to save a bit of Santa Clara history because we don't have this area surveyed to identify all the historically important houses, or neighborhood features, or cultural resources. The threshold for looking at a structure is 50 years. That doesn't mean it will be declared historically significant. Lots of homes aren't. It means we should examine these older homes to find out if they might be of significance to our history.

But, as anyone can see, this house is obviously over 50 years old, for the most part its character-defining features are still visible, and it might be historically significant. Here's what I found in just a quick look:

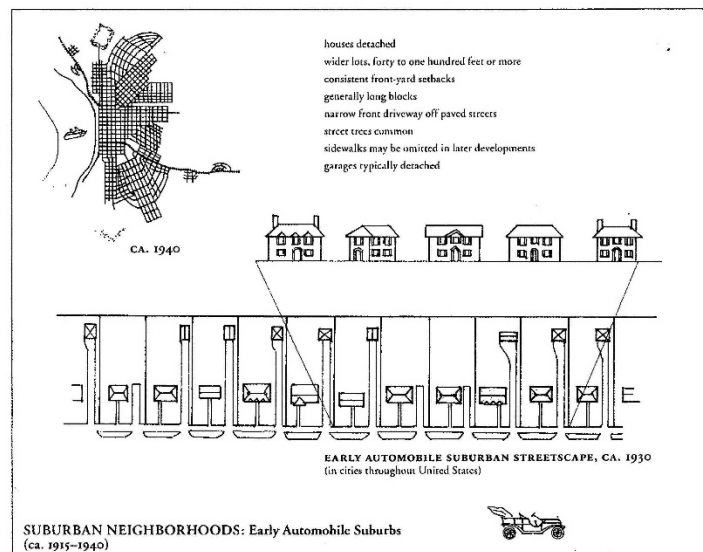
**Architecture.** If studied, 1772 may not be found to be architecturally significant, however there is a strong possibility that it will be deemed historically significant for the role the original occupants played in this immigrant community in the early 1900s.

Architecturally speaking, the proposed addition does not meet the Secretary's Standards. In fact, if one reviews the Preservation Briefs and other technical publications the Park Service publishes on-line to help one interpret the standards (particularly Preservation Brief #14 New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings), one can see that this façade is almost a textbook example of how NOT to design an acceptable addition.

The proportions of an addition should be subservient or smaller than the main house so it doesn't overshadow it. The openings, both in style and size, should agree or be compatible with the main house – these are not. The character-defining features of the main house, such as the wide frieze board at the top of the walls has not been repeated or even complemented on the addition. This is now a building with a split personality, left half turn of the Century, right half, clearly modern. This type of design for an addition does not meet the Standards and, with the location of the garage so far forward and its large size it visually competes with the potentially significant older part of the house and therefore the addition has a significant negative effect on 1772.

