



Historic Resources Board

Staff Report (ID # 11133)

Report Type: Action Items **Meeting Date:** 5/14/2020

Summary Title: 488 University Avenue (Hotel President)

Title: PUBLIC HEARING / QUASI-JUDICIAL. Hotel President, 488 University Avenue [19PLN-00038]: Review of Proposed Building Modifications for Compliance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards; Architectural Review Application to Modify a Local Inventory Category 2 Resource, Including Interior and Exterior Renovations, to Convert Residentially Used Spaces to Hotel Use. The Building is Considered a Legal Non-Complying Facility, and is Eligible for Listing on the California Register of Historical Resources. Environmental Assessment: California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Exempt per Guidelines 15301 for Existing Structures, 15302 for Reconstruction and 15331 for Restoration of Historic Resource. For More Information Contact the Project Planner Sheldon S. Ah Sing at sahsing@m-group.us.

From: Jonathan Lait

Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Historic Resources Board (HRB) take the following action(s):

1. Provide a recommendation regarding the building modifications, confirming the project's consistency with the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation.

Report Summary

The Hotel President building is a six-story, Inventory Category 2 building located at 488 University Avenue. This report transmits the historic resource evaluation and peer review. These reports (a) confirm the building is eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources, and (b) evaluate the proposed building modifications.

Built in 1929-30, Hotel President is a ‘grandfathered’ non-complying facility with respect to building height, floor area ratio (FAR) and setback projections (basement, marquee entry and balcony). The proposed project includes interior and exterior remodeling, rehabilitation, and conversion of the upper floor use. Most recent uses included 75 residential units and ground floor commercial spaces. The proposed use is commercial: a 100-guestroom hotel with ground floor commercial spaces. Attachment A provides a location map of the project site. The project plans are included as a link available in Attachment F.

The applicant submits the applications pursuant to:

- Palo Alto Municipal Code (PAMC) Section 18.18.120(b)(F), seeking a waiver to allow the conversion of residential space to non-residential space, and
- PAMC Section 16.49.080(a)(1)(A), for architectural review of Downtown historic structures by the HRB, and
- PAMC Section PAMC 18.18.060(e)(2), seeking the addition of elevator access to the rooftop via a Conditional Use Permit, which also would apply to the sale (on site) of alcoholic beverages.

The HRB is requested to review of the proposed modifications for compliance with the *Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (SOI Standards). The review is associated with the Architectural Review application. This meeting is the first public hearing for the project. The HRB’s feedback will inform the Director of Planning and Development Services’ consideration of the project.

Background

The Hotel President building was constructed in 1929-1930 with ground floor commercial spaces and hotel lodging above the first floor. The architecture represents the Spanish colonial revival architectural style. In 1968, the building was converted from apartment/hotel use to full apartment use while the ground floor continued to be in commercial use. In 1978, the building was placed on the Palo Alto Historic Resources Inventory (*Category 2—major building of regional importance*) as “a good example of the local restrained variant of the Spanish (or California) Colonial image.”

The applicant requests Architectural Review approval to renovate the building’s exterior features and interior spaces. The applicant proposes to convert the 75 residential apartments into 100 hotel guestrooms. This conversion requires a waiver approval by City Council from PAMC Section 18.18.120(b)(F), since the building is a non-complying facility.

Discussion

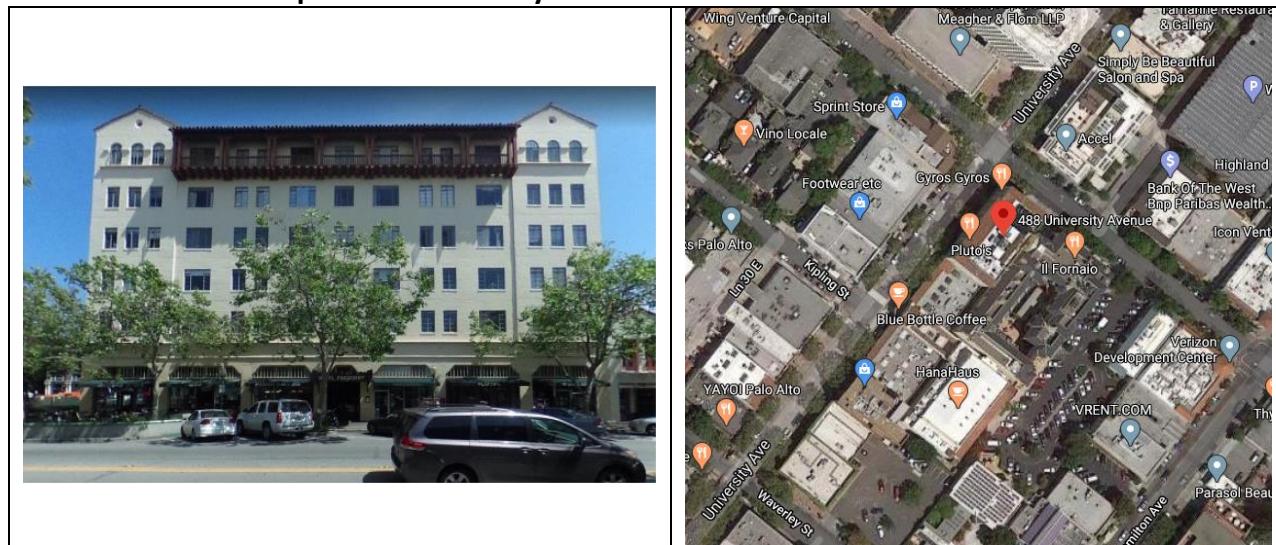
Site and Surroundings

The 9,425 square foot (SF) parcel is a rectangular shaped corner lot, developed with a six story, 51,115 SF building constructed in 1929-1930. The site takes vehicular access from a driveway on Cowper Street directly to a one-level basement garage. Deliveries to the site are via the 10-foot alley, located next to the building’s east wall and within the property boundaries. Pedestrian

access would continue from University Avenue into an entry lobby; a new internal pedestrian corridor is proposed from Cowper Street to the ground floor lobby. The building also includes existing wireless telecommunications equipment on the roof.

Adjacent uses include commercial, lodging, and offices. The architectural styles of buildings within the vicinity include an eclectic mix of contemporary and traditional architecture. These buildings range from low to mid-rise buildings, except for one high-rise, 15-story office building located at 525 University Avenue.

Photo and Aerial Map of 488 University Avenue:



Source: Google, 2020

Source: CNES/Airbus, Maxar, USGS 2020

Project Description

The applicant proposes an interior renovation, use conversion of the upper floor spaces to create a 100-guestroom hotel, and exterior renovations. The applicant proposes restoration of the building's original architectural and design elements; this includes building (seismic) and fire code (sprinklers) upgrades. The proposal does not include any new additions to the building, nor does it alter its footprint, mass, or scale. The proposal includes providing elevator access to the roof, allowing the roof terrace to be accessible by all [permitted under PAMC Section 18.18.060(e)(1) & (2)].

Proposed interior alterations:

- Reconfiguration of the basement for storage, bicycle parking, and vehicle parking;
- Reconfiguration of the six existing retail spaces on first floor
 - Retention of two of the existing retail spaces;
 - Merging two retail spaces to create a new corridor from the lobby to Cowper Street;
 - Creation of a lobby and lobby café from two of the existing vacant retail spaces;
- Restoration and preservation of the historic elevator;

- Addition of a new elevator; and
- Preservation of historic elements within the existing lobby space

Proposed exterior renovations:

- Renovate roof terrace and construct new elevator penthouse
- South Elevation
 - Paint stucco walls and mullions
- West Elevation (University Avenue)
 - Remove storefront awnings (Sheets A300 & A301)
 - Replace non-historic tile at low walls along storefront #2 with tiles that match historic tiles (A300 & A301)
 - Reconstruct the iron hinged grille at main entry to lobby (A300 & A301)
 - Replace storefront windows, removal of door, addition of low tiled wall with tiles to match historic tiles (Space #4) (A300 & A301)
 - Replace storefront windows, remove door, continue low tiled wall with tiles to match historic tiles (Space #5) (A300 & A301)
 - Paint stucco walls,
wrought iron balconies (A300 & A301),
mullions,
wood balcony (A300 & A301)
 - Replace door to match historic context (A300 & A301)
- North Elevation (Cowper Street)
 - Remove storefront awnings (Sheets A302 & A303)
 - Paint stucco walls and mullions
- East Elevation (Alley)
 - Replace window with new door to the kitchen (A304 & A305)
 - Paint stucco walls and mullions

Comprehensive Plan Designation

The subject property has the land use designation ‘Regional/Community Commercial’. This designation includes larger shopping centers and districts that have a wider variety of goods and services than the neighborhood shopping areas. They rely on larger trade areas and include such uses as department stores, bookstores, furniture stores, toy stores, apparel shops, restaurants, theaters and non-retail services such as offices and banks. Examples include Stanford Shopping Center, Town and Country Village and University Avenue/Downtown. Non-retail uses such as medical and dental offices are also permitted within areas having this designation; software development is a permitted use Downtown. In some locations, residential and mixed-use projects are allowed on properties having this land use category. Non-residential Floor Area Ratios (FARs) range from 0.35 to 2.0. Consistent with the

Comprehensive Plan's encouragement of housing near transit centers, higher density multi-family housing may be allowed in specific locations.

The following Comprehensive Plan historic preservation/rehabilitation programs/policies apply to the project:

- **Policy L-7.1:** Encourage public and private upkeep and preservation of resources that have historic merit, including residences listed in the City's Historic Resource Inventory, the California Register of Historical Resources, or the National Register of Historic Places.
- **Program L-7.1.1:** Update and maintain the City's Historic Resource Inventory to include historic resources that are eligible for local, State, or federal listing. Historic resources may consist of a single building or structure or a district.
- **Policy L-4.7:** Maintain and enhance the University Avenue/Downtown area as a major commercial center of the City, with a mix of commercial, civic, cultural, recreational and residential uses. Promote quality design that recognizes the regional and historical importance of the area and reinforces its pedestrian character.
- **Policy L-7.5:** To reinforce the scale and character of University Avenue/Downtown, promote the preservation of significant historic buildings.
- **Program L-7.8:** Promote adaptive reuse of old buildings.
- **Policy L-7.12:** Maintain the historic integrity of building exteriors. Consider parking exceptions for historic buildings to encourage rehabilitation.

Zoning

The site's zoning designation is Community Commercial Downtown District with a Pedestrian Shopping Combining (CD-C (GF)(P)). The CD-C zoning district is a comprehensive district for the Downtown business area. This zone allows a wide range of commercial, residential and neighborhood service uses, including mixed uses. The Pedestrian Shopping (P) combining district is intended to modify the regulations of various commercial districts. This is found in locations where it is deemed essential to (1) foster the continuity of retail stores and display windows and (2) avoid a monotonous pedestrian environment. The (P) district goal is to establish and maintain an economically healthy retail district. The Ground Floor (GF) combining district is intended to provide design guidelines and modify the uses allowed in the commercial districts and sub-districts. The GF district goal is to promote active, pedestrian-oriented uses, with a high level of transparency and visual interest at the ground level.

Noncomplying Facility

The Hotel President was constructed in 1929-30; at the time, the building complied with the City's then-prevailing zoning and building standards. Subsequent changes to the City's zoning standards rendered the property a legal, non-complying facility, as defined in the PAMC Section 18.70.010 and further governed by regulations in PAMC Section 18.18.120.

The property is non-complying with respect to several zoning development standards. These include the following:

- Height (50 feet maximum allowed versus 90 feet);
- FAR (18,850 square feet maximum permitted versus 50,540 square feet proposed); and
- Setbacks on University Avenue:
 - Basement protrudes nine feet
 - Marquee entry protrudes 8'-9"
 - Sixth floor balcony protrudes 2'-7"

The project is subject to PAMC 18.18.120(b)(2)(F). This code section restricts conversion of residential space to a non-residential use for non-complying facilities. In accordance with this section, the applicant requests a City Council waiver to implement the use conversion. This issue is not within the HRB's purview.

Requested Entitlements, Findings and Purview:

The applicant requests approval of the following discretionary applications:

- Architectural Review (AR): The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.77.070. AR applications are typically forwarded to the Director of Planning & Development Services for entitlement decision. As a designated Historic Resource (Category 2) located within the Downtown, modifications are also subject to HRB review. AR projects are evaluated against specific findings. All findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. Failure to make any one finding requires project redesign or denial. The HRB will provide a recommendation based on the project's consistency with the SOI Standards. For this project, the Council will receive the HRB's recommendations on the AR application.
- Conditional Use Permit (CUP): The applicant seeks approval, pursuant to PAMC 18.18.060(e)(2), to provide access to the rooftop (increasing height/expand floor area). The applicant seeks approval, pursuant to PAMC 18.42.090, of alcoholic beverages for sale and consumption on site. The process for evaluating this type of application is set forth in PAMC 18.77.060. CUP applications are reviewed by staff and recommendations are typically forwarded to the Director of Planning & Development Services. Since the project's other requests include evaluation by the City Council, the request for the CUP will also be considered by the City Council. CUP projects are evaluated against specific findings. All findings must be made in the affirmative to approve the project. Failure to make any one finding requires project redesign or denial. This request is not within the HRB's purview to consider.
- Waiver of Conversion of Residential Space: In accordance with PAMC Section 18.18.120(b)(2)(F), since the project is a non-complying facility, conversion of residential space to non-residential space is not permitted. An applicant asserting that the operation of this subsection (F) is preempted by state or federal law shall submit a statement of its position with all claims and all supporting documentary evidence at the time it applies for a change of use. The City Council shall hold at least one noticed public hearing in accordance with the procedures set forth in PAMC 18.77.080 to consider

whether to waive or adjust the requirements of one or more provisions of Titles 18 or 21. The City Council may seek additional information including, without limitation, third party peer review paid for at the applicant's expense. This request is not within the HRB's purview.

Analysis

Compliance with Development Standards

The applicant submitted requests for Architectural Review, a Conditional Use Permit and a Waiver of PAMC Section 18.18.120(b)(2)(F). Attachment E summarizes the project's compliance with the City's zoning development standards. The height of building increases (85 feet to 90'-3") because of the elevator addition. This elevator would allow access to the renovated roof terrace.

Buildings located in the CD-C sub-district that are noncomplying for height or gross floor area may be permitted to increase height and expand floor area to the minimum degree necessary, to provide rooftop access and related amenities. Such access and amenities may include features such as stairs, elevators, trellises, outdoor furniture, railings, lighting, and other similar features. Rooftop access area is not included in the gross floor area calculation. The rooftop access request is considered in conjunction with the requested conditional use permit.

The proposed internal renovations result in a reduction in the site FAR from 5.42:1 to 5.36:1. This FAR is still greater than the allowable 2.0:1 FAR.

Character Defining Features

The applicant submitted a Historic Resources Report (HRE) and discussion of the SOI Standards in 2020 (prepared by Page & Turnbull, Attachment B). The City retained Metropolitan Planning Group, Inc. to conduct a peer review of the 2020 HRE and an updated review of the Standards as it relates to the new project (Attachment C). In summary, the peer review concurs with the findings of the 2020 HRE. Attachment D summarizes the character defining features of the property.

There are later alterations to the building, specifically completed during the 1950s and in 1971. The modifications are outside of the building's period of significance and are not considered to be character-defining features of the building.

Eligibility for Listing on California Historic Register

Listing Criteria

The HRE examines the subject property's eligibility for listing on the California Register of Historic Resources (California Register). A property may be eligible for listing on the California Register, if it is found to be significant under one or more of the following criteria:

- Criterion 1, Events
- Criterion 2, Persons
- Criterion 3, Architecture
- Criterion 4, Information Potential

According to the HRE, the property appears individually eligible for Criteria 1 and 3. The peer review memorandum concurs with the HRE's conclusions.

Integrity

The HRE also evaluates the existing building's integrity for eligibility of listing on any local, state or national historic register. In order to qualify for listing in any local, state or national historic register, a property must possess significance under at least one evaluative criterium. The property must also retain integrity as defined by the California Office of Historic Preservation and National Park Service. Further guidance is provided by the National Register Bulletin on integrity. Without integrity, the property cannot remain eligible for listing on any register.

The seven aspects that define integrity include:

- Location
- Design
- Workmanship
- Association
- Setting
- Materials
- Feeling

The property retains five of the seven aspects of integrity. The property substantially retains integrity of setting and materials. It retains enough integrity to convey its significance under Criteria 1 (Events) and 3 (Architecture) of the California Register, with a period of significance of 1929-1930.

Summary of Impacts of Project on Building & Architectural Integrity

In accordance with PAMC Section 16.49.050(a)(1)(A), because the project is a significant historic structure in the downtown area, it is subject to HRB review and recommendation. Staff requests the HRB's feedback as to whether the project will enable the existing building to retain its historic character. The 2020 Report provides an updated analysis of the project's impacts on architectural integrity of the historical resource. Note that eligibility for the California Register qualifies the Hotel President for use of the State Historic Building Code (SHBC), per Health and Safety Code Section 18955. Listing on the City's Historic Inventory also qualifies the building for SHBC use. Use of the SHBC can be helpful in preserving a historic building's integrity.

Compliance with Secretary of Interior's Standards

Staff determines the proposed changes would meet the SOI Standards and summarizes those findings in the following table. The peer review memo concurs with the HRE report conclusions.