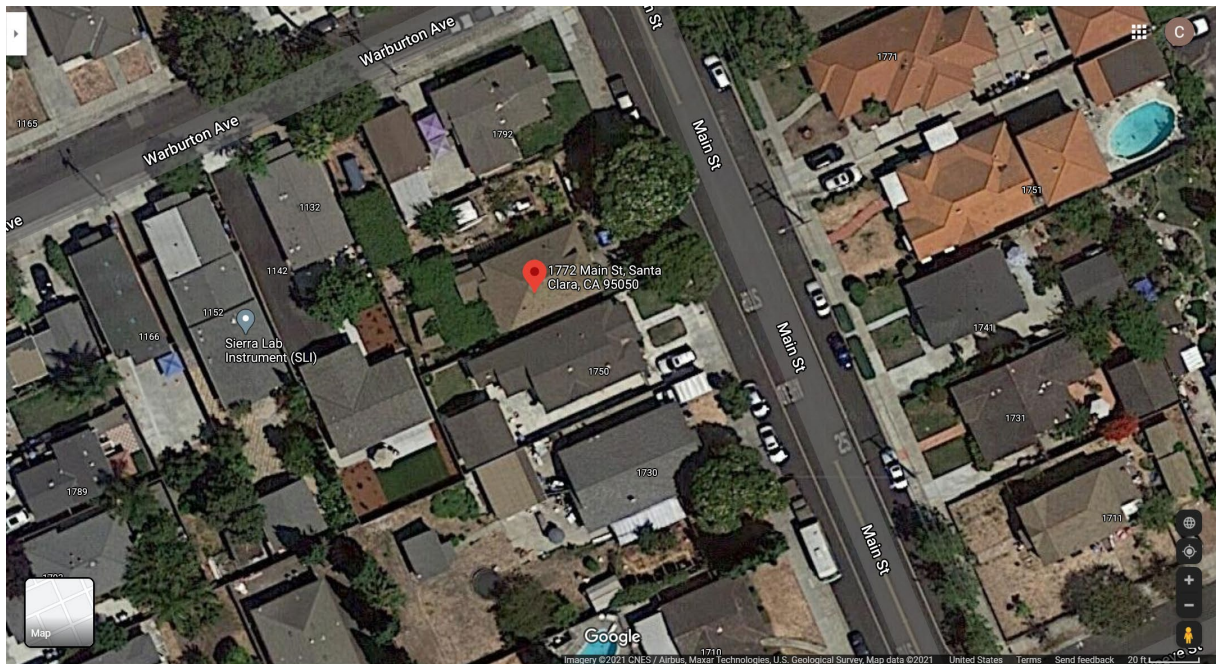
**Historic patterns of development.** When I started in this business, we just looked at the pieces of the house and decided if they displayed a particular style. Now, evaluators are also tasked with examining "setting" or neighborhood. Although the houses on this block are of different styles, all are very small worker cottages. While not all houses have garages, those that do have a long driveway extending past the house to a garage at the back corner of the lot. This pattern of development is not so plainly evident in most places in town. And because it is still enough intact to be clearly seen on this block it is a historically important, character-defining feature of this neighborhood.

In her book *"A Field Guide to American Houses"*, p.68, Virginia McAlester talks about the forms of land development of early neighborhoods. She has drawn an example of what this block that is very similar to what this block still looks like:





The aerial view confirms this.



Look carefully at the driveways – they extend past each house to the back of the property. No one else has a garage out front.

If 'setting' is studied in an historical evaluation, this street could rise to become one of the most significant in town for the integrity of its displayed development. Therefore, it would not meet the Secretary's Standards to destroy the integrity of this potentially important cultural resource by inserting such an anomaly as this garage addition.

**Effect on 1795:** We have been fighting the insertion of garages in the front of the properties for decades in these older sections of town. We have only won this concession in cases where multiple houses on the street have previously been declared historic. But it is quite clear to me, as a qualified expert in this field, that placing a garage at the front of any house on this block has a detrimental effect on not only the listed resource at 1795 but also any other potentially historic resource on the street. The view of the street and neighbors from 1795 would change. The integrity of the pattern and rhythm of street facades will be forever broken. This clearly does not meet the Secretary's Standards, and as such is an adverse effect on the integrity of 1795, the designated property.

My conclusion is that

- This proposal will have a significant adverse effect on 1772 Main, which if evaluated according to the Historic Preservation Ordinance might be found to be eligible for listing in the HRI;
- The proposed addition will also have a significant adverse effect on 1795, the HRI property, as it disrupts one of the most significant, intact views of early patterns of development left in the City;
- The proposed addition is not compatible with the existing residence, and certainly not compatible with this street; and
- The alterations are clearly not consistent with the Secretary's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

For these reasons I suggest the Commission recommend denial of this proposal, and require that an Historical Evaluation be done, after which a proposal for a revised, smaller design with the garage at the rear and that is compatible with the Secretary's Standards could be considered.

Volunteer Architectural Advisor to the Historical and Landmarks Commission

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