SOI Standards for Rehabilitation	Analysis
----------------------------------	----------

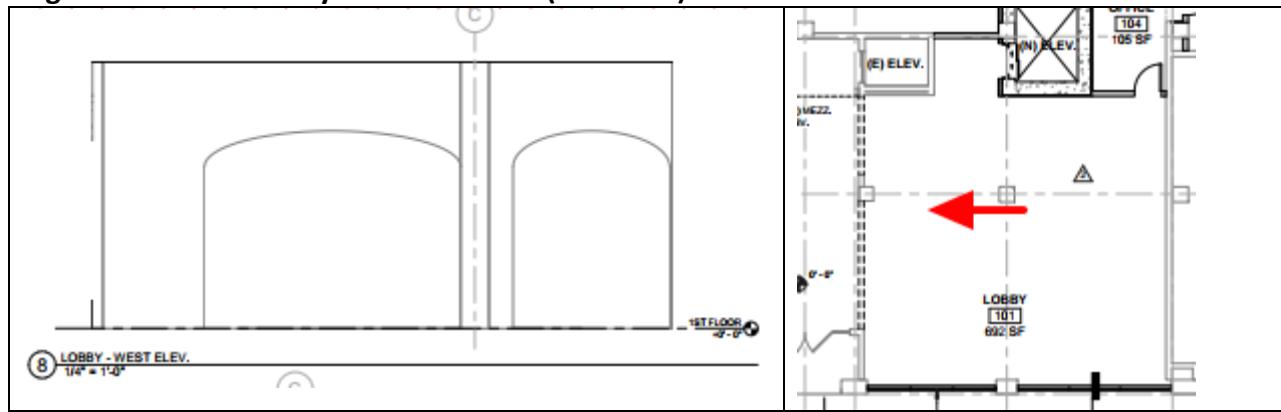
SOI Standards for Rehabilitation	Analysis
<p>1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces and spatial relationships.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed project will absorb commercial square footage into an enlarged lobby area, which will be used by the hotel. The upper floors are renovated to accommodate 100 guestrooms. Although, this represents a change from a residential use, the building historically accommodated hotel and residential uses. The proposed hotel does not introduce a new use that what was originally constructed. The project will be implemented with minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and site. The project will adhere to Standard 1.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> The building's primary mass and form will not be altered. The addition of elevator access to the roof and the construction of a mechanical equipment screen is consistent with other elements on the roof and will not be visible from the public right-of-way. The project does not appear to impact any character-defining features of the exterior, basement or roof levels.</p> <p>Retention of commercial units at the ground floor will allow the building to continue to convey its mixed-use identity. The storefronts and interiors of commercial units four and five have already been altered, and further alteration of those units will not compromise the building's ability to convey its significance as a mixed-use Spanish Colonial Revival building designed by the original architect.</p> <p><i>The removal of a portion of the dividing wall between the lobby and unit four will affect the</i></p>

SOI Standards for Rehabilitation	Analysis
	<i>lobby's hall-style character and does not fully comply with Standard 2. However, the proposed improvement retains substantially the dividing wall and includes arched openings that are consistent with the architectural theme of the building. (See Figure 1)</i>
3. <i>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.</i>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> The proposed project does not include any new additions and does not alter the building footprint or scale. The proposed enlargement of the lobby will alter interior proportions at the first story. No other features from different historic periods are proposed that would create a false sense of historical development.</p>
4. <i>Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.</i>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> Subsequent changes to the property (including the 1971 renovation by Clark, Stromquist & Sandstrom Architects and other post-1930 alterations) have not acquired historic significance in their own right. Non-historic materials and features will also be removed or altered. Examples include formerly altered wall sections within the building lobby (i.e. former opening to commercial unit four within the southwest lobby wall and former opening to lounge/banquet room), removal of non-historic lobby floor tiling, the removal of non-historic storefront features, and the alteration of storefronts at commercial units four and five.</p>
5. <i>Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples</i>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA</p>

SOI Standards for Rehabilitation	Analysis
<i>of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.</i>	<u>Explanation:</u> The original materials, features, finishes and construction methods that characterize the structure's historic architectural integrity will be retained.
<p>6. <i>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.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA <u>Explanation:</u> All retained historic features will be repaired.
<p>7. <i>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.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA <u>Explanation:</u> The treatment method will comply with the standards and be gentle.
<p>8. <i>Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.</i></p>	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NA <u>Explanation:</u> The project does not include any excavation.
<p>9. <i>New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will 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.</i></p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA <u>Explanation:</u> The conversion of commercial units to hotel lobby use will use clear demarcation of old versus new. A partial wall will be retained between the lobby and commercial unit four to avoid loss of a hall-style lobby. This is achieved by making new openings with a low-arch shape, which differentiates them from the round-arch primary entrance door and the post-and-lintel construction of the rest of the historic lobby's structural elements. The historic lobby tile

SOI Standards for Rehabilitation	Analysis
	<p>flooring will remain; newly renovated areas will feature differentiated flooring material and furnishings. Similarly, the renovation of upper floor units to hotel guest rooms will rely on contemporary design choices.</p> <p><i>The removal of a portion of the dividing wall between the lobby and unit four will affect the lobby's hall-style character and does not fully comply with Standard 9. However, the proposed improvement retains substantially the dividing wall and includes arched openings that are consistent with the architectural theme of the building. (See Figure 1)</i></p>
<p>10. <i>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.</i></p>	<p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NOT CONSISTENT <input type="checkbox"/> NA</p> <p><u>Explanation:</u> The removal of a portion of the dividing wall between the lobby and unit four will affect the lobby's hall-style character and does not fully comply with Standards 2 and 9, which specifically address spatial relationships and historic design features. Although the wall will not be entirely removed, it will have two large low-arched openings cut into it, opening the greater length of the wall from the entrance vestibule to the elevator. The proposed opening in the wall, however, is reversible and therefore is consistent with Standard 10.</p>

Figure 1: Interior Lobby Wall Condition (SOI 2 & 9)



Source: ELS, Sheets A201 & A401, 2020

Environmental Review

The subject project has been assessed in accordance with the authority and criteria contained in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the State CEQA Guidelines, and the environmental regulations of the City. Specifically, the project is exempt under CEQA pursuant to three classes:

- Class 1 (Section 15301) for existing structures, since the project proposes repair, maintenance, minor alterations and involves a negligible or no expansion of existing or former use.;
- Class 2 (Section 15302) for reconstruction since the project involves the replacement or reconstruction of existing structures and facilities where the structure will have substantially the same purpose and capacity; and
- Class 31 (Section 15331) for restoration of a historic resource in that the project includes maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historic resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Treatments of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. The project restores the exterior character defining features and restores the original use of the lobby space and roof top terrace.

Public Notification, Outreach & Comments

Staff placed notice of the HRB public hearing for this project in accordance with the Palo Alto Municipal Code.

Alternative Actions

In addition to the recommended action, the HRB may:

1. Continue the project to a date uncertain; or
2. Recommend project denial

Report Author & Contact Information

Sheldon S. Ah Sing, AICP, Consultant Planner
(408) 340-5642 X 109
sahsing@m-group.us

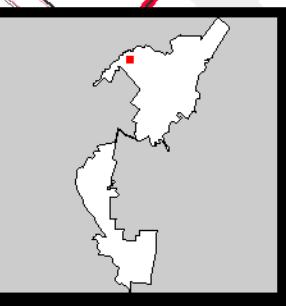
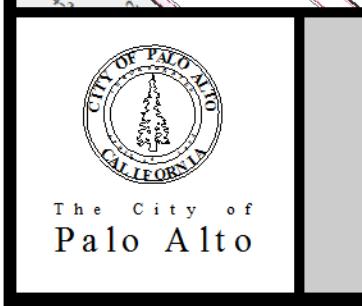
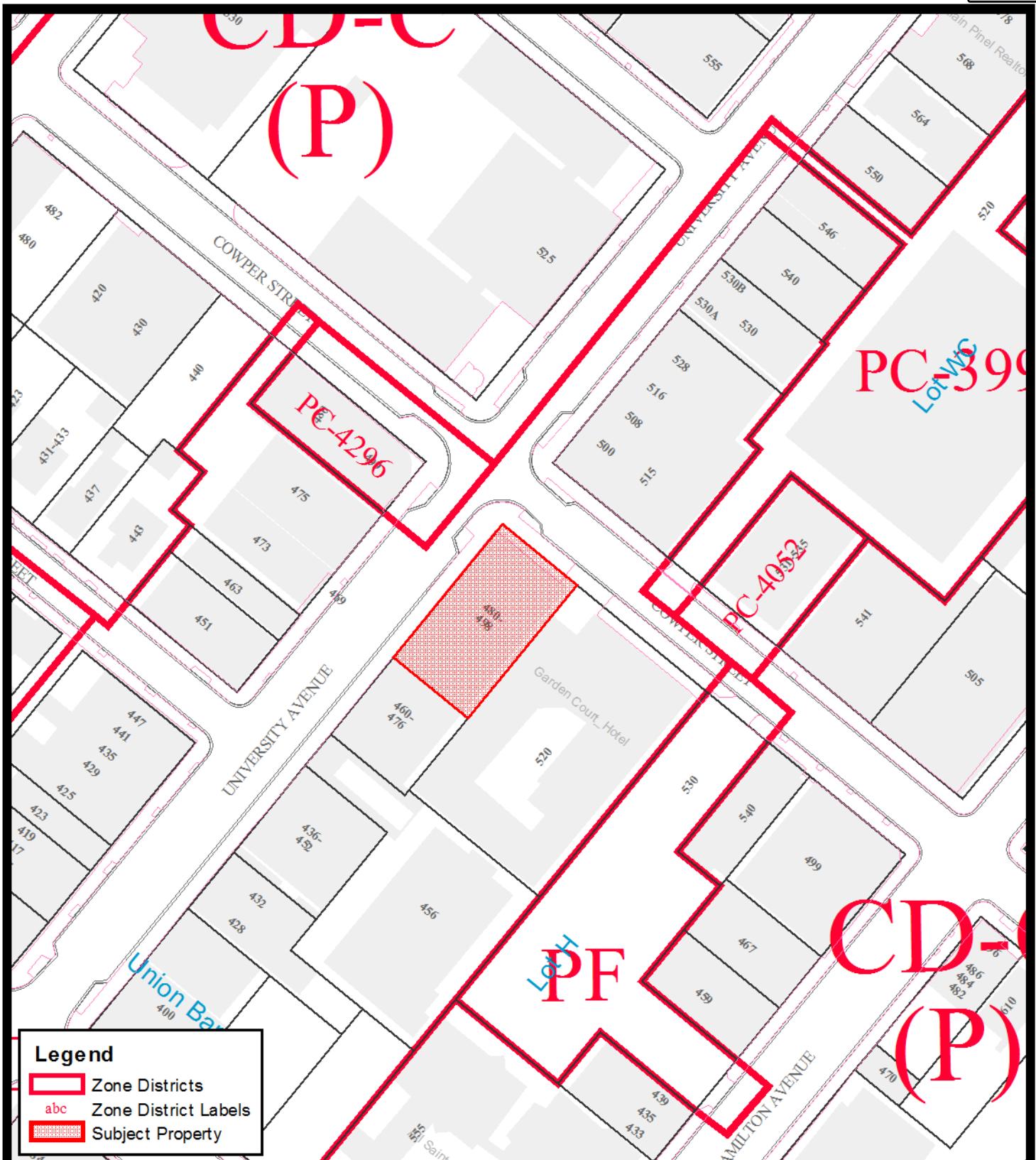
HRB¹ Liaison & Contact Information

Amy French, AICP, Chief Planning Official
(650) 329-2336
amy.french@cityofpaloalto.org

Attachments:

- Attachment A: Location Map (PDF)
- Attachment B: Historic Resource Evaluation and SOI Standards Memo (PDF)
- Attachment C: Peer Review of Historic Resource Evaluation(PDF)
- Attachment D: Character Defining Features (DOCX)
- Attachment E: Zoning Comparison Table (DOCX)
- Attachment F: Project Plans (DOCX)

¹ Emails may be sent directly to the HRB using the following address: hrb@cityofpaloalto.org



488 University Avenue
19PLN-00038

This map is a product of the
City of Palo Alto GIS



0'
103'

HOTEL PRESIDENT
HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION
480-498 UNIVERSITY AVENUE, PALO ALTO, CALIFORNIA
[18120]

PREPARED FOR:
GPCA OWNER LLC



PAGE & TURNBULL

imagining change in historic environments through design, research, and technology

FEBRUARY 6, 2020

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. INTRODUCTION.....	2
METHODOLOGY	2
SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
II. EXISTING HISTORIC STATUS	3
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES	3
CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES.....	3
CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE STATUS CODE.....	3
PALO ALTO HISTORIC INVENTORY.....	3
III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION	5
EXTERIOR.....	5
INTERIOR.....	12
SURROUNDING AREA.....	16
IV. HISTORIC CONTEXT	18
PALO ALTO HISTORY	18
UNIVERSITY SOUTH NEIGHBORHOOD.....	20
V. HISTORY OF THE HOTEL PRESIDENT.....	22
CONSTRUCTION CHRONOLOGY.....	27
OWNERSHIP HISTORY.....	30
OCCUPANT HISTORY	32
SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE	33
BIRGE M. CLARK (1893-1989), ARCHITECT	33
VI. EVALUATION.....	35
CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES.....	35
CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES	36
INTEGRITY.....	38
VII. CONCLUSION	41
VIII. REFERENCES CITED.....	42

I. INTRODUCTION

This Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) has been prepared at the request of GPCA Owner LLC for the property at 480-498 University Avenue (APN 120-15-071), known as the Hotel President. The Hotel President was built in 1929-1930 and designed by local master architect Birge Clark in the Spanish Colonial Revival style. The subject property is located at the southern corner of University Avenue and Cowper Street in a Downtown Commercial (community) (or CD-C) zoning district with both a ground floor (GF) and pedestrian shopping (P) combining district regulations. The parcel consists of a large rectangular lot of approximately 9,425-square-feet (**Figure 1**).



Figure 1: City of Palo Alto parcel map. Subject property indicated by blue outline.
Source: City of Palo Alto, Online Parcel Reports, 2020.

METHODOLOGY

This report follows a standard outline used for Historic Resource Evaluation reports, and provides a summary of the current historic status, a building description, and a historic context for the Hotel President. The report includes an evaluation of the property's individual eligibility for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register).

Page & Turnbull prepared this report using research collected for a prior due diligence report for the project applicant. The research included visits to various local repositories, including the Palo Alto Development Services and the Palo Alto Historical Association (PAHA), as well as various online sources including Palo Alto Stanford (PAST) Heritage, Ancestry.com, and Newspapers.com. Key primary sources consulted and cited in this report include Palo Alto building permit applications, city and county directories, and historical newspapers. All photographs in this report were taken by Page & Turnbull during a site visit in May 2018, unless otherwise noted.

II. EXISTING HISTORIC STATUS

The following section examines the national, state, and local historical ratings currently assigned to the Hotel President.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the nation's most comprehensive inventory of historic resources. The National Register is administered by the National Park Service and includes buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level.

The Hotel President is not currently listed in the National Register.

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an inventory of significant architectural, archaeological, and historical resources in the State of California. Resources can be listed in the California Register through a number of methods. Properties can be nominated to the California Register by local governments, private organizations, or citizens. The evaluative criteria used by the California Register for determining eligibility are closely based on those developed by the National Park Service for the National Register.

The Hotel President is not currently listed in the California Register.

CALIFORNIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE STATUS CODE

Properties listed or under review by the State of California Office of Historic Preservation are assigned a California Historical Resource Status Code (Status Code) of "1" to "7" to establish their historical significance in relation to the National Register or California Register. Properties with a Status Code of "1" or "2" are either eligible for listing in the California Register or the National Register or are already listed in one or both of the registers. A property assigned a Status Code of "3" or "4" appears to be eligible for listing in either register, but normally requires more research to support this rating. Properties assigned a Status Code of "5" have typically been determined to be locally significant or to have contextual importance, while properties with a Status Code of "6" are not eligible for listing in either register. Finally, a Status Code of "7" means that the resource has not been evaluated for the National Register or the California Register, or needs reevaluation.

The Hotel President is listed in the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS) database with a status code of 5S2, meaning "an individual property that is eligible for local listing or designation."¹ The most recent update to the CHRIS database for Santa Clara County that lists the status codes was in April 2012.²

PALO ALTO HISTORIC INVENTORY

The City of Palo Alto's Historic Inventory lists noteworthy examples of the work of important individual designers and architectural eras and traditions as well as structures whose background is associated with important events in the history of the city, state, or nation. The inventory is

¹ California State Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks and Recreation, "Technical Assistance Bulletin #8: User's Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historical Resource Inventory Directory" (Sacramento, November 2004).

² California Historical Resource Information System (CHRIS), Historic Property Data File for Santa Clara County, Updated April 2012.

organized under the following four Categories:

- **Category 1:** An “Exceptional Building” of pre-eminent national or state importance. These buildings are meritorious works of the best architects, outstanding examples of a specific architectural style, or illustrate stylistic development of architecture in the United States. These buildings have had either no exterior modifications or such minor ones that the overall appearance of the building is in its original character.
- **Category 2:** A “Major Building” of regional importance. These buildings are meritorious works of the best architects, outstanding examples of an architectural style, or illustrate stylistic development of architecture in the state or region. A major building may have some exterior modifications, but the original character is retained.
- **Category 3 or 4:** A “Contributing Building” which is a good local example of an architectural style and relates to the character of a neighborhood grouping in scale, materials, proportion or other factors. A contributing building may have had extensive or permanent changes made to the original design, such as inappropriate additions, extensive removal of architectural details, or wooden façades resurfaced in asbestos or stucco.

The Hotel President is a Category 2 building on the Palo Alto Historic Inventory.

III. ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Hotel President is located on a large, rectangular parcel at the south corner of University Avenue and Cowper Street (**Figure 2**). The building's primary northwest façade fronts University Avenue and the secondary northeast facade fronts Cowper Street. The southwest façade abuts the two-story building at 470 University Avenue and the southeast (rear) façade looks onto a narrow alley and the four-story Garden Court Hotel building at 520 Cowper Street. The six-story, rectangular-plan building was constructed in 1929-1930 and contains a basement, a first story with six commercial units and a private building lobby, five stories of lodging units, and a seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse and roof terrace.

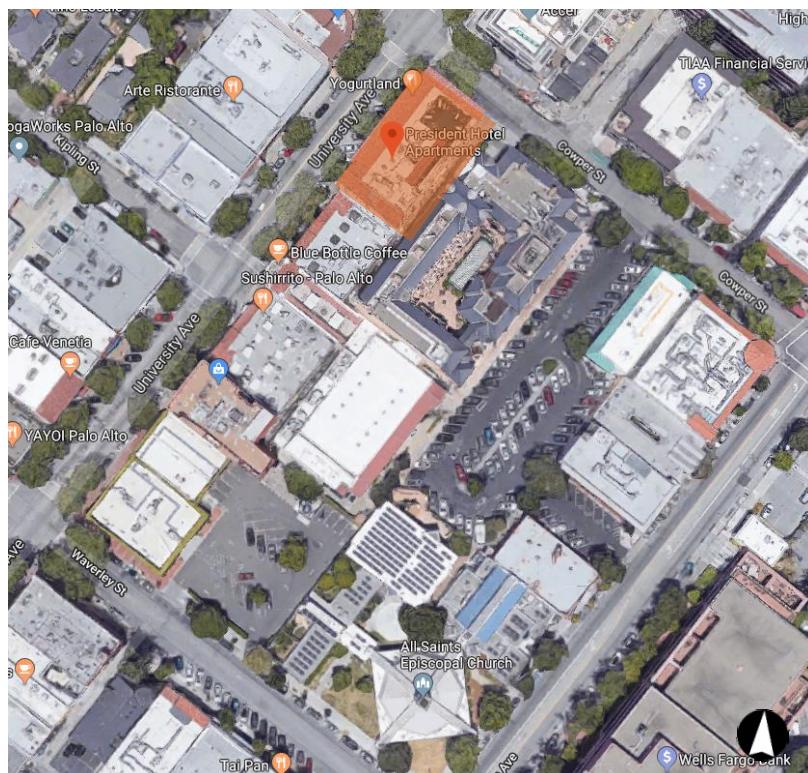


Figure 2: Aerial view of subject property at 488-98 University Avenue. The subject parcel is highlighted in orange. Source: Google Maps, 2018. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

EXTERIOR

The primary façade of the textured stucco-clad building features prominent marquee signage, six commercial storefronts, two-second-story Juliet balconies, and a sixth story wood gallery (or balcony) (**Figure 3**). The building's upper levels feature a regular fenestration pattern with steel-frame fixed and casement windows. Some windows contain wired or opaque glazing. The building is topped with a parapeted flat roof, terra cotta clay tile end gables, and a terra cotta clay tile shed roof at the gallery level.

Primary (Northwest) Façade

The primary (northwest) façade features seven structural bays. The first and last bays slightly project at the upper floors. The first story contains six commercial storefronts and a central, recessed entrance vestibule that opens to the private building lobby (**Figure 4**). On the original architectural drawings, the commercial units are numbered one through six from left (north) to right (south). The units are numbered in this report and are addressed as follows: unit one: 498 University Avenue; unit

two: 494 University Avenue; unit three: 490 University Avenue; unit four: 486 University Avenue; unit five: 482 University Avenue; and unit six: 480 University Avenue.



Figure 3: Primary (northwest) façade of Hotel President, looking southeast. Source: Google Street View, photo submitted by Rahul Biswas in 2016.



Figure 4: Storefronts at primary façade, view looking southeast. Commercial unit one at image left, commercial unit six at image right. Source: Google Street View.

Each commercial unit is defined by a rectangular opening with scalloped chamfered top corners. Each commercial storefront contains a bulkhead(s), a single door, fixed plate glass storefront glazing, a fabric awning with scrolled metal brackets, and a multi-lite opaque glazed transom window. A steel seismic beam divides the storefront doors and windows from the transoms above. Spindlework screens shield the transoms, which contain four wood-frame inward-opening hopper windows flanked by fixed scalloped chamfered lites. The six commercial storefronts are otherwise varied in appearance and configuration. Unit one features a glazed wood-frame central door with a glass transom. The door is flanked by large wood-frame plate-glass windows that sit above tiled bulkheads (**Figure 5**). Unit two features a glazed wood-frame central door with a glass transom. The door is flanked by large wood-frame aluminum-sash plate glass windows that sit above tiled bulkheads

(Figure 6). Unit three features a right-of-center glazed wood-frame door with a stained-glass transom.³ Two large wood-frame aluminum-sash plate glass windows sit above a tiled bulkhead. Unit four features a left-of-center glazed aluminum-frame door with a glass transom. Three aluminum-frame and aluminum-sash plate glass windows sit above an aluminum-panel bulkhead. Unit five features a slightly recessed storefront with can lighting, a left-of-center glazed wood-frame door, and a glazed-wood frame accordion door that sits above a tiled bulkhead. Unit six features a wood Dutch door with a nine-lite window in the upper half and a glass transom. The central door is flanked by large wood-frame plate glass windows that sit above tiled bulkheads.



Figure 5: 498 University Avenue (commercial unit one).



Figure 6: 494 University Avenue (commercial unit two).



Figure 7: 482 University Avenue (commercial unit five).



Figure 8: 480 University Avenue (commercial unit six).

³ The transom contains “490” numerals and the red and white barber pole symbol.



Figure 9: Marquee at lobby entrance vestibule, view looking northeast.



Figure 10: Transom above marquee.

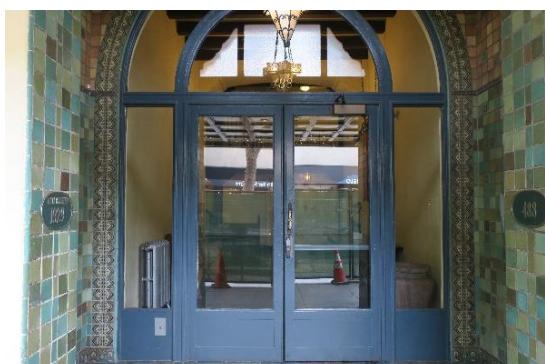


Figure 11: Recessed primary entrance vestibule.



Figure 12: Transom above primary entrance doors and chandelier.

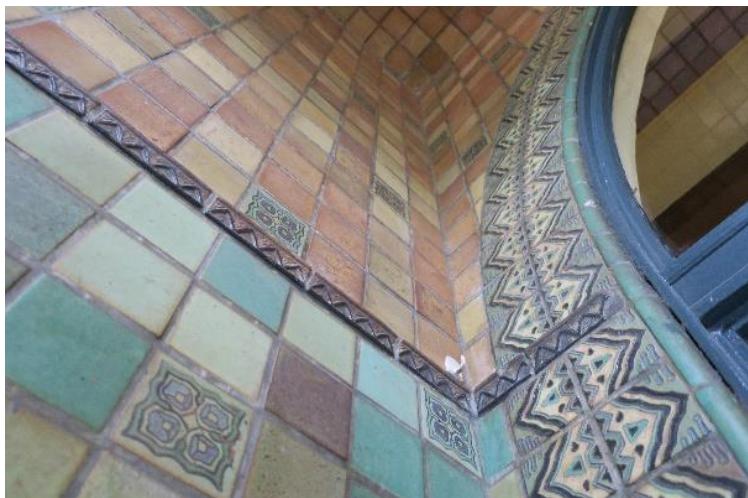


Figure 13: Detail of vestibule tilework at lobby entrance vestibule



Figure 14: Detail of lobby door handle.

Similar to the commercial storefronts, the lobby entrance is defined by a rectangular opening with scalloped chamfered corners; the opening is narrower than the commercial storefronts. Rather than a fabric awning, a projecting cast iron marquee spans the opening of the recessed primary entrance vestibule. The marquee, supported by scrolled brackets, features "Hotel President" lettering bordered by palmette, scroll, and vegetal detailing. Openings amongst the lettering indicate the former presence of neon lighting. An opaque glazed transom sits above the marquee; a central fixed lite is

flanked by scalloped chamfered fixed lites. The fully tiled primary entrance vestibule terminates at glazed wood-frame double doors flanked by sidelights and topped with an arched double transom. The right (south) door features a single decorative metal handle. A wrought-iron six-pointed star chandelier illuminates the vestibule.

The first story of the building is visually differentiated from the upper five stories by two slightly projecting molded wood beltcourses. Second-story Juliet balconies are located at the far (north) and right (south) projecting bays (**Figure 15**). The balconies feature scrolled wrought-iron railings and corbel molded bases. The fenestration pattern at the upper five stories is vertically regular; the horizontal fenestration pattern, from left to right, includes: three double casement multi-lite windows; a fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements, paired double casement multi-lite windows; a fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements; a narrow five-lite fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements; a fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements, paired double casement multi-lite windows; a fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements; and three double casement multi-lite windows (**Figure 16**).⁴ The only exceptions to the vertically regular fenestration pattern are at the sixth story. Three double casement arched windows with a molded sill and broken lintel are located at the north and south projecting bays. These arched windows sit beneath small, round, scallop-molded vents at the gable peaks. A wood gallery structure spans the central portion of the primary façade, between the gabled bays (**Figure 17**). The gallery's floor beams are cantilevered from the building interior. Eight sets of paired wood posts with scrolled corbels support the gallery's clay-tile shed roof. The structure is enclosed by a simple wood railing. Two sets of paired double doors lead from the sixth story apartments provide access to the gallery.



Figure 15: Juliet balcony at south projecting bay of primary facade.



Figure 16: Typical upper-level window.



Figure 17: Gallery at sixth story of primary facade, view looking southeast

⁴ The multi-lite casement windows are four lites topped with a fixed lite; this configuration is present at all facades and applies to all uses of “multi-lite.”

Northeast Façade

The northeast façade of 480-98 University Avenue faces Cowper Street (**Figure 18**). The building's sole garage entrance is located at the far left (south) portion of the façade; a ramp descends to the basement garage. A glazed wood-frame door located mid-façade provides access to commercial unit one. A storefront at the right (north) portion of the façade largely mirrors those at the primary façade. The storefront features scalloped chamfered corners, a tiled bulkhead, three wood-frame fixed plate glass storefront windows, and a multi-lite opaque transom window. Unlike the storefronts at the primary façade, the northeast storefront at commercial unit one does not contain an access door and the outer hopper windows have been infilled with air conditioning units (**Figure 19**).

The upper five stories of the northeast façade sit above two molded beltcourses and feature vertically regular fenestration. Horizontal fenestration, from left (south) to right (north), consists of: a fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements; two vertically-oriented four-lite casement windows; paired multi-lite glazed doors opening onto the fire escape; two vertically-oriented four-lite casement windows; and a fixed central window flanked by multi-lite casements.



Figure 18: Northeast façade, view looking west.



Figure 19: Storefront of commercial unit one fronting Cowper Street, view looking southwest.

Southeast (Rear) Façade

The southeast (rear) façade of 480-98 University Avenue is clad in board-formed concrete, rather than stucco (**see Figure 20, Figure 21, and Figure 22**). The first and second stories feature irregular fenestration consisting of metal-sash windows and metal single doors. Windows are casement, double casement, awning, or industrial. One window features a vinyl frame. Metal single doors provide access to the commercial units. The upper three stories contain multi-lite double casement windows, fixed central windows flanked by multi-lite casements, and six-lite glazed double doors that open onto the rear fire escape. The rear façade also features venting, piping, and affixed air conditioning units.



Figure 20: Southeast façade (image left), view looking west.



Figure 21: First and second stories of southeast façade, view looking southwest.



Figure 22: Upper levels of southeast façade.

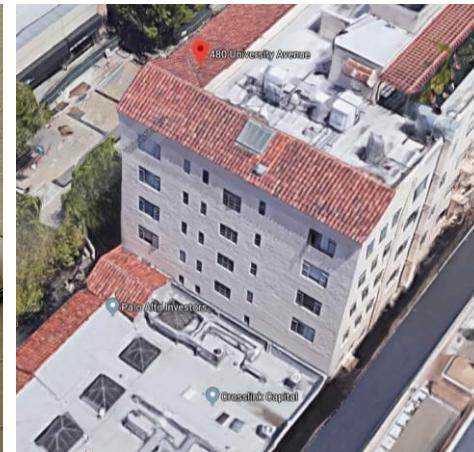


Figure 23: Southwest façade, view looking north. (Google Maps, 2020).

Southwest Façade

The southwest façade of 480-98 University Avenue abuts the neighboring two-story building at 470 University Avenue (**Figure 23**). The second story of the subject building is partially visible and features three three-lite casement windows. The upper four stories feature fixed central windows flanked by multi-lite casements, and vertically-oriented four-lite casement windows. Unlike the northeast Cowper Street façade and southeast (rear) façade, the southwest façade does not feature a fire escape.

Roof

The roof of 480-98 University Avenue contains a seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse (**Figure 24**). The stucco-clad penthouse contains an elevator operation room, fan room, storage rooms, and facilitates pedestrian access from the building interior to the roof. A wood pergola structure with decorative wood corbels is affixed to the southeast façade of the penthouse (**Figure 25**). The north

area of the roof serves as a terrace shared by building tenants. A parapet wall encloses the full roof area, which contains various mechanical and satellite equipment at the southwest area. A roof vent affixed to the southwest façade of the penthouse circulates air throughout the entire building. At the northwest façade of the penthouse, two adjacent wood structures partially obscure the primary rectangular penthouse mass. Pergola rafter tails and a metal-frame window remain visible at the primary penthouse mass (where not obscured by the storage room structures); the projecting structures feature wood-sash four-lite awning windows, an aluminum screened door, and a wood door. The structures feature a slightly lower roofline than the primary penthouse mass.⁵ The main building roof, the penthouse roof, and the two storage structure roofs are flat; the end bays of the main building are gabled. The building features one central skylight at the south gable, and one skylight at the seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse.



Figure 24: Rooftop circulation/utility penthouse with storage rooms, view looking south.



Figure 25: Rooftop pergola, view looking northeast.

INTERIOR

The following sections describe the interior publicly accessible spaces of the Hotel President.

Lobby and Mezzanine

The lodging portion of the subject building is addressed 488 University Avenue. The entrance to the private lobby is located at the center of the building's primary northwest façade, between commercial unit three and unit four. The Spanish Colonial Revival style lobby consists of an entrance hall area and a rear area containing an elevator, mailroom, and office. A mezzanine level is accessed via a tiled stairway. Features of the entrance hall include: polychrome floor tiles, decorative Spanish tiles at the floor perimeter, a wood-beamed ceiling with a wrought-iron chandelier, and decorative molded plaster ceiling brackets that visually separate the entrance hall area from the rear lobby spaces (**see Figure 26 to Figure 32**). Features of the single elevator cab include: a wood manual folding door with two wired glass lites, a metal security gate, leather-paneled walls, a copper ceiling, and brass fixtures (**Figure 33**). A passageway leads from the elevator to a single wood door at the far (northeast) end of the rear lobby, which provides access to commercial unit two. The wood-paneled passageway ceiling features painted wood beams and wrought iron light fixtures. A mailroom at the far rear lobby area features a plaster ceiling, a chandelier, and polychrome floor tiles (**Figure 34 and Figure 36**). A partially glazed wood door at the rear of the mailroom leads to an office. A tiled stairway with terra cotta paver treads, Spanish tile risers, and a scrolled wrought iron railing provides access from the lobby entrance hall to a mezzanine level (**Figure 37**). A storage closet (former telephone room) sits beneath the mezzanine stairway, across from the mailroom. A wood door located immediately left (northwest) of the mezzanine stair ascent provides access to commercial unit three. The mezzanine level is supported by wood posts with scrolled wood corbels with floral details.

⁵ One opening that appears to have originally contained an awning window is boarded over.

A carved wood beam spans the length of the mezzanine floor. The mezzanine level contains: a hall leading to a rear bathroom, a landing area, a coved-ceiling corner, and a staircase leading to the building's second story. A large mural depicting a Spanish streetscape is located at the quarter-turn landing of the second-story staircase (Error! Reference source not found.).

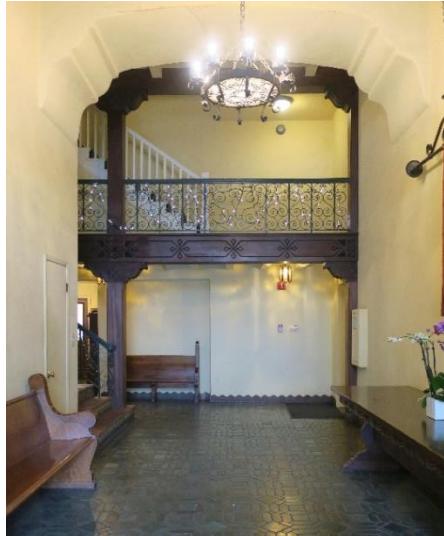


Figure 26: Entrance hall of building lobby, view looking southeast.



Figure 27: Entrance hall of lobby, view looking northwest.



Figure 28: Lobby entrance hall ceiling and chandelier, view looking up.

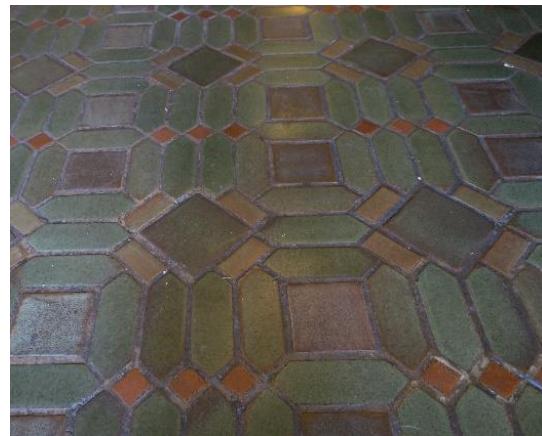


Figure 29: Polychrome tile flooring of lobby (extant at entrance hall and rear corridor from elevator).



Figure 30: Tiles at floor perimeter of lobby.



Figure 31: Passageway between elevator and mailroom/rear lobby area, view looking northeast.



Figure 32: Passageway between elevator and mailroom/rear lobby area, view looking southwest.

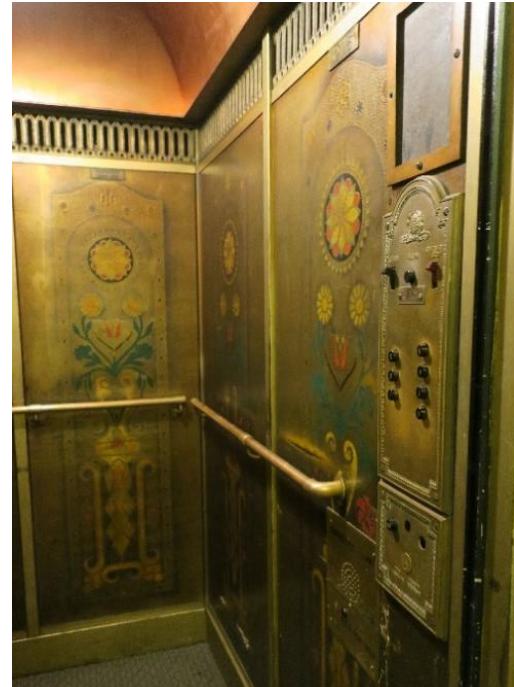


Figure 33: Interior of elevator cab.



Figure 34: Lobby mailroom and office door, view looking east.



Figure 35: Lobby passageway ceiling.



Figure 36: Lobby mailroom ceiling.



Figure 37: Tiled staircase to mezzanine level, view looking northeast.

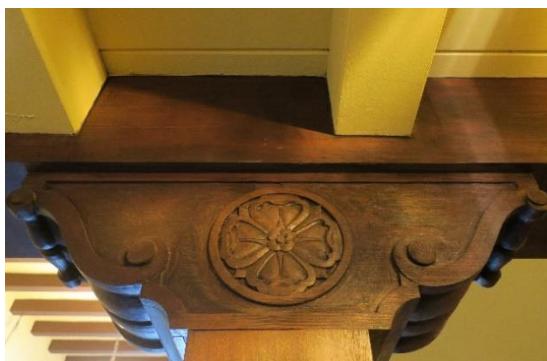


Figure 38: Detail of wood corbels at mezzanine support posts.



Figure 39: Mezzanine landing, view looking southeast.

Commercial Units

The Hotel President contains six commercial units with storefronts along University Avenue. Commercial unit one also includes a storefront (including a tiled bulkhead, glazed storefront window, transom, and spindlework screen) and a separate single wood-frame glazed door at Cowper Street. All commercial unit interiors appear to have undergone some degree of tenant improvement work. Original plans by architect Birge Clark depict commercial units one, two, five and six with recessed entries; however, the storefronts were instead constructed flush with the primary façade. A large mural in unit five once depicted scenes of Stanford University; the mural is no longer extant. Unit three appears to retain its original picture rail molding; unit three retains one original pendant light and unit six appears to retain original wrought-iron light fixtures. Units one, two four, and six retain original mezzanine levels.⁶

SURROUNDING AREA

The area immediately surrounding the subject building is primarily commercial in use, developed mainly with low and mid-rise commercial buildings. One high-rise office building (Palo Alto's tallest) is located one block north of the subject building at 525 University Avenue (1965) (**Figure 40**). The four-story Garden Court Hotel at 520 Cowper Street (1985) is located southeast of the subject building. 500 University Avenue, located northeast of the subject building, is a newly constructed building that will be completed in 2018. Adjacent low-rise commercial buildings on University Avenue date to the 1920s (**Figure 41**). Buildings in the area are typically built out to their lot lines. Architectural styles in the immediate area are varied but include Spanish Colonial Revival and Modern styles. Views from the roof of the subject building are expansive due to the relative lack of high-rise development in the vicinity.



Figure 40: High-rise office building at 525 University Avenue, one block north of the subject building.
Source: Google maps 2019.

⁶ Page & Turnbull did not survey the rear portions of the commercial units; the extant mezzanines are depicted on 2018 as-built architectural drawings.



Figure 41: Properties directly across the street from the subject building are low in scale. Source: Google Street View 2019.

IV. HISTORIC CONTEXT

PALO ALTO HISTORY

The earliest known settlement of the Palo Alto area was by the Ohlone people. The region was colonized in 1769 as part of Alta California. The Spanish and Mexican governments carved the area into large ranchos which contained portions of land that became Palo Alto including *Rancho Corte Madera*, *Rancho Pastoria de las Borregas*, *Rancho Rincon de San Francisquito*, and *Rancho Riconada del Arroyo de San Francisquito*.⁷ These land grants were honored in the cession of California to the United States, but parcels were subdivided and sold throughout the nineteenth century.

The current city of Palo Alto contains the former township of Mayfield, which was located just southwest of Alma Street, and was established in 1855 (**Figure 42**). Starting in 1876, the railroad magnate and California politician Leland Stanford began to purchase land in the area for his country estate, and in 1882 he purchased an additional 1,000 acres adjacent to Mayfield for his horse farm.⁸ Stanford's vast holdings became known as the Palo Alto Stock Farm. On March 9, 1885, Stanford University was founded on land of the Palo Alto Stock Farm through an endowment act by the California Assembly and Senate.

Originally looking to connect Stanford University as a part of the already established town of Mayfield, Stanford asked residents of Mayfield to make the town a temperance town. Their refusal in 1886 caused Stanford to found the town of Palo Alto with aid from his friend, Timothy Hopkins of the Southern Pacific Railroad. Hopkins purchased and subdivided 740 acres of private land, that was known initially as University Park (or the Hopkins Tract).⁹ This land was bounded by the San Francisquito Creek to the north and the railroad tracks and Stanford University campus to the south. A new train stop was created along University Avenue and the new town flourished in its close connection with the university. University Park, under its new name of Palo Alto, was incorporated in 1894.

In its early years, Palo Alto was a temperance town where no alcohol could be served. The residents were mostly middle and working class, with a pocket of University professors clustered in the neighborhood deemed Professorville. The development of a local streetcar in 1906, and the interurban railway to San Jose in 1910, facilitated access to jobs outside the city and to the University, encouraging more people to move to Palo Alto.¹⁰ In July 1925, Mayfield was officially annexed and consolidated into the city of Palo Alto.¹¹

Like the rest of the nation, Palo Alto suffered through the Great Depression in the 1930s and did not grow substantially. World War II brought an influx of military personnel and their families to the Peninsula; accordingly, Palo Alto saw rapid growth following the war as many families who had been stationed on the Peninsula by the military, or who worked in associated industries, chose to stay. Palo Alto's population more than doubled from 16,774 in 1940 to 52,287 in 1960.¹²

⁷ Ward Winslow and Palo Alto Historical Association, *Palo Alto: A Centennial History* (Palo Alto, CA: Palo Alto Historical Association, 1993), 12-17.

⁸ Ibid, 35.

⁹ City of Palo Alto, *Comprehensive Plan 2030* (adopted by City Council, November 13, 2017), 16, accessed August 29, 2019, <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/62915>.

¹⁰ Dames & Moore, "Palo Alto Historic Survey Update," 1-4.

¹¹ City of Palo Alto, *Comprehensive Plan 2030*, 16.

¹² "City of Palo Alto, Santa Clara County," Bay Area Census, accessed August 27, 2019, <http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/PaloAlto50.htm>.

Stanford University was also a steady attraction for residents and development in the city. The city center greatly expanded in the late 1940s and 1950s, gathering parcels that would house new offices and light industrial uses and lead the city away from its “college town” reputation.¹⁵ Palo Alto had been one of the first California cities to establish a City Planning Commission (CPC). Zoning matters were tasked to this advisory commission as early as 1917 in order to control development and design. Regulations on signage, public landscaping and lighting, and appropriateness within residential areas fell under the purview of the CPC. From this early period, Palo Alto has maintained control over the built environment, which has resulted in its relatively low density and consistent aesthetic. However, the zoning controls in the early part of the twentieth century played a part in the racial segregation of the city and the exclusion of certain groups from residential areas. Several neighborhoods were created with race covenants regarding home ownership and occupation, until this practice was ruled unconstitutional in 1948.¹⁶ The academic nature of the town prevented factories or other big industries from settling in Palo Alto, limiting the range of people who would populate the area.



Figure 42: Detail of “Official Map of Santa Clara, California” by Herrmann Brothers, 1890. Source: Library of Congress.

Palo Alto’s city center greatly expanded in the late 1940s and 1950s, gathering parcels that would house new offices and light industrial uses and lead the city away from its “college town” reputation. Palo Alto annexed a vast area of mostly undeveloped land between 1959 and 1968. This area, west of the Foothill Expressway, has remained protected open space.¹³ Small annexations continued into the 1970s, contributing to the discontinuous footprint of the city today. Palo Alto remains closely tied to Stanford University; it is the largest employer in the city. The technology industry dominates other sectors of business, as is the case with most cities within Silicon Valley. Palo Alto consciously maintains its high proportion of open space to development and the suburban feeling and scale of its architecture.

¹³ City of Palo Alto, *Comprehensive Plan 2030*, 11-20.

UNIVERSITY SOUTH NEIGHBORHOOD

The current University South neighborhood is located in the southern portion of the original University Park tract platted by Timothy Hopkins. It was the core part of the early city, along with today's Downtown North neighborhood (located northwest of University Avenue, Downtown North is the main commercial corridor within the original core of Palo Alto). University South contains the residential and commercial areas that lay southeast of University Avenue, although it does not encompass Professorville, the residential neighborhood closely associated with early Stanford faculty members and their families. As a result, the neighborhood is U-shaped, bounded by University Avenue at the northwest, Alma Street and the railroad tracks at the south, and Middlefield Road at the northeast. The southeast boundary follows Embarcadero Road but steps northwest to Addison Avenue, so as to exclude Professorville.

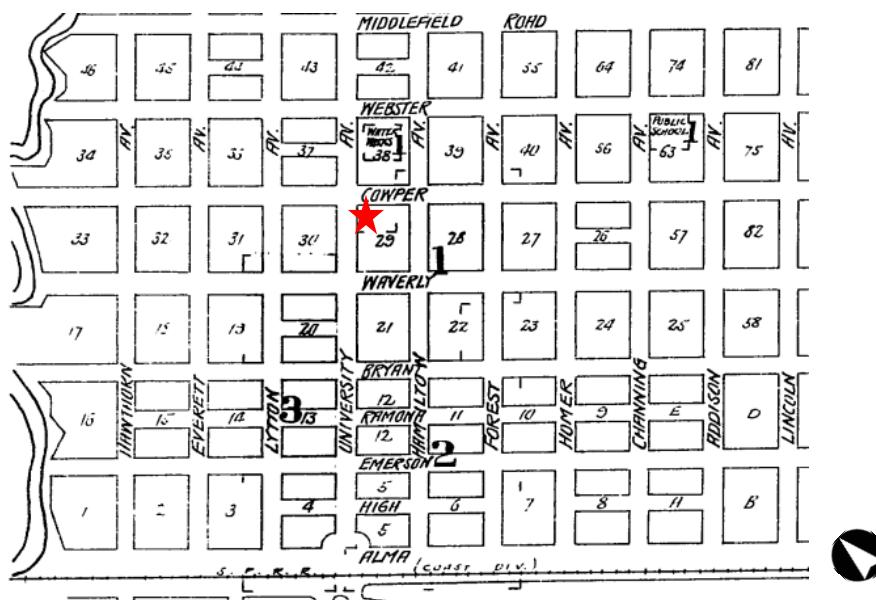


Figure 43. 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. map of Palo Alto showing the street layout within the core of the city. The future location of the subject property is marked by the red star.

Source: San Francisco Public Library, Edited by Page & Turnbull.

The 1895 Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map illustrates that stores were located along University Avenue, and were particularly concentrated at its southwestern end, near the railroad, where a large lumberyard stood (Figure 43). Residences were scattered along the street just east and west of University Avenue on Hamilton and Lytton Avenues. A few churches, hotels, and boarding houses also stood among many vacant lots. Contemporary newspapers called the homes that housed artisans and merchants in this area “neat cottages”—which stood in contrast to the houses occupied by Stanford faculty members, located to the southeast in what is today the Professorville neighborhood. Some grander homes for more affluent residents were sprinkled throughout the current-day University South neighborhood.¹⁴

By 1901, Palo Alto had grown beyond its original core. Houses filled in the lots on the blocks around the railroad, while scattered residential development extended up to and beyond Middlefield Road. Institutions, such as schools and Palo Alto’s first public library, had been built in the area. During the

¹⁴ Palo Alto AAUW, ...Gone Tomorrow? “Neat Cottages” and “Handsome Residences” (Palo Alto: American Association of University Women, 1971, revised 1986) 5.

first decade of the twentieth century, the University South neighborhood appears to have been built out with one- and two-story residences, but as the downtown commercial area prospered and expanded, University South became a desirable location for the growth of Palo Alto's commercial interests.¹⁵

The work of the Palo Alto Improvement Company in the 1920s and 1930s aimed to support this growing commercial identity and the company worked to build several commercial structures south of University Avenue. Their projects concentrated on Ramona Street between University and Hamilton avenues and today are recognized as the Ramona Street Architectural District.¹⁶

By 1924, the previously vacant north quadrant of the block containing the subject parcel (bound by University Avenue, Cowper Street, Waverly Street and Hamilton Street) was developed with the two-story (12-unit) Cowper Court apartment building, a large auto garage, and a one-story dwelling. At the time of the Hotel President's construction in 1929-30, the commercial core of the neighborhood effectively stopped at the 400-block of University Avenue, and the construction of the subject property was a statement of confidence in the continued growth of the commercial core.

Many properties containing early residences in the University South neighborhood have gradually been redeveloped for commercial and institutional uses, as well as into multi-unit residential buildings. The neighborhood currently transitions from commercial and civic tenants concentrated along the University Avenue corridor toward the less dense character of adjacent residential neighborhoods.

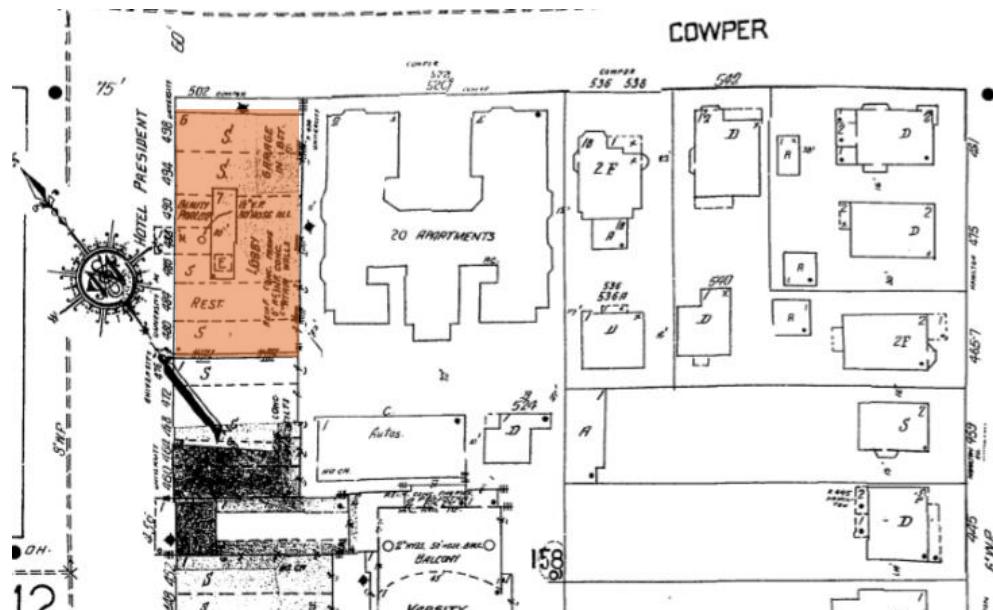


Figure 44: 1949 Sanborn Fire Insurance map. The subject building is shaded orange. Source: San Francisco Public Library, Edited by Page & Turnbull.

¹⁵ The 1924 Sanborn Map shows a variety of uses including a mixture of dwellings, stores, institutional, and light industrial uses.

¹⁶ "Ramona Street Architectural District." Palo Alto Stanford Heritage. Accessed October 2019. <https://www.pastheritage.org/inv/invR/RamonaStreet%20AD.html>

V. HISTORY OF THE HOTEL PRESIDENT

1929-1930s

Plans for the subject building were announced in 1929 by managing owner J. Mort Blackburn. The building was designed by local architect Birge M. Clark and built by the James McLaughlin Company. Blackburn's investment cost was approximated at \$300,000. The *Palo Alto Times* reported that the building would contain two-room apartments and single hotel rooms, arranged in a manner that apartments and hotel rooms may be joined to serve as three-room apartments.¹⁷ Two and three-room apartments cost \$57.50 and \$65 per month and up, and transient hotel rooms cost \$3.50 per day and up. The public was invited to visit the new "apartment hotel" building upon its grand opening on June 11, 1930.

The six-story reinforced concrete Spanish Colonial Revival building featured a prominent wood gallery (or balcony) at the sixth floor of the primary façade. The building was visually distinguished as the tallest building on University Avenue at the time and advertisements highlighted the building as Palo Alto's largest and most modern hotel. The building's name, "Hotel President," honored Stanford University graduate and then-President, Herbert Hoover, who had been one of Stanford's earliest enrolled students. The building was originally opened with that name, and advertisements in 1932 and 1940 continued to use it (Figure 45 and Figure 46).

However, an advertisement as early as 1934 used the name "Hotel President," which suggests that different names began to be used somewhat interchangeably. Historic photographs from ca.1929 and the 1930s depict the building within its first decade of construction.



Figure 45: Advertisement for Hotel President, ca.1930. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.



Figure 46: Hotel President, ca.1930. View looking west. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.

¹⁷ "5-story apartment house will be built here soon," *Palo Alto Times* (June 12, 1929).



Figure 47: University Avenue, ca.1930. View looking southwest. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.

1940s

The building was purchased ca.1939 by hotelier George T. Thompson, owner of a handful of hotels throughout northern California. Thompson placed advertisements and developed promotional brochures that highlighted the building's Spanish Colonial Revival design and attractive amenities, such as the coffee shop and dining room located at the ground floor of the building. According to Thompson, the building was imbued "with just the right touch of Spanish atmosphere to harmonize with the local tradition."¹⁸ Brochures featured the building's distinguished primary entrance with a lavish wrought iron grille and tile surround (altered at an unknown date, prior to 1978) (**Figure 48**). The lobby entrance was lined with photographs of all the past presidents and featured a beamed ceiling, Spanish furniture, and polychrome tiling (**Figure 49**). One of the most novel features of the guest rooms and residential units was in-room radio service. Speakers were sunk into the walls, "their color and finish [to] harmonize with the woodwork," and portable speakers sat on "tables, stands or other furniture...[to] blend with the furnishings."¹⁹ A beautiful roof garden was "equipped with lounging furniture, [planned] so that shade as well as sunshine is available on the hot summer days and sheltering walls afford protection when the wind is brisk" (**Figure 50**).²⁰ The building enjoyed its visually prominent position on University Avenue, in part thanks to oversize rooftop lettering that read: "Hotel President." The Hotel President Company was formed by Thompson in 1940 to operate the hotel lease.

In September 1949, George T. Thompson sold the Hotel President Company to Wallace J. Carlisle, who bought all corporate stock and took over active management of the 125-room hotel along with

¹⁸ Brochure (ca.1940s) held at the Palo Alto Historical Association. Of interest, the brochure specifies the Palo Alto Airport and Moffett Field as nearby perks, as well as the nearby Stanford University.

¹⁹ "Hotel Features Radio Service," *Palo Alto Times* (June 16, 1930).

²⁰ Ibid.

Mrs. Wallace Carlisle, and Robert Littler.²¹ By 1949, the building itself (separate from the hotel business under Hotel President Company) was owned by E.B. DeGolia of San Francisco and was leased to Carlisle's hotel corporation.²² In December 1949, the building was featured in local news articles due to a union dispute. Union picketers protested the employment of non-union member Florence Wainwright, an artist commissioned by Carlisle to paint a mural on the wall of the building's coffee shop (unit five) depicting scenes of Stanford University.²³ It was determined that Carlisle's hiring of a non-unionized worker for an artistic commission was legal.

The first Sanborn Fire Insurance Company map to depict the subject building was published in 1949 (see **Figure 44**). The building was recorded with six stories, a seventh-story utility and circulation penthouse, and basement garage. A historic photograph of University Avenue confirms the building's condition in 1949.



Figure 48: Brochure of Hotel President, featuring the entrance and primary façade, ca.1940s. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.

²¹ Hotel President sold to Menlo Park resident," *Palo Alto Times* (September 24, 1949).; A note on the number of rooms: Multiple historic newspaper articles cite the existence of 125 rooms. However, available historic floor plans appear to indicate fewer than 125 rooms. The number and arrangement of apartment and transient hotel guest room units has changed over the decades and cannot be confirmed.

²² "Hotel President renovation work 3 months away," *Palo Alto Times* (September 29, 1949)

²³ "Art's art, so painter paints on," *Palo Alto Times* (December 2, 1949).

*Historic Resource Evaluation
[18120]*

*Hotel President
Palo Alto, California*



Figure 49: Brochure detail of Hotel President lobby, ca.1940s. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.



Figure 50: Brochure detail of Hotel President rooftop, ca.1940s. View looking southwest. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.

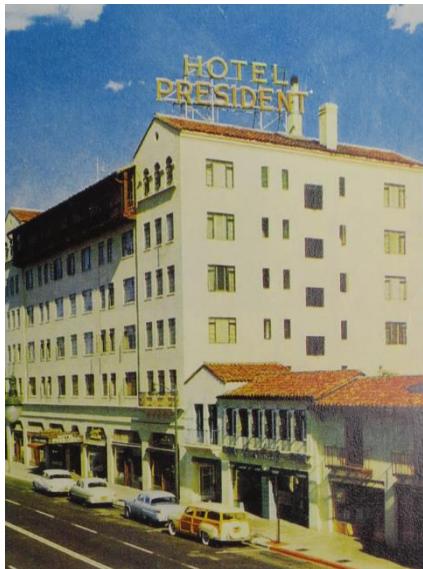


Figure 51: Postcard of Hotel President, ca.1950s. View looking northeast. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.



Figure 52: Hotel President lobby, 1958. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.

1950s

In 1949-51, the hotel's coffee shop was renovated under the new ownership of Wallace J. Carlisle's Hotel President Company. A more complete building renovation was launched December 1, 1955, after building owners Mr. and Mrs. E.B. De Golia resumed active operation of the building and named Clifford Shea manager.²⁴ The De Golias' renovation project was completed in 1956.²⁵ Major changes included: the conversion of the coffee shop into a modern 60-seat dining room; the installation of a stainless steel kitchen; completely new furnishings for all of the Hotel President's 110

²⁴ At the time, the De Golias had managing interest at the time in both the Sir Francis Drake and St. Francis hotels in San Francisco.

²⁵ "Hotel President completes \$225,000 renovation job," *Palo Alto Times*, (April 25, 1956)

rooms, including installation of television sets in all of the units; new plumbing throughout the building and some re-wiring; new carpeting and lighting fixtures in the rooms and hallways; the installation of refrigerators in 20 apartment units; and the replacement of gas appliances with electric stoves. In regard to the room renovations, hotel manager Clifford Shea commented, “the only thing we kept was the telephones.”²⁶ The Spanish Colonial Revival style in the public lobby areas was retained (**Figure 52**). The exterior of the building does not appear to have been impacted by the 1955-56 renovation.

1960s

In 1968, the building was converted from apartment/hotel use to full apartment use and was officially renamed the Hotel President Apartments. The ground floor continued to accommodate six commercial units and the central lobby (**Figure 53**). Melville Mack, president of the Hotel President Corporation in 1968, estimated the hotel, historically, was 40 percent occupied by permanent residents. Mack explained that “the change carries out a long trend toward accommodating permanent residents at the hotel...there also has been increased interest in permanent residence in the hotel building by employees working in the 15-story Palo Alto Office Center across the University Avenue-Cowper Street intersection.”²⁷ Another apparent factor for the hotel’s full conversion to apartments was the recently-introduced one-way street system on University Avenue.²⁸ According to Mack, “more permanent residents were admitted...when transient business dropped off after the start of the one-way experiment in the downtown area... ‘We were no longer able to tell people just to drive up University.’”²⁹ Yet another factor in the change of use was the City’s updated sign ordinance, which required the removal of the hotel’s large rooftop sign, in turn making it more difficult for guests to find the hotel. Though not acknowledged by Mack at the time, other factors at play in the 1950s and 1960s appear to have contributed to the building’s conversion from a hotel apartment building to an apartment-only building. Increasing numbers of auto-friendly motels and resort-style hotels were constructed along El Camino Real, the main thoroughfare for travelers down the San Francisco Peninsula. These cheaper accommodation options brought stiff competition to Palo Alto’s two main downtown hotels, the Cardinal Hotel on Hamilton Avenue and Hotel President.³⁰

The Hotel President Apartments conversion was completed in April of 1968. Individual telephone connections were installed in each room, and all units were updated with a refrigerator, cooking apparatus, and a television set. 75 units were distributed throughout the building’s five upper floors. Bachelor apartments rented from \$125 per month upward, two-room units from \$150 upward, and three-room units from \$200 upward.³¹

1970s

The building was photographed in 1978 for inclusion in the Palo Alto Historic Resource Inventory (**Figure 54**). The survey form states the building’s reason for significance as: “a good example of the local restrained variant of the Spanish (or California) Colonial image. When built, its size and location were especially notable, since the commercial area then ended, for all practical purposes, at the 400 block of University Avenue. Thus, the style introduced in the more western area of the district now was prominently “anchored” and displayed at the opposite border of the commercial area... very important in terms of urban enclosure.”

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ “39-year-old Palo Alto hotel converting to apartments,” *Palo Alto Times* (March 18, 1968).

²⁸ University Avenue was converted back to a two-way street at an unknown date.

²⁹ “39-year-old Palo Alto hotel converting to apartments,” *Palo Alto Times* (March 18, 1968).

³⁰ Matt Bowling, “Hotel President now a relic,” *Palo Alto Daily News* (November 4, 2007).

³¹ Ibid.



Figure 53: Hotel President, 1968. View looking south.
Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.



Figure 54: Hotel President, 1978. View looking south. Source: Palo Alto Historical Association.

1980s-90s

In 1985, the new Garden Court Hotel was built southeast of the subject building at 520 Cowper Street. Renters at the Hotel President Apartments despaired, first from the construction noise and later because of the chimney smoke rising from the Garden Court's in-room fireplaces into the windows of the Hotel President Apartments.

In the 1990s, the subject building was repainted a soft yellow color with green trim.³² The departure from the building's original off-white stucco with black trim was unpopular with some. The re-painting followed the building's purchase by Russ Flynn, a prominent San Francisco landlord, and Chris Dressel. Other changes included the removal of defunct rooftop solar panels and the addition of Pluto's restaurant in place of Henry's.³³

CONSTRUCTION CHRONOLOGY

The following table and accompanying narrative provide a timeline of known construction activity at 480-98 University Avenue, based on building permit applications on file with Palo Alto Building Inspection, historic photographs, Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps, physical observation, and plans available online as part of Stanford University's collection of Birge M. Clark architectural drawings, 1909-1954. Permit applications listed as expired, withdrawn, or those dealing with minor upgrades such as fire sprinklers and alarms are not included.

³² Peter Gauvin, "Paint job irks historians," Palo Alto Weekly (August 30, 1996).

³³ The first legal cocktail in Palo Alto was allegedly served at Henry's.

Date Filed	Address	Permit App. #	Architect / Builder	Description of Work
9/10/1929	480-98 University Avenue	NA	Birge M. Clark	Plan set dated September 10, 1929, titled "Apartment Hotel Building for J.M. Blackburn"
2/14/1966	480 University Avenue (unit six)	25496	Lindell Co.	Remove interior non-bearing partition to open lobby area
3/11/1971	486 University Avenue (unit four)	29712	Acme Glass	Commercial storefront alteration
4/6/1971	480-98 University Avenue	NA	Clark, Stromquist & Sandstrom Architects	Plan set dated April 6, 1971, titled "Alterations and Additions President Apartments"
4/5/1971	482 University Avenue (unit five)	29762	Design Rest. Inc.	Installation of bar and back bar, paneling of side walls with mahogany panels, existing lattice work will be covered and taped ³⁴
12/1/1971	480 University Avenue (unit six)	30376	Rosken West, Ltd.	Permit requested for 8" high partitions for offices #1 and #2, interior non-bearing
11/14/1973	482 University Avenue (unit five)	32614	Paul Garnier Studios, Cor Lon Company	Bar/restaurant seats approx. 100, no structural change made. Changing all surface area (tile floors, panel walls, paint ceiling, rebuild bar, add light fixtures)
11/15/1973	482 University Avenue (unit five)	32618	A. Garnier Studios, Cor Lon Company	Exterior remodel as per ARB approved plans
6/31/1982	489 University Avenue (unit one)	13-82-863	Richard Elmore Design Association	Installation of bakery at existing copy shop, no alteration to building visually or structurally
12/17/1982	480 University Avenue (unit six)	B82-1339	N/A	Small partition in store, 8' high but 12" ceiling
10/17/1996	482 University Avenue (unit five)	96-3341B	Millennium Construction	Interior design modifications involving upgrades in compliance with handicap accessibility, kitchen equipment and finish work associated with the equipment
10/17/1996	482 University Avenue (unit five)	96-3341	Millennium Construction	Interior and storefront remodel for Pluto's restaurant
11/6/1996	482 University Avenue (unit five)	96-3585D	N/A	Interior demolition work of a project which is concurrently

³⁴ Remaining text is illegible, appears to describe asbestos paint.

Date Filed	Address	Permit App. #	Architect / Builder	Description of Work
				undergoing full building permit review (permit # 96-3341). No demolition of storefront under this permit
4/13/1998	480-98 University Avenue (excluding 488 University Avenue)	98-301B	San Jose Awning Company	Installation of seven welded frame awnings
9/14/1999	488 University Avenue	00-0451	TDS Architects, Inc.	Work completed for Cellular One cell site name "Downtown Palo Alto," number "770." Plans show basement and roof cable mounts and power conduits. Cell antennas on roof
5/17/2002	488 University Avenue	02-1582	Pacific 17 Telecommunications Engineering Consulting	Work completed for AT&T. Antennas on roof
June 2003	488 University Avenue	03-1840	Matrix Seismic Corp.	Add kickplate and lever hardwares to all 1 st floor entrance doors
6/29/2010	488 University Avenue	11-0884	HMH Design Group	Work done for AT&T site no.CNU0770. Install two Wi-Fi antennas inside the building balcony area, install one cabinet and 2 RRUs
10/29/2015	488 University Avenue	15-2576	Streamline Engineering	Work done for AT&T. Modification of telecommunication facility
8/16/2016	488 University Avenue	16-1646	SAC Wireless	Work done for AT&T. Antenna work
1/12/2018	488 University Avenue	98-0301	N/A	Solar heating system, plumbing schematic

Original plans by Birge M. Clark, dated September 10, 1929 and titled, "Apartment Hotel Building for J.M. Blackburn," are available online at Stanford Atlas.³⁵ The Stanford Atlas collection also contains a renovation drawing by Clark, Stromquist & Sandstrom Architects, dated April 6, 1971 and titled "Alterations and Additions President Apartments."³⁶ The singular plan sheet depicts a number of alterations, including: "cut 3-4ft opening in rear façade for doorway and install solid core or hollow metal door; cut and patch furred areas as required; in banquet room, patch floor flush with adjacent floor and install carpet to match existing; remove existing fireplace and finish walls to match existing; install 3-7ft solid core door in wood frame; close stair to basement (behind lobby elevator);

³⁵ "Hotel President/apartment building, J.M. Blackburn, 480-98 University and Cowper, Palo Alto, California, 1929-30, 1971." https://exhibits.stanford.edu/ua-maps-drawings/catalog?utf8=%E2%9C%93&exhibit_id=ua-maps-drawings&search_field=search&q=president+hotel

³⁶ Ibid. The firm was led by Birge Clark, Walter Stromquist, and Paul Sandstrom.

new cocktail lounge (plans and construction by lessor); interior alterations to jewelry store including removal interior door and bathroom alterations; close opening to women's restroom from lobby, finish to match existing; remove existing doors from lobby to banquet room, patch opening to match adjacent finishes; new opening(s) at rear façade near garage ramp.”³⁷

Physical observation and archival research has revealed additional alterations not indicated in the permit history and available architectural drawings. With the exception of cellular-related projects, all known alterations (included unpermitted alterations) are summarized below with dates or approximate dates provided in parentheses.

- Interior renovation including: completely new furnishings for all of the upper floor 110 rooms, installation of television sets in all of the units; new plumbing throughout the building and some re-wiring; new carpeting and lighting fixtures in the rooms and hallways; the installation of refrigerators in 20 apartment units; and the replacement of gas appliances with electric stoves (1955-56)
- Removal of prominent rooftop “Hotel President” signage (ca.1960s)
- Removal of roof chimney and incinerator (date unknown)
- Removal of the reception desk (prior to 1997)
- Re-flooring of mailroom/former reception area floor tiling (ca.2000)
- Installation of current mailboxes in mailroom area (date unknown)
- Removal of a telephone booth under mezzanine stairs and installation of new door (date unknown)
- Alteration of the front entrance (removal of wrought iron detailing within glazed portion of double doors, sidelights, and arched transom) (date unknown, after 1940s)
- Alterations of openings at the first story of the rear façade (after 1971)
- Addition of two storage structures at the northwest façade of the seventh-story rooftop utility/circulation penthouse (date unknown)
- Removal of wood grating (flooring) at roof terrace (date unknown)
- Seismic strengthening work, including two steel support beams in the basement and below all storefront transoms (date unknown)
- Circulation changes: the infill of a passageway between the lobby and commercial unit four (ca.1971); slight relocation of/replacement of door between the lobby and commercial unit three; the infill of a staircase from the lounge/banquet room to the basement level; the enclosure of the central staircase at floors three, four, and five; and two new doors at the rear façade (date unknown)
- Upper floor unit interior alterations of varying degrees (continuous)
- The conversion of 125 upper floor units of various sizes to 75 units between 250 and 800 square feet (continuous)³⁸
- Commercial unit storefront alterations:
 - All: removal and replacement of original awnings, which were likely retractable (1998); addition of kickplate and lever hardwares to all entrance doors (2003)
 - Unit one: none at University Avenue; two transom lites fitted with AC units and similar replacement bulkhead tiling at Cowper Street (date unknown)
 - Unit two: similar replacement bulkhead tiling and aluminum storefront window sashes (date unknown)

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Multiple historic newspaper articles cite the existence of 125 rooms. However, available historic floor plans appear to indicate fewer than 125 rooms. The number and arrangement of apartment and transient hotel guest room units has changed over the decades and cannot be confirmed.

- Unit three: replacement aluminum storefront window sashes (date unknown)
- Unit four: replacement aluminum glazed single door, aluminum-frame storefront windows, aluminum bulkhead panels (1971)
- Unit five: exterior remodel (1973); replacement recessed storefront, similar replacement bulkhead tiling, replacement wood-frame glazed accordion storefront and single door (relocated from original center placement to left placement) (1996)
- Unit six: replacement single (Dutch) door (date unknown)
- Commercial unit interior alterations:
 - Unit one: installation of bakery at copy shop (1982); periodic tenant improvements
 - Unit two: installation of false ceiling (date unknown), periodic tenant improvements
 - Unit three: periodic tenant improvements, though appears to retain an original light feature
 - Unit four: former passage to lobby infilled (1971), periodic tenant improvements
 - Unit five: Renovation of coffee shop (ca.1949-51); conversion of coffee shop into a modern 60-seat dining room; kitchen expansion into former lounge/banquet room area; the installation of a stainless-steel kitchen, installation of false ceiling, former opening to commercial unit four infilled, installation of two bars, new wall paneling, (1971), new bar/restaurant seat and all interior surfaces updated (1973); interior design modifications related to handicap accessibility and kitchen equipment (1996); ongoing tenant improvements. Wood-beamed ceiling of former hotel lounge/banquet room is extant
 - Unit six: partition removal (1966); partition installation (1973); partition installation (1982); periodic tenant improvements. Appears to retain original light fixtures.

OWNERSHIP HISTORY

The following ownership history has been gathered from available documentation in historic newspapers, city directories, census records, and permits at the Palo Alto Development Services.

Year(s)	Owner(s)	Occupation / Notes
1929- ca. 1939	J. Mort Blackburn	
ca. 1939-1949	George T. Thompson	
1949- 1955	Wallace J. Carlisle	Owner of the hotel company, not the hotel itself
1949- ca. 1956	Mr. And Mrs. E.M. De Golia	Took over management of hotel company in 1955
Unknown-1987	President Apartment Associates	
1987-Unknown	498 University Ave Partners	
Unknown-1996	Greg Rec Webster	
1996-2018 ³⁹	University President Associates LLC	Also listed as University President Associates LP ⁴⁰
2018-	GPCA Owner LLC	

³⁹ Note that an easement was filed on November 28, 2005, between University Presidents Associates LP and Comcast of California II Inc.

⁴⁰ Note that permit #03-1840, filed June 2003, lists Flynn Investments as the property owner. Flynn Investments is not included in the property's grantor/grantee records. Research revealed that Russ Flynn, a prominent San Francisco-based landlord, was a member of University President Associates.

Select Owner Biographies

J. Mort Blackburn

The Hotel President was constructed in 1929 for owner J. Mort Blackburn. Research did not uncover additional information about Blackburn; he sold the property to George T. Thompson ca.1939.

George T. Thompson

George T. Thompson acquired the subject building ca. 1939. Thompson is known to have owned and managed several affiliated hotels, including the Hotel Sir Francis Drake Hotel and Maurice Hotel in San Francisco, the Eureka Inn in Eureka, and Sonoma Mission Inn in Boyes Springs.

Wallace J. Carlisle (Lessor/Hotel Operator)

Wallace J. Carlisle acquired all corporate stock of the Hotel President Company from George T. Thompson in September 1949. He leased the hotel company from building owners Mr. and Mrs. E.M. De Golia prior to 1955. Carlisle served as a Director of the hotel alongside his wife, Katharine, and Robert Littler.⁴¹ Carlisle was previously engaged in hotel management and brokerage in Idaho, Utah, and elsewhere in California. Carlisle served as a member of the board of directors of the California Northern Hotel Association and was a member of the California State Hotel Association. Carlisle and his wife moved to Palo Alto in 1944, and then to Menlo Park in 1947.

Mr. and Mrs. E. B De Golia

Mr. and Mrs. E. B. De Golia purchased the building from George T. Thompson in 1949 and leased the building to Wallace J. Carlisle prior to taking over full management of the hotel in 1955. Ca.1955, the De Golas had managing interest in both the Sir Francis Drake Hotel and St. Francis Hotel in San Francisco.

University President Associates LP/ Flynn Investments

In 1966, the property was purchased by University President Associates, headed by Russ Flynn, a prominent San Francisco landlord, and Woodside resident Chris Dressel, a former Stanford/professional football player.⁴²

OCCUPANT HISTORY

Due to the large number of individuals who resided in the building over the years, building occupants were not researched for the preparation of this report, and city directories were not consulted. The commercial units at the ground floor of the building appear to have been consistently occupied. A longtime tenant was the Hotel President Coffee Shop and Dining Room, which operated in conjunction with the hotel and was located in commercial unit five. Later, Henry's restaurant operated out of commercial unit five until the 1990s, when the current tenant, Pluto's restaurant, moved in. A barber shop has operated out of commercial unit three since 1949. Additional tenants are known to have included a copy shop, a bakery, an optometrist, a camera shop, and a AAA office. More recent tenants include Gyro Gyro in commercial unit one, Yogurtland in commercial unit two, Norzin Collections in commercial unit four, and the Tobacco Czar (currently, Hemingway Cigars and Tobacco) in commercial unit six.

⁴¹ Hotel President sold to Menlo Park resident," *Palo Alto Times* (September 24, 1949). Stanford graduate Robert Littler worked as a San Francisco attorney and was vice president of the Palo Alto Board of Education.

⁴² Peter Gauvin, "Paint Job irks historians," *Palo Alto Weekly* (August 30, 1996).

SPANISH COLONIAL REVIVAL STYLE

Historically rooted in the building traditions of early Spanish and Mexican settlers of California and other Spanish colonies, this revival style was popular in California and the rest of the Southwest from the early 1900s to the 1930s, with variations on the style remaining popular today. Earlier Hispanic Revival styles were rooted in regional interpretations of traditional Spanish, Native American, and Mexican design and construction techniques, which were indigenous to California. Not as ornate as its earlier Mexican prototypes, the Mission Revival style was characterized by low-pitched or flat roofs (often composed of thatch, terracotta tile or tar), thick masonry walls of adobe brick or stucco, multiple doorways, deeply recessed openings with multi-lite windows, arcades, sculpted parapets resembling the typical Espadaña or belfry, and red clay tile roofs. The Mission Revival style was popular in California and much of the Southwest because it was derived from indigenous prototypes.

By the 1920s, the Mission Revival in California was joined by the more elaborate Mediterranean and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. Making use of terracotta tile gabled roofs, thick masonry walls, plaster finishes, wrought iron grilles, balconies, and smaller fenestration openings, the Spanish Colonial Revival style was popular for commercial buildings, institutions, apartments, and houses. In California, the Spanish Colonial Revival came into prominence after the Panama-California Exposition in San Diego in 1915 and was very popular through the 1930s.⁴³

The first Spanish Colonial Revival house in Palo Alto was designed by Santa Barbara architect George Washington Smith in 1924 at 1336 Cowper Street. Soon after, local architect Birge Clark began using the style for his residential and commercial projects in Palo Alto.

BIRGE M. CLARK (1893-1989), ARCHITECT

Birge M. Clark is considered the most influential architect in Palo Alto's history. Clark was active during much of the twentieth century and was a proponent of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which he called "Early California." Clark's prolific output and stylistic consistency greatly contributed to Palo Alto's current character. Clark designed a variety of commercial, residential and industrial buildings, including 98 residences in Palo Alto and an additional 39 residences on the Stanford campus. Some of Clark's most prominent residential commissions in Palo Alto include the houses on Coleridge Avenue between Cowper and Webster streets, the Dunker House at 420 Maple Street (1926) and the Lucie Stern residence at 1990 Cowper Street (1932). Other well-known non-residential commissions of Clark's include the former Palo Alto Police and Fire Station at 450 Bryant Street (now the Palo Alto Senior Center) (1927), the Post Office at 380 Hamilton Avenue (1932), the Lucie Stern Community Center at 1305 Middlefield Road (1932) and the 500 Block of Ramona Street (1920s).⁴⁴

Birge Clark was born on April 16, 1893 in San Francisco. His father, Arthur B. Clark, had moved the family west the year before from Syracuse, New York to take a position as the first chairman of the Art and Architecture Department at Stanford University. Arthur Clark would later serve as the first mayor of Mayfield.⁴⁵ Birge Clark graduated from Palo Alto High School in 1910. He studied art and engineering at Stanford University, where he graduated in 1914. Clark received his graduate degree in architecture from Columbia University in 1917. That same year he enlisted in the Army and went to France, where he served as a captain and a company commander in the Balloon Corps during World War I. Clark returned to Palo Alto in 1919, where he took part in the design of his first commission,

⁴³ San Francisco Planning Department, *San Francisco Preservation Bulletin No. 18 – Residential and Commercial Architectural Periods and Styles in San Francisco* (January 2003).

⁴⁴ Peter Gauvin, "Birge Clark (1893-1989)," *Palo Alto Centennial* (May 25, 1994).

⁴⁵ Peter Gauvin, "Arthur B. Clark (1866-1949)," *Palo Alto Centennial* (October 21, 1994).

the Lou Henry Hoover House on the Stanford University campus. In 1922, he married Lucile Townley, with whom he would eventually have four children.

Clark played a major role in the creation of Palo Alto during the boom times of the 1920s. During this phase of the city's development, Clark designed many of the Spanish Colonial Revival houses and a few in other Revival styles in the recently annexed residential neighborhoods. Clark also designed many of the commercial blocks and government buildings that were gradually replacing the false-front Victorian-era structures in the downtown shopping area. Clark's business tapered off during the Depression and World War II, when construction slowed. Just as he was considering a new career, Clark contracted with shipbuilding magnate Henry Kaiser to design a massive steel mill in Fontana, California. During this period, he also designed the first Hewlett Packard building on Page Mill Road in Palo Alto (1942). Another Hewlett Packard plant at 1501 Page Mill Road followed in 1957.

Clark taught architecture at Stanford University from 1950 until 1972. In 1980, he joined the Palo Alto Historic Resources Board. In 1984, Clark retired from active participation in his firm Clark, Stromquist & Sandstrom and on April 30, 1989, he died at the age of 96. All told, Birge Clark designed approximately 450 buildings in the Bay Area. Many of his buildings have been listed in local registers and the National Register of Historic Places. The Hotel President is a leading example of a work by Birge Clark. The building is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style – both locally and beyond – and strongly relates to the character of the surrounding area.

VI. EVALUATION

CALIFORNIA REGISTER OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is an inventory of significant architectural, archaeological, and historical resources in the State of California. Resources can be listed in the California Register through a number of methods. State Historical Landmarks and National Register-listed properties are automatically listed in the California Register. Properties can also be nominated to the California Register by local governments, private organizations, or citizens. The evaluative criteria used by the California Register for determining eligibility are closely based on those developed by the National Park Service for the National Register of Historic Places.

In order for a property to be eligible for listing in the California Register, it must be found significant under one or more of the following criteria.

- *Criterion 1 (Events)*: Resources that are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States.
- *Criterion 2 (Persons)*: Resources that are associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history.
- *Criterion 3 (Architecture)*: Resources that embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values.
- *Criterion 4 (Information Potential)*: Resources or sites that have yielded or have the potential to yield information important to the prehistory or history of the local area, California, or the nation.

The following section examines the eligibility of the Hotel President for individual listing in the California Register:

Criterion 1 (Events)

The Hotel President was opened in 1930 as the Hotel President, a mixed-use building containing six commercial units, apartment units, and transient hotel guest rooms. The building appears eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 1 (Events) at the local level, for its role in the northeast extension of University Avenue as a commercial corridor, as an early mixed-use building with commercial units, residential apartment units, and transient hotel guest units, and for its association with President Herbert Hoover, an early graduate of Stanford University and a figure of local importance. The Palo Alto Historic Resource Inventory survey form states the size and location of the building were especially notable, since the commercial area then ended, for all practical purposes, at the 400 block of University Avenue. Thus, the construction of the Hotel President was important in terms of Palo Alto's urban design. At the time of its construction, the building was the largest on University Avenue and was the largest hotel in Palo Alto. The building's mixed-use typology extended commercial activity on University Avenue, contributed to the city's hospitality and tourist services, and also brought permanent residents to the downtown area.

Therefore, the Hotel President does appear to be individually eligible for the California Register under Criterion 1.

Criterion 2 (Persons)

The Hotel President does not appear eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 2 (Persons). Research has failed to suggest that any owners or hotel operators figured prominently enough in Palo Alto's development to qualify the building for listing in the California Register under this criterion. Although city directories were not researched for the names of tenants and occupants, an intensive review of archival materials did not indicate any building tenants or occupants that would rise to a level of significance such that the building would qualify under this criterion. Thus, the Hotel President does not appear to be individually eligible for the California Register under Criterion 2.

Criterion 3 (Architecture)

The Hotel President appears eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 3 (Architecture) as a building that "embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represent the work of a master, or possess high artistic values." The subject building is significant for its high degree of architectural quality and its Spanish Colonial Revival style. Additionally, the building is readily identifiable in Palo Alto as a work by master architect Birge Clark. Birge Clark – the only architect who maintained an office in Palo Alto at the time of the building's construction – predominantly designed his projects in the Spanish Colonial Revival style, which he called the Early California style. Constructed beginning in 1929 and opened as the Hotel President in 1930, the subject building is an excellent example of this style which was popular in American architecture from 1915 into the 1930s. By 1929 the style had already been established on University Avenue at adjacent and nearby buildings, including within the Ramona Street Architectural District, which is listed on the National Register. With the construction of the Hotel President, the Spanish Colonial Revival style became prominently anchored and displayed at the northeast border of Palo Alto's commercial area.

Therefore, the Hotel President does appear to be individually eligible for the California Register under Criterion 3.

Criterion 4 (Information Potential)

The Hotel President does not appear to be individually eligible under Criterion 4 as a building that has the potential to provide information important to the prehistory or history of the City of Palo Alto, state, or nation. It does not feature construction or material types, or embody engineering practices that would, with additional study, provide important information. Page & Turnbull's evaluation of this property was limited to age-eligible resources above ground and did not involve survey or evaluation of the subject property for the purposes of archaeological information.

Period of Significance

The period of significance for the Hotel President is defined as 1929-1930, which includes the building's initial construction and the opening of the Hotel President.

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES

For a property to be eligible for national or state designation under criteria related to type, period, or method of construction, the essential physical features (or character-defining features) that enable the property to convey its historic identity must be evident. These distinctive character-defining features are the physical traits that commonly recur in property types and/or architectural styles. To be eligible, a property must clearly contain enough of those characteristics to be considered a true representative of a particular type, period, or method of construction, and these features must also retain a sufficient degree of integrity. Characteristics can be expressed in terms such as form, proportion, structure, plan, style, or materials.

The following character-defining features have been identified for the Hotel President at 480-98 University Avenue, which has a period of significance of 1929-30 and is significant for its role in the early commercial development of University Avenue, its Spanish Colonial Revival style, and as an excellent example of the work of master architect Birge M. Clark. The character-defining features of the Hotel President include, but are not limited to:

Exterior:

- Situated on the south corner of University Avenue and Cowper Street
- Six-story building with symmetrical massing
- Rectangular plan extending to property lines
- Concrete construction with stucco cladding
- Parapeted flat roof with terra cotta clay-tile gable ends and gallery shed roof
- Primary façade with seven structural bays; the first and last bays slightly project at the upper floors
- Recessed entrance vestibule for building lobby
 - Cast iron “Hotel President” marquee with scrolled support brackets
 - Double doors with sidelights and arched transom
 - Tile flooring and wall cladding
 - Wrought iron six-pointed chandelier
- Six commercial units at the primary northwest (University Avenue) façade (four of which retain most original storefront features)
 - Tiled bulkheads
 - Fixed plate glass storefront windows
 - Single wood doors with glazed transoms
 - Storefront transoms with scalloped chamfered upper corners, hopper windows, and fixed end lites
 - Spindlework screen that spans the storefront transoms
- Two beltcourses between first and second stories
- Wrought iron Juliet balconies at the first and last bays at the second story of the primary facade with corbelled moldings underneath
- Wood gallery at the central portion of the primary façade’s sixth story
- Storefront, single wood-frame glazed door, and garage opening at northeast (Cowper Street) facade
- Steel-sash, multi-lite, regular fenestration at upper floors throughout the building, including:
 - Fixed windows flanked by casement windows
 - Double casement windows
 - Single casement windows
 - Arched windows at sixth story primary façade
 - Some windows have wired glass or pebbled opaque glass
- Seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse, wood pergola, and rooftop terrace
- Fire escapes at northeast and southeast facades

Interior:

- Building lobby
 - Polychrome tile flooring
 - Tile floor perimeter border
 - Wrought iron chandeliers
 - Molded plaster brackets
 - Single-cab elevator with manual folding door, security gate, leather-paneled walls, a copper ceiling, and brass fixtures
 - Wood-beamed ceiling

- Mezzanine stairway with terra cotta treads, Spanish tile risers, and a wrought iron scrolled railing
- Wood horizontal beam and support posts for mezzanine level featuring carved corbels
- Hall and stair circulation throughout upper floors
 - Hall running the length of building (southwest to northeast)
 - Hall running the partial width of the building (northwest to southeast)
 - Central staircase with skylight (accessible at mezzanine/second story and sixth/seventh story, enclosed/non-accessible at third, fourth, and fifth stories)
 - Southwest staircase with skylight (between second and sixth stories)
 - Shallow arched hall ceilings
 - Textured stucco wall cladding in the halls
 - Wood upper floor unit doors
 - South stairway wood-framed wired glass five-lite double doors
 - Second-story mural in stairwell leading from mezzanine level
- Lodging units at upper floors (second through sixth floors)
- Six commercial units at the first story
 - Presence of rear mezzanine levels in commercial units one, two, four and six⁴⁶
 - Wrought iron light fixtures in commercial unit six
 - Pendant light fixture in commercial unit three
 - Picture rail in commercial unit three
 - Wood-beamed ceiling in commercial unit five (at the rear portion, formerly the hotel lounge/banquet room)

While later alterations—specifically the 1950s renovations and the 1971 first-story renovation—are 50 years old or nearly so, they are outside the building’s period of significance and are not considered to be character-defining features of the building.

INTEGRITY

In order to qualify for listing in any local, state, or national historic register, a property or landscape must possess significance under at least one evaluative criterion as described above and retain integrity. Integrity is defined by the California Office of Historic Preservation as “the authenticity of an historical resource’s physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource’s period of significance,” or more simply defined by the National Park Service as “the ability of a property to convey its significance.”⁴⁷

In order to evaluate whether the Hotel President retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance, Page & Turnbull used established integrity standards outlined by the *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Seven variables, or aspects, that define integrity are used to evaluate a resource’s integrity—location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. A property must stand up under most or all of these aspects in order to retain overall integrity. If a property does not retain integrity, it can no longer convey its significance and is therefore not eligible for listing in local, state, or national registers.

The seven aspects that define integrity are defined as follows:

⁴⁶ Page & Turnbull did not survey the rear portions of the commercial units; the extant mezzanines are depicted on 2018 as-built architectural drawings by ELS.

⁴⁷ California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 7: How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historical Resources* (Sacramento: California Office of State Publishing, September 4, 2001) 11; U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1995) 44.

Location is the place where the historic property was constructed.

Setting addresses the physical environment of the historic property inclusive of the landscape and spatial relationships of the building(s).

Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plans, space, structure, and style of the property.

Materials refer to the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form the historic property.

Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history.

Feeling is the property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

Location

The Hotel President retains integrity of location, as the location of original construction has not changed.

Setting

The Hotel President substantially retains integrity of setting. Some integrity of setting has been lost as the construction of the high-rise (15 story) building at 525 University Avenue and other mid-rise buildings have altered the character of the immediate vicinity, but the Hotel President is still located in a commercial neighborhood and continues to visually anchor this portion of University Avenue, and thus substantially retains integrity of setting.

Design

The Hotel President retains integrity of design. The building retains its form, massing, distinctive tiling, cast and wrought iron ornamentation, and wood gallery at the primary (University Avenue) façade. The primary façade has been of primary importance since the original construction of the building, as it was designed to be a substantial presence along University Avenue .Despite alterations to the commercial storefronts (ranging from window sash replacement to overall configuration changes) the primary façade of the Hotel President retains a high degree of integrity of design that enables the building to convey its architectural significance as an important work of master architect Birge Clark.

Materials

The Hotel President substantially retains integrity of materials. The primary façade has undergone minimal alteration since the hotel was opened in 1930. Those alterations that have occurred are largely limited to the ground floor commercial storefronts, but also include the removal of the prominent historic rooftop signage and the removal of wrought-iron detailing around the entrance doors. Regarding the interior, the Hotel President has experienced some changes to its circulation plan in the public spaces and a reconfiguring of rooms on the building's upper levels. However, these material changes have not impacted the Hotel President's ability to convey its significance or to show

the quality of architectural design and craftsmanship that have defined the building since its opening in 1930. Therefore, the Hotel President substantially retains integrity of materials.

Workmanship

The Hotel President retains integrity of workmanship. Features that demonstrate evidence of period workmanship and construction methods include stucco cladding, a clay tile roof, distinctive tiling, cast and wrought iron ornamentation, and the wood gallery along the primary façade remain intact.

Feeling

The Hotel President retains integrity of feeling. The building retains the feeling of a 1930 Spanish Colonial Revival style mixed-use, hotel building designed by the master architect Birge Clark. The building's design, materiality, and workmanship remain highly representative of Clark's identified aesthetic which was known for thoughtfully integrating tilework and decorative metalwork into his Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings.

Association

The Hotel President retains integrity of association. The retention of commercial and lodging uses is sufficient for the building to retain integrity of association as a mixed-use building. Additionally, the building continues to communicate its association with Birge Clark and its role as one of Palo Alto's most prominent mixed-use Spanish Colonial Revival style buildings from the 1920s and 1930s.

Therefore, the Hotel President retains five of the seven aspects of integrity, and substantially retains integrity of setting and materials, and therefore retains enough integrity such that it conveys its significance under Criteria 1(Events) and 3 (Architecture) of the California Register, with a period of significance of 1929-1930.

VII. CONCLUSION

Constructed in 1929-30, 480-98 University Avenue is significant under California Register Criterion 1 at the local level for its role in extending the commercial corridor of University Avenue, as an early mixed-use building with commercial units, residential apartment units, and transient hotel guest units, and for its association with President Herbert Hoover, an early graduate of Stanford University and a figure of local importance. Additionally, the building is significant under California Register Criterion 3 as an example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Palo Alto and as a work of master local architect Birge M. Clark. The building is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, communicated through exterior tilework, textured stucco cladding, spindlegallery, a wood gallery, a terra cotta clay tile roof, and wrought iron detailing. The building interior features tilework, carved wood beams and corbels, wrought iron detailing, mural work, and an ornamented elevator. Overall, the building displays high artistic values.

VIII. REFERENCES CITED

Published Works

- “39-year-old Palo Alto hotel converting to apartments.” *Palo Alto Times*. March 18, 1968.
- “5-story apartment house will be built here soon.” *Palo Alto Times*. June 12, 1929.
- “Art’s art, so painter paints on.” *Palo Alto Times*. December 2, 1949.
- Bertelsen, Ann. “Birge M. Clark: The Man.” NCH&G. May 1989.
- Bowling, Matt. “Hotel President now a relic.” *Palo Alto Daily News*. November 4, 2007.
- California Office of Historic Preservation. *Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 7: How to Nominate a Resource to the California Register of Historical Resources*. Sacramento: California Office of State Publishing, September 4, 2001.
- California Office of Historic Preservation. *Technical Assistance Bulletin No. 8: User’s Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historic Resources Inventory Directory*. Sacramento: California Office of State Publishing. November 2004. Accessed October 22, 2018, <http://ohp.parks.ca.gov/pages/1069/files/tabc8.pdf>.
- CEQA Guidelines. Accessed May 10, 2018. <http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/guidelines/>.
- Dames & Moore, Michael Corbett, and Denise Bradley. “Final Survey Report – Palo Alto Historical Survey Update: August 1997-August 2000.” Prepared for the City of Palo Alto Planning Division, February 2001.
- Fortney, Mary T. “Post Office candidate for historic site.” *The Peninsula Times Tribune*. April 3, 1981.
- Gauvin, Peter. “Birge Clark (1893-1989).” *Palo Alto Centennial*. May 25, 1994.
- Gauvin, Peter. “Paint Job irks historians.” *Palo Alto Weekly*. August 30, 1996.
- Grimmer, Anne E. *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.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 2017. Accessed October 2019, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/treatment-guidelines-2017.pdf>.
- “Hotel Features Radio Service.” *Palo Alto Times*. June 16, 1930.
- Kushman, Rick. “Birge Clark: the man behind the blueprints.” *Palo Alto Centennial*. April 15, 1994.
- Kushman, Rick. “Clark family has influenced local medicine, architecture.” *Palo Alto Weekly*. December 27, 1979.
- Lyhne, Bob. “Birge M. Clark: long memory for Peninsula living.” *Palo Alto Times*. February 11, 1978.
- McCormick, Peter. “Birge M. Clark has left his mark on Palo Alto.” *San Jose Mercury News*. May 30, 1984.
- McAlester, Virginia Savage. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Revised Edition. New York: Knopf, 2015.
- National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin Number 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service.
- Nowell, Jen. “Barbershops, nail salons spared from city’s wrath.” *Daily Post*. October 18, 2016.
- Palo Alto AAUW, ...*Gone Tomorrow? “Neat Cottages” and “Handsome Residences”* (Palo Alto: American Association of University Women, 1971, revised 1986).
- “Peninsula Architect Birge Clark, 96.” *San Francisco Chronicle*. May 3, 1989.

- “Hotel President completes \$225,000 renovation job.” *Palo Alto Times*. April 25, 1956.
- “Hotel President renovation work 3 months away.” *Palo Alto Times*. September 29, 1949.
- “Hotel President sold to Menlo Park resident.” *Palo Alto Times*. September 24, 1949.
- San Francisco Planning Department, *San Francisco Preservation Bulletin No. 18 – Residential and Commercial Architectural Periods and Styles in San Francisco* (January 2003).
- Voakes, Paul. “Clark firm to incorporate.” *Palo Alto Times*. January 27, 1978.
- Winslow, Ward and Palo Alto Historical Association. *Palo Alto: A Centennial History*. Palo Alto, CA: Palo Alto Historical Association, 1993.

Public Records

- Building Permit Applications. Palo Alto Development Services.
- California Historical Resource Information System (CHRIS), Historic Property Data File for Santa Clara County, April 5, 2012.
- City of Palo Alto. *Comprehensive Plan 2030*. Adopted by City Council, November 13, 2017. Accessed August 29, 2019, <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/62915>.
- City of Palo Alto. Online Parcel Reports. <https://xmap.cityofpaloalto.org/parcelreports/>
- United States Federal Census, www.Ancestry.com.
- U.S., Find A Grave Index, 1600s-Current. www.Ancestry.com.

Archival Records

- Palo Alto Historical Association. Building Permit Index Files.
- Palo Alto Historical Association. Inventory of Historic Buildings Files.
- Palo Alto Historical Association. Palo Alto City Directories (1924-1978).
- Palo Alto Historical Association. Photograph Collection. <http://archives.pahistory.org/index.php>
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Accessed via San Francisco Public Library.
- University of California, Santa Barbara Library, Special Research Collections. Aerial Photography FrameFinder. <https://www.library.ucsb.edu/src/airphotos/aerial-photography-information>.

Internet Sources

- “AJ Capital Partners Acquires Hotel President Apartments to Be Converted to Graduate Palo Alto.” *Hotel Executive*. June 20, 2018. <https://www.hotelexecutive.com/newswire/63585/aj-capital-partners-acquires-president-hotel-apartments-to-be-converted-to-graduate-palo-alto>
- Ancestry.com
- Birge Clark architectural drawings, 1909-1954: Hotel President/apartment building, J.M. Blackburn, 480-498 University and Cowper, Palo Alto, California, 1929-1930, 1971.” Stanford University. <https://exhibits.stanford.edu/ua-maps-drawings/catalog/nd845xn7898>
- “Birge Clark.” *Palo Alto Online*. May 25, 1994. https://www.paloaltonline.com/weekly/morgue/news/1994_May_25.CREATOR7.html
- Bowling, Matt. “The Meeting on the Corner: The Beginning of Mayfield’s End,” *Palo Alto History.com*. <http://www.paloaltonhistory.com/the-beginning-of-mayfields-end.php>.

*Historic Resource Evaluation
[18120]*

*Hotel President
Palo Alto, California*

“City of Palo Alto, Santa Clara County,” Bay Area Census. Accessed August 27, 2019,
<http://www.bayareacensus.ca.gov/cities/PaloAlto50.htm>.

David Rumsey Historic Map Collection.

Google Maps. 2019.

Kushman, Rick. “Birge Clark: The Man Behind the Blueprints.” Palo Alto Historical Association.
(April 15, 1994) http://www.service.com/paw/Centennial/1994_Apr_15.1920SE.html.

“Prominent Architects and Builders.” Palo Alto Stanford Heritage.
<http://www.pastheritage.org/ArchBuild.html#c>

State of California, *California Environmental Quality Act*, accessed June 2018,
http://resources.ca.gov/ceqa/docs/2016_CEQA_Statutes_and_Guidelines.pdf.

Weinstein, Dave. “Signature Style: Birge Clark/California Colonial/Palo Alto’s Favorite Architect
Mixed Romance with Realism.” *San Francisco Chronicle*.
<http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/SIGNATURE-STYLE-Birge-Clark-California-2576779.php>

www.page-turnbull.com

417 S. Hill Street, Suite 211
Los Angeles, California 90013
213.221.1200 / 213.221.1209 fax

2401 C Street, Suite B
Sacramento, California 95816
916.930.9903 / 916.930.9904 fax

170 Maiden Lane, 5th Floor
San Francisco, CA 94108
415.362.5154 / 415.362.5560 fax

PAGE & TURNBULL

imagining change in historic environments through design, research, and technology

MEMORANDUM

DATE	March 2, 2020	PROJECT NO.	18120
TO	Alex Stanford	PROJECT	Hotel President, 480-98 University Avenue
OF	GPCA Owner LLC	FROM	Barrett Reiter, Architectural Historian / Cultural Resources Planner
CC	Ruth Todd, Principal; Christina Dikas, Senior Architectural Historian	VIA	E-mail

REGARDING: Hotel President – SOI Standards Consultation Memorandum

INTRODUCTION

GPCA Owner LLC has requested this *Secretary of the Interior's Standards Consultation Memorandum* for a proposed project located at the Hotel President (480-98 University Avenue) in Palo Alto's downtown area. The purpose is to outline the historic building's character-defining features and provide comments regarding compliance of the proposed project to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*. For improved understanding of the character-defining features of 480-98 University Avenue, Page & Turnbull has also provided an overview of the historic status and a brief architectural description of the Hotel President.

Page & Turnbull conducted a site visit on May 24, 2018 and has reviewed the following relevant materials:

- Assessor's records of the subject property
- Parcel map
- Sanborn Map Company fire insurance maps
- Google Street View and Google Maps imagery
- Permits from previous projects at the subject building, held at Palo Alto Building Inspection
- Plans by Birge M. Clark (dated September 9, 1929)
- Plans by Clark, Stromquist & Sandstrom Architects (April 4, 1971)
- ARB Submittal for Major Project drawing set by ELS Architecture and Urban Design (dated February 12, 2020)
- Materials held at Palo Alto Historical Association
- Palo Alto Historic Inventory

HISTORIC STATUS OVERVIEW

The Hotel President is not currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) or the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). The subject property is listed in the Palo Alto Historic Inventory as a Category 2 property, indicating a "major

ARCHITECTURE
PLANNING & RESEARCH
PRESERVATION TECHNOLOGY

building” of regional importance.¹ Based on the 1978 inventory listing (revised in 1981 and 1985), the building is a “good example of the local restrained variant of the Spanish (or California) Colonial image. When built, its size and location were especially notable, since the commercial area then ended, for all practical purposes, at the 400 block of University Avenue. Thus, the style introduced in the more western area of the district now was prominently ‘anchored’ and displayed at the opposite border of the commercial area.”² Consequently, the building is listed in the California Historic Resources Information System (CHRIS) database with a status code of 5S2, meaning “an individual property that is eligible for local listing or designation.”³

Page & Turnbull evaluated the building for eligibility for listing in the California Register in a Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) prepared on February 6, 2020 and found it eligible under Criterion 1 (Events) and Criterion 3 (Architecture). At the time of its construction, the building was Palo Alto’s largest hotel and was the largest building on University Avenue. Its location at University Avenue and Cowper Street was notable in expanding the commercial corridor of University Avenue to the northeast, when it had previously remained more closely connected to the train station along Alma Street. Architecturally, the visually prominent building displays high artistic value and is an excellent example of a Spanish Colonial Revival style building by master architect Birge Clark.

The building’s period of significance was identified in the HRE as 1929-30, which corresponds to when the building was constructed. Original materials and features that date to this period of significance are considered character-defining.

BRIEF ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The six-story building at 480-98 University Avenue was designed by Birge Clark in the Spanish Colonial Revival style in 1929-30. The builder was James McLaughlin Company. The property measures 130 feet by 62.5 feet and is located at the south corner of University Avenue and Cowper Street (**Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). The building’s primary (northwest) façade fronts University Avenue, while the rear (southeast) façade looks onto an alley accessed from Cowper Street. The first story contains six commercial units and a building lobby; the upper five stories contain vacant lodging units. The commercial units are noted in this memorandum as unit one, unit two, etc., and are addressed as follows:

- Unit one: 498 University Avenue (Gyros Gyros)
- Unit two: 494 University Avenue (Vacant)
- Unit three: 490 University Avenue (President Barber Shop)
- Unit four: 486 University Avenue (Vacant)
- Unit five: 482 University Avenue (Pluto’s)
- Unit six: 480 University Avenue (Hemingway Cigars and Tobacco)

According to the Historic Building Inventory form, the “six-story building could be regarded as either Spanish Colonial or California Colonial in style. Its utilitarian image is enriched by a gallery running

¹ Palo Alto Stanford Heritage, “Palo Alto Historic Buildings Inventory,” accessed June 2018, <http://www.pastheritage.org/inv/invU/Univ488.html>

² Ibid.

³ California State Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Parks and Recreation, “Technical Assistance Bulletin #8: User’s Guide to the California Historical Resource Status Codes & Historical Resource Inventory Directory” (Sacramento, November 2004).

along the upper floor. The entrance originally was marked by lavish use of wrought iron grille and tile, which has been removed.”⁴ Page & Turnbull conducted a site visit and observed the following characteristics and features: rectangular-plan six-story building with basement and seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse and roof terrace; concrete construction with textured stucco cladding; six first-story commercial units with single doors, storefront glazing, decorative tile bulkheads, awnings, hopper/fixed window transoms, and spindle work transom screens; two Juliet balconies at the second story of the primary façade; a long gallery at the sixth story of the primary façade; regular upper-level fenestration with multiple steel-sash window types; and a parapeted flat roof with terra cotta clay-tiled gable and shed roof portions.

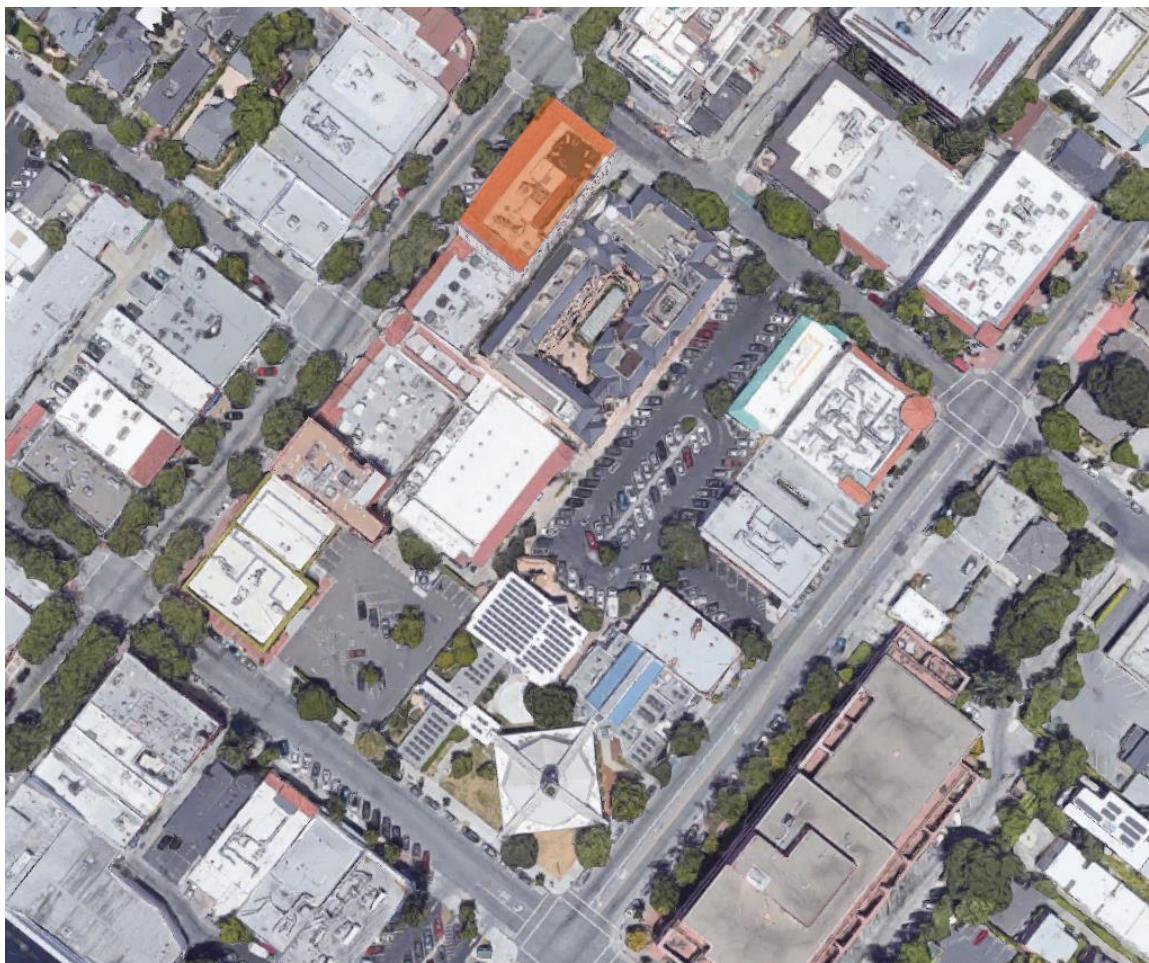


Figure 1: Aerial image. Hotel President shaded orange. North is up. Source: Google Maps, 2018. Edited by Page & Turnbull.

⁴ Ibid. Page & Turnbull has determined the entrance tile appears to have been retained, and only the wrought iron detailing of the glazed double doors, sidelights, and arched transom has been removed.



Figure 2: Primary northwest façade of Hotel President. Note commercial units one through six (image left to image right), flanking central building lobby entrance.

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES

For a property to be eligible for national, state, or local designation under one of the significance criteria, the essential physical features (or character-defining features) that enable the property to convey its historic identity must be evident. To be eligible, a property must clearly retain enough of those characteristics, and these features must also retain a sufficient degree of integrity. Character-defining features can be expressed in terms of form, proportion, structure, plan, style, materials, and ornamentation. The following character-defining features have been identified for the Hotel President at 480-98 University Avenue, which has a period of significance of 1929-30 and is significant for its role in the early commercial development of University Avenue, its Spanish Colonial Revival style, and as an excellent example of the work of master architect Birge M. Clark. The character-defining features of the Hotel President include, but are not limited to:

Exterior:

- Situated on the south corner of University Avenue and Cowper Street
- Six-story building with symmetrical massing
- Rectangular plan extending to property lines
- Concrete construction with stucco cladding
- Parapeted flat roof with terra cotta clay-tile gable ends and gallery shed roof
- Primary façade with seven structural bays; the first and last bays slightly project at the upper floors
- Recessed entrance vestibule for building lobby
 - Cast iron “Hotel President” marquee with scrolled support brackets
 - Double doors with sidelights and arched transom
 - Tile flooring and wall cladding
 - Wrought iron six-pointed chandelier

- Six commercial units at the primary northwest (University Avenue) façade (four of which retain most original storefront features)
 - Tiled bulkheads
 - Fixed plate glass storefront windows
 - Single wood doors with glazed transoms
 - Storefront transoms with scalloped chamfered upper corners, hopper windows, and fixed end lites
 - Spindlework screens that span the storefront transoms
- Two beltcourses between first and second stories
- Second-story wrought-iron Juliet balconies at the first and last bays of the primary façade with corbelled moldings underneath
- Sixth-story wood gallery at central portion of primary façade
- Storefront, single wood-frame glazed door, and garage opening at northeast (Cowper Street) façade
- Steel-sash, multi-lite, regular fenestration at upper floors throughout the building, including:
 - Fixed windows flanked by casement windows
 - Double casement windows
 - Single casement windows
 - Arched windows at sixth story primary façade
 - Some windows have wired glass or pebbled opaque glass
- Seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse, wood pergola, and rooftop terrace
- Fire escapes at northeast and southeast façades

Interior:

- Building lobby
 - Polychrome tile flooring
 - Tile floor with perimeter border
 - Wrought-iron chandeliers
 - Molded plaster brackets
 - Single-cab elevator with manual folding door, security gate, leather-paneled walls, a copper ceiling, and brass fixtures
 - Wood-beamed ceiling
 - Mezzanine stairway with terra cotta treads, Spanish tile risers, and a wrought iron scrolled railing
 - Wood horizontal beam and support posts for mezzanine level featuring carved corbels
- Hall and stair circulation throughout upper floors
 - Hall running the length of building (southwest to northeast)
 - Hall running the partial width of the building (northwest to southeast)
 - Central staircase with skylight (accessible at mezzanine/second story and sixth/seventh story, enclosed/non-accessible at third, fourth, and fifth stories)
 - Southwest staircase with skylight (between second and sixth stories)
 - Shallow arched hall ceilings
 - Textured stucco wall cladding in the halls
 - Wood residential unit doors
 - South stairway wood-framed wired glass five-lite double doors
 - Second-story mural in stairwell leading from mezzanine level
- Lodging units at upper floors (second through sixth floors)

- Six commercial units at the first story
 - Presence of rear mezzanine levels in commercial units one, two, four and six⁵
 - Wrought iron light fixtures in commercial unit six
 - Pendant light fixture in commercial unit three
 - Picture rail in commercial unit three
 - Wood-beamed ceiling in commercial unit five (at the rear portion, formerly the hotel lounge/banquet room)

PROPOSED PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The following proposed project description was provided by ELS with the proposed project drawing set:

The scope of work for the Hotel President project centers around the restoration of the building's original architectural and design elements, and includes critical modernization components to bring the building to code and outfitted to serve the community for decades to come.

The existing ground floor retail is to remain, with the insertion of a hotel lobby and lounge in the vacant retail spaces. Floors two through six converts 75 vacant lodging units to 100 hotel guest rooms. The existing roof garden remains.

11 existing parking spaces in the basement are reconfigured into 12 full size parking spaces.

The building is proposed to undergo a structural seismic retrofit, fully-sprinklered life safety upgrade, and ADA compliance.

Non-historic storefronts at the new hotel lobby are proposed to be replaced with historically correct storefront systems, including copper mullions and ceramic tile bases. The exterior is proposed to be painted with a new color palette that celebrates the historic nature of the building.⁶

Basement (Sheet A200)

The proposed project will demolish, alter, and add various storage rooms at the perimeter of the basement. An electrical room will be constructed on the northeast side. An engineer's workshop, small storage room, linen room, elevator machine room, and mechanical room will be constructed in the south corner near the circulation. A new second elevator will be installed adjacent to the linen room. A new staircase will be inserted adjacent to the existing mechanical room at the south corner of the basement. The existing hall and (closed-off) stair adjacent to the existing central elevator will be demolished. The proposed project will accommodate 12 total parking spaces on site and will also provide six long-term bicycle storage spaces in the basement.

⁵ Page & Turnbull did not survey the rear portions of the commercial units; the extant mezzanines are depicted on 2018 as-built architectural drawings by ELS.

⁶ "Project Description," ELS, Drawing set: ARB Submittal for Major Project, dated February 12, 2020, A001.

First Floor (Sheet A201)

The proposed project will include the demolition of the existing storefronts at commercial units four and five, to be replaced with glazed window walls. At the interior, commercial units one and two will be internally combined, and the rear portion of these two commercial units will be altered to include a circulation hallway that extends from the historic lobby northeast to a new opening along Cowper Street. Behind this new hallway, a luggage storage room, three individual bathrooms and a larger bathroom with three restroom stalls will be created.

Commercial units three, and six will be retained. The existing historic lobby will be connected to a new hotel lobby via two large low-arched openings that will be cut into the southwest wall of the existing historic lobby. The new hotel lobby will be created by merging commercial units four and five. The existing elevator and mezzanine stairway will be retained. The rear portion of unit four will contain a new bar that extends to the northeast incorporating existing spaces used as a kitchen, an office, and a walk-in freezer. Historically, this area was open to the main lobby. The proposed project will re-introduce that opening to facilitate access between the historic lobby, new hotel lobby, and new bar.

A new second elevator will be installed south of (behind) the existing elevator, within the footprint of commercial unit five. The rear portion of commercial unit five will be modified to accommodate the new elevator, a new kitchen, and a small office space (105 square feet). The rear portion of commercial units five and six will be altered to accommodate a new stairwell.

Mezzanine Floor (Sheet A202)

The mezzanine will retain the existing two storage rooms, restroom, and mezzanine at the southeast corner. A new circulation hallway will be added from the mezzanine stairs toward Cowper Street and two storage rooms will be added; one at the northeast corner and one across from the mezzanine stairs along the southeast wall.

Typical Upper Floor (Sheet A207)

The proposed project involves the conversion of 75 existing vacant lodging units to 100 hotel guest rooms. With the exception of the existing windows and portion of the existing hallway walls, all existing features and materials within unit interiors will be demolished. The northwest/southeast (short) hall that currently runs the partial width of the building's upper stories will be enclosed and absorbed by new guest-room units. The main southwest/northeast (long) hall will be retained. The proposed project will retain the historic residential unit doors. However, the door openings will be re-arranged along the hall to align with re-sized guest rooms. The proposed project will install a second elevator cab south of the existing elevator cab, and the enclosed central staircase will be reopened at the third, fourth, and fifth floors.

Roof (Sheet A250)

The proposed project will minimally alter the seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse. The existing stair from the sixth story will be retained. The proposed project will provide elevator access via the new elevator that will be inserted partially within the existing fan room and will extend the building envelope to the south. The north-most storage room will be slightly expanded and divided into two single bathrooms accessed via a small vestibule, and a small storage room. New mechanical screens will be constructed on the east and north sides of the roof. The proposed project will retain the pergola and there will be a 749 square-foot roof garden.

Exterior Envelope of Hotel President (Sheet A301, A303, A305)

Few changes are being made to the exterior envelope of the Hotel President. Along the primary façade, alterations are limited to painting the building and removing non-historic features and replacing with historically accurate materials. The wrought iron grille at the main lobby entrance will be recreated, based on historic drawings and photos. These alterations include the replacement of non-historic storefront bulkheads (units two, four, and five) and a non-historic storefront door (unit six). The existing storefronts of commercial units four and five will be reconfigured; storefront doors will be removed and replaced with glazing over low bulkheads with tile cladding to match historic storefronts.

Along the Cowper Street façade, the existing wood-frame door with glazing will be removed from its existing location and relocated to align with the new interior circulation hallway at the ground floor.

Along the rear of the building, a door will be installed to replace an existing non-historic window.

As currently proposed, beyond painting the building, no alterations are being made to the materials or fenestration of the west elevation.

At the roofline, the addition of elevator access to the seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse results in the creation of an elevator bulkhead for mechanical support that will raise the existing roofline to 16 feet and 4 inches at its southern end. This height appears to be in keeping with the existing antenna enclosure and cellular equipment which will be retained. The eight-foot mechanical screen that will be added on the north end of the roof will not affect the existing historic clay tile roof.

DISCUSSION OF SOI STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION COMPLIANCE

The Hotel President is both an individually eligible resource for listing on the California Register under Criteria 1 and 3, and is a “Group A” historic resource, meaning an existing property that is listed in the Palo Alto Historic Inventory, therefore alterations to the building are subject to HRB review under the City’s Historic Preservation Ordinance.⁷

The Planning staff may review and approve minor exterior alterations pursuant to guidelines adopted by the Historic Resources Board. Minor exterior alterations are “those alterations which the director of planning and community environment or his/her designee determines will not adversely affect the exterior architectural characteristics nor the historical or aesthetic value of the historic structure, its site or surroundings.”⁸ Projects that are not considered minor exterior alterations are subject to HRB review and may also be subject to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), unless the project complies with the *Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, specifically the Standards for Rehabilitation (the SOI Standards).⁹ The Standards provide guidance for reviewing proposed work on historic properties, with the stated goal 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 values.”¹⁰

⁷ City of Palo Alto, “Historic Resource Project Review FAQ,” <https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/64188>

⁸ Section 16.49.050(C), Palo Alto Municipal Code, Chapter 16.49 Historic Preservation.

⁹ CEQA Guidelines section 15331.

¹⁰ National Park Service, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Treatment of Historic Properties*, <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/>.

The following discussion considers the proposed project's potential effects on, and compatibility with, the Hotel President, and provides comments on whether the project appears to adhere to the Standards.

The Standards for Rehabilitation are:

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.
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.
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.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property 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.
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.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, 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 will 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.

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.¹¹

The following comments are provided regarding the proposed project's adherence to the applicable SOI Standards. As a consultation memorandum, the following discussion does not include a Standard-by-Standard analysis. It excludes discussion of Standard 6 (repair and replacement of historic materials and features), Standard 7 (chemical/physical treatments), and Standard 8 (archeological resources); as all retained historic features will be repaired, the treatment method will be gentle per the Standards, and no excavation is proposed on the site that would involve archaeological or below-ground resources. Rather, the following comments are grouped thematically in terms of use, treatment of historic character, treatment of historic materials and features, and compatibility and differentiation of new construction.

Use (Standard 1):

Under the proposed project, the subject building will remain mixed-use. However, the current six commercial units at the first story will be reduced to three units. The proposed project will absorb commercial square footage into an enlarged lobby space. The enlarged building lobby will be used by the hotel. The upper floors of the building will be renovated to accommodate 100 guest rooms. Although the proposed project involves a change from the most recent residential-only use, the building historically accommodated hotel and residential uses. The proposed hotel project therefore does not introduce a new use. The project will be implemented with minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Historic character (Standards, 2, 9, and 10):

The building's primary mass and form will not be altered. The addition of elevator access to the seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse and the erection of a mechanical screen are consistent with existing elements along the roof and will not be visible from the public right of way. The majority of the building's historic materials and features will be retained. The proposed project does not appear to impact any character-defining features at the exterior, basement, or roof levels.

Retention of commercial units at the ground floor will allow the building to continue to convey its mixed-use identity. The storefronts and interiors of commercial units four and five have already been altered, and further alteration of those units will not compromise the building's ability to convey its significance as a mixed-use Spanish Colonial Revival building designed by Birge Clark.

Proposed alterations to the lobby retain most original lobby materials, as well as the mezzanine stairway and the elevator. Additionally, the proposed project includes the creation of a bar space within an area that was historically part of the Hotel President lobby but had been altered to house a commercial kitchen. This change will re-introduce the opening to facilitate access between the bar and lobby.

¹¹ National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, "Technical Preservation Services: Rehabilitation as a Treatment," accessed April 25, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/four-treatments/treatment-rehabilitation.htm>.

The removal of a portion of the dividing wall between the lobby and unit four will affect the lobby's hall-style character and does not fully comply with Standards 2 and 9, which specifically address spatial relationships and historic design features. Although the wall will not be entirely removed, it will have two large low-arched openings cut into it, opening the greater length of the wall from the entrance vestibule to the elevator. The proposed opening in the wall, however, is reversible and therefore is consistent with Standard 10.

Proposed alterations to the upper floors involve a restructured floor plan to accommodate additional guest room units. As a result, historic door openings and dividing walls between units will be rearranged, and the short transversal hall will be mostly enclosed. The project will retain the historic doors and re-use them in new locations along the same double-loaded corridor. The central staircase will be reopened at the third, fourth, and fifth floors to restore stair circulation throughout all upper floors. The proposed alterations to the upper stories of the building will not impact the public's understanding of the building's historic significance or character.

Removal of historic materials and features (Standards 2, 4, 5, and 9):

The subject building's period of significance is 1929-30. Subsequent changes to the property (including the 1971 renovation by Clark, Stromquist & Sandstrom Architects and other post-1930 alterations) have not acquired historic significance in their own right. Thus, historic materials and features include that which remains from the building's original construction in 1929-1930. The proposed project involves the retention of most existing historic materials. This includes exterior stucco cladding; the terra cotta clay-tile roofing; wood gallery; Juliet balconies; upper floor fenestration pattern and materiality; presence of some commercial units and commercial storefronts at the first story; tiled lobby entrance vestibule; most lobby materials and features; most circulation features; and the roof utility/circulation penthouse and terrace. The missing wrought iron grille at the primary lobby entrance will be recreated, based on original drawings and historic photos.

Historic features that will be removed or altered include some parts of the building lobby (i.e. a portion of the southwest lobby wall and decorative tile border), the short transverse hall on the upper stories, and the rearrangement of door openings and dividing walls at the upper stories (historic hall doors will be salvaged and reused).

Non-historic materials and features will also be removed or altered. Examples include formerly altered wall sections within the building lobby (ie. former opening to commercial unit four within the southwest lobby wall and former opening to lounge/banquet room), removal of non-historic lobby floor tiling, the removal of non-historic storefront features, and the alteration of storefronts at commercial units four and five.

Compatibility, differentiation, and historical development (Standards 3 and 9):

The proposed project does not include any new additions and does not alter the building footprint or scale. The proposed enlargement of the lobby will alter interior proportions at the first story. However, no conjectural features or elements from other historic periods will be added, and the proposed project will not create a false sense of historical development.

The conversion of commercial units to hotel lobby use will employ clear demarcation of old versus new. A partial wall will be retained between the lobby and commercial unit four to avoid loss of a hall-style lobby. This is achieved by making new openings with a low-arch shape, which differentiates them from the round-arch primary entrance door and the post-and-lintel construction

of the rest of the historic lobby's structural elements. The historic lobby tile flooring will remain; newly renovated areas will feature differentiated flooring material and furnishings. Similarly, the renovation of upper floor units to hotel guest rooms will rely on contemporary design choices.

Overall SOI Standards Compliance

Projects that comply with the SOI Standards benefit from a regulatory presumption that they "shall be considered as mitigated to a level of less than a significant impact on a historic resource."¹² Projects that do not fully comply with the SOI Standards may cause either a significant or less-than-significant impact according to CEQA.

As designed, the proposed project retains and preserves the overall historic character of the Hotel President at 480-498 University Avenue. The project involves rehabilitation in a manner mostly consistent with the SOI Standards, but does not appear to fully comply with Standards 2 and 9 due to the effect of opening the lobby wall on the spatial character of that historic public space. The project would fully comply with all of the SOI Standards if it was revised to cut a narrower arched opening in the side wall closest to the primary lobby entrance, as this would more clearly communicate the historic design's intent.

To the extent that there appear to be some alterations to the lobby of the Hotel President that are not fully compliant with the SOI Standards, the building will maintain the majority of its character-defining features and its overall ability to convey its significance as a mixed-use Spanish Colonial Revival building designed by Birge Clark. Thus, it does not appear that the project will cause a significant impact according to CEQA.

¹² CEQA Guidelines subsection 15064.5(b)(3).



HISTORIC RESOURCE EVALUATION PEER REVIEW

Hotel President
480-98 University Avenue
Palo Alto, California

Richard Patenaude | March 2020

1. INTRODUCTION

The City of Palo Alto retained M-Group to complete a peer review of the Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) report for the Hotel President at 480-98 University Avenue (subject property) in Palo Alto, California, which was prepared by Page & Turnbull in February 2020. M-Group reviewed the HRE report to determine the adequacy of the physical description, background research, and historic context, and the appropriateness of the conclusion that the subject property is significant under:

- California Register Criterion 1 (Events) at the local level for its role in extending the commercial corridor of University Avenue; as an early mixed-use building with commercial units, residential apartment units, and for its association with President Herbert Hoover, an early graduate of Stanford University and a figure of local importance, and
- California Register Criterion 3 (Architecture) as an example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style in Palo Alto.

Furthermore, M-Group's review included a *Secretary of the Interior's Standards Consultation Memorandum*, prepared by Page & Turnbull in March 2020 for GPCA Owner LLC, "to outline the historic building's character-defining features and provide comments regarding compliance of [a] proposed project [affecting the hotel lobby] to the *Secretary of the Interior Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*."

2. FINDINGS

M-Group concurs with Page & Turnbull that the Hotel President, at 480-98 University Avenue, is eligible for listing in the California Register. Page & Turnbull's evaluation of the subject property is based on an adequate historic context. M-Group concurs that the building is an excellent example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style,

"communicated by its exterior tile work, textured stucco cladding, spindlework, a wood gallery, a terra cotta clay tile roof, and wrought iron detailing. The building interior features tilework, carved wood beams and corbels, wrought iron detailing, mural work, and an ornamented elevator. Overall, the building displays high artistic values."

M-Group furthermore concurs, that the proposed project to alter the hotel lobby, as designed, retains and preserves the overall historic character of the Hotel President. The project involves rehabilitation in a manner mostly consistent with the *Secretary of the Interior Standards*. Page & Turnbull reported that the project "does not appear to fully comply with Standards 2 and 9" (spatial relationships) "due to the effect of opening the lobby wall on the spatial character of that historic public face." However, M-Group concurs that "the building will maintain the majority of its character-defining features and its overall ability to convey its significance as a mixed-use Spanish Colonial Revival building."

Furthermore, M-Group concurs that "it does not appear that the project will cause a significant impact" pursuant to CEQA.

ATTACHMENT D

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES OF THE PROPERTY

Exterior

- Situated on the south corner of University Avenue and Cowper Street
- Six-story building with symmetrical massing
- Rectangular plan extending to property lines
- Concrete construction with stucco cladding
- Parapet flat roof with terra cotta clay-tile gable ends and gallery shed roof
- Primary façade with seven structural bays; the first and last bays slightly project at the upper floors
- Recessed entrance vestibule for building lobby
 - Cast iron “Hotel President” marquee with scrolled support brackets
 - Double doors with sidelights and arched transom
 - Tile flooring and wall cladding
 - Wrought iron six-pointed chandelier
- Six commercial units at the primary northwest (University Avenue) façade (four of which retain most original storefront features)
 - Tiled bulkheads (low walls along storefronts)
 - Fixed plate glass storefront windows
 - Single wood doors with glazed transoms
 - Storefront transoms with scalloped chamfered upper corners, hopper windows, and fixed end lites
 - Spindle work screen that spans the storefront transoms
- Two belt courses between first and second stories
- Wrought iron Juliet balconies at the first and last bays at the second story of the primary facade with corbelled moldings underneath
- Wood gallery at the central portion of the primary façade’s sixth story
- Storefront, single wood-frame glazed door, and garage opening at northeast (Cowper Street) facade
- Steel-sash, multi-lite, regular fenestration at upper floors throughout the building, including:
 - Fixed windows flanked by casement windows
 - Double casement windows
 - Single casement windows
 - Arched windows at sixth story primary façade
 - Some windows have wired glass or pebbled opaque glass
- Seventh-story utility/circulation penthouse, wood pergola, and rooftop terrace
- Fire escapes at northeast and southeast facades

Interior:

- Building lobby
 - Polychrome tile flooring
 - Tile floor perimeter border

- Wrought iron chandeliers
 - Molded plaster brackets
 - Single-cab elevator with manual folding door, security gate, leather-paneled walls, a copper ceiling, and brass fixtures
 - Wood-beamed ceiling
 - Mezzanine stairway with terra cotta treads, Spanish tile risers, and a wrought iron scrolled railing
- ○ Wood horizontal beam and support posts for mezzanine level featuring carved corbels
- Hall and stair circulation throughout upper floors
 - Hall running the length of building (southwest to northeast)
 - Hall running the partial width of the building (northwest to southeast)
 - Central staircase with skylight (accessible at mezzanine/second story and sixth/seventh story, enclosed/non-accessible at third, fourth, and fifth stories)
 - Southwest staircase with skylight (between second and sixth stories)
 - Shallow arched hall ceilings
 - Textured stucco wall cladding in the halls
 - Wood upper floor unit doors
 - South stairway wood-framed wired glass five-lite double doors
 - Second-story mural in stairwell leading from mezzanine level
- Lodging units at upper floors (second through sixth floors)
- Six commercial units at the first story
 - Presence of rear mezzanine levels in commercial units one, two, four and six⁴⁶
 - Wrought iron light fixtures in commercial unit six
 - Pendant light fixture in commercial unit three
 - Picture rail in commercial unit three
 - Wood-beamed ceiling in commercial unit five (at the rear portion, formerly the hotel lounge/banquet room)

ATTACHMENT E
ZONING COMPARISON TABLE
488 University Avenue, 19PLN-00038

Table 1: COMPARISON WITH CHAPTER 18.18 (CD-C DISTRICT) Exclusively Non-Residential Development Standards			
Regulation	Required	Existing	Proposed
Minimum Setbacks			
Front Yard (Cowper St.)	None Required	7 ft 1 in	7 ft 1 in
Rear Yard	None Required	0 ft	0 ft
Interior Side Yard	None Required	10 ft	10 ft
Street Side Yard (University Ave.)	None Required	0 ft ⁽⁶⁾	0 ft ⁽⁶⁾
Special Setback	Pursuant to Code Section 20.08	N/A	N/A
Minimum street setback for sites sharing a common block face with any abutting residential zone district	Note 4	N/A	N/A
Minimum yard (ft) for lot lines abutting or opposite residential zone districts	10 feet (Note 1)	N/A	N/A
Maximum Site Coverage	None Required	3,092 sf	3,226 sf
Maximum Height	50 ft (Note 3)	85 ft to penthouse 90 ft 1 in to Wireless equipment enclosure	90 ft 3 in to elevator
Maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	2.0:1 (18,850 sf) (Note 5)	5.42: 1 (51,115 sf)	5.36:1 (50,540 sf)
Daylight Plane for lot lines abutting one or more residential zone districts			
Initial Height at side or rear lot line	(Note 2)	N/A	N/A
Slope	(Note 2)	N/A	N/A

Notes

- 1) The yard shall be planted and maintained as a landscaped screen, excluding area required for site access.
- 2) The initial height and slope shall be identical to those of the residential zone abutting the site line in question.
- 3) The maximum height within 150 feet of any abutting residential zone district shall not exceed the height limit of the abutting residential district.
- 4) The minimum street setback shall be equal to the residentially zoned setback for 150 feet from the abutting single-family or multiple family development.
- 5) FAR may be increased with transfers of development and/or bonuses for seismic and historic rehabilitation upgrades, not to exceed a total site FAR of 3.0:1 in the CD-C subdistrict or 2.0:1 in the CD-S or CD-N subdistricts.
- 6) Property includes entry marquee (8'-9") on the ground floor and balcony (4'0") on the 6th floor that encroach into this setback.

18.18.110 Context-Based Design Criteria. As further described in a separate attachment, development in a commercial district shall be responsible to its context and compatible with adjacent development, and shall promote the establishment of pedestrian oriented design.

**Table 2: CONFORMANCE WITH CHAPTER 18.52.040 (Off-Street Parking and Loading)
for Downtown University Avenue Parking Assessment District**

Type	Required	Existing	Proposed	Conforms?
Vehicle Parking (within the Downtown Parking Assessment District) PAMC 18.52.040 Table 2	All uses except residential: 1 space per 250 sf $7,645 \text{ sf} \times 5 \text{ floors} = 38,225 / 250 =$	153 spaces 115 spaces after State reduction ⁽¹⁾	12 spaces 14 spaces, 25 off-site, 76 in-lieu	Yes ⁽²⁾
Bicycle Parking (within the Downtown Parking Assessment District) PAMC 18.52.040 Table 2	All uses except residential: 1 space per 2,500 sf 40% Long Term (LT) 60% Short Term (ST)	20 spaces 8 LT 12 ST	12 ST 11 Long Term 12 Short Term	Yes
Loading Space	10,000-99,999 sf	1 space	1	1 Yes

(1) California Health & Safety Code Section 18962 allows a 25% reduction for historic properties

(2) Off site parking required and payment of parking in-lieu fee

Attachment F

Project Plans

Hardcopies of project plans are provided to Board members. These plans are available to the public online and/or by visiting the Planning & Development Services Department on the 5th floor of City Hall at 250 Hamilton Avenue.

Directions to review Project plans online:

1. Go to: bit.ly/PApendingprojects
2. Scroll to find “488 University Avenue” and click the address link
3. On this project specific webpage you will find a link to the Project Plans and other important information

Direct Link to Project Webpage:

<https://www.cityofpaloalto.org/news/displaynews.asp?NewsID=4536&TargetID=319>