

The *CMC* Dynamics Theorem in \mathbb{R}^3

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Abstract

In this paper, we develop some new tools and theory that are useful in describing the geometry of properly embedded, constant mean curvature surfaces in \mathbb{R}^3 with bounded second fundamental form. More precisely, we prove dynamics type results for the space of translational limits of such a surface. As a consequence of our main theorems, in subsequent papers we obtain rigidity results for certain properly embedded, constant mean curvature surfaces in \mathbb{R}^3 [23], as well as derive curvature estimates for complete, embedded, constant mean curvature surfaces in complete locally homogeneous three-manifolds.

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1 Introduction.

A general problem in classical surface theory is to describe the asymptotic geometric structure of a connected, noncompact, properly embedded, nonzero constant mean curvature (*CMC*) surface M in \mathbb{R}^3 . In this paper, we will show that when M has bounded second fundamental form, for any divergent sequence of points $p_n \in M$, a subsequence of the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ converges to a properly immersed surface of the same constant mean curvature and which bounds a smooth open subdomain on its mean convex side. The collection $\mathbb{T}(M)$ of all these limit surfaces sheds light on the geometry of M at infinity.

We will focus our attention on the subset $\mathcal{T}(M) \subset \mathbb{T}(M)$ consisting of the connected components of surfaces in $\mathbb{T}(M)$ which pass through the origin in \mathbb{R}^3 . Given a surface $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$, we will prove that $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ is always a subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. In particular, we can consider \mathcal{T} to represent a function:

$$\mathcal{T}: \mathcal{T}(M) \rightarrow \mathcal{P}(\mathcal{T}(M)),$$

where $\mathcal{P}(\mathcal{T}(M))$ denotes the power set of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. Using the fact that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ has a natural compact metric space topology, we obtain classical dynamics type results on $\mathcal{T}(M)$ with respect to the mapping \mathcal{T} . These dynamics results include the existence of nonempty

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minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant subsets in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and are described in Theorem 2.3, which we refer to as the *CMC Dynamics Theorem* in \mathbb{R}^3 , or more simply as just the *Dynamics Theorem*.

Assume $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a connected, noncompact, properly embedded *CMC* surface with bounded second fundamental form. In section 3, we describe several important consequences of the Dynamics Theorem concerning elements of minimal invariant sets of $\mathcal{T}(M)$; some of these consequences are contained in Theorem 3.3, which we call the *Minimal Element Theorem*. For example, we prove that if M has an infinite number of ends, then $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a surface in a minimal invariant set with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry; see item 7 of Theorem 3.3. Another result that appears in this section is that whenever M has finite genus, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ always contains a Delaunay surface¹; in the special case that M has finite topology, then this result follows from the main theorem in [13]. The full generality of this result for finite genus M is needed in applications in [21, 23]. In [23], we apply the existence of a Delaunay surface in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ to prove the isometric rigidity of such an M (also see Remark 3.10). Another important application of this result is given in the proof of the following statement, which can be found in [21]: *Any complete, embedded, noncompact, simply-connected CMC surface M in a fixed homogeneous three-manifold N has the appearance of a suitably scaled helicoid nearby any point of M where the second fundamental form is sufficiently large.* This geometric result plays a key role in proving that any such M has bounded second fundamental form, where the bound depends only on a positive lower bound of the mean curvature of M and on an upper bound of the absolute sectional curvature of N (see [21] for details and [27] for a related result). In section 4, we prove Theorem 4.1 which implies that if M has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry, then M has finite topology if and only if it has a finite number of ends greater than one.

The collection of properly embedded *CMC* surfaces with bounded second fundamental form is quite large and varied (see [4, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16]). Classically, many of these examples appear as doubly and singly-periodic surfaces. Furthermore, the techniques of Kapouleas [10] and Mazzeo-Pacard [15] can be applied to obtain many nonperiodic examples of finite and nonfinite topology. Some theoretical aspects of the study of these special surfaces have been developed previously in works of Meeks [17], Korevaar-Kusner-Solomon [13] and Korevaar-Kusner [12]; results from all of these three key papers are applied here. More generally, the broader theory of properly embedded *CMC* surfaces in homogeneous three-manifolds is an active field of research with many interesting recent results [2, 5, 9]. In [20], we will generalize the ideas contained in this paper to obtain related theoretical results for properly embedded separating *CMC* hypersurfaces of bounded second fundamental form in homogeneous n -manifolds.

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¹In this manuscript, Delaunay surfaces are the embedded *CMC* surfaces of revolution discovered by Delaunay [3] in 1841.

2 The Dynamics Theorem for CMC surfaces of bounded curvature.

In this section, motivated by previous work of Meeks, Perez and Ros in [18], we prove a dynamics type result for the space $\mathcal{T}(M)$ of certain translational limits of a properly embedded, CMC surface $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ with bounded second fundamental form. All of these limit surfaces satisfy the almost-embedded property described in the next definition.

Definition 2.1 Suppose W is a complete flat three-manifold with boundary $\partial W = \Sigma$ together with an isometric immersion $f: W \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^3$ such that f restricted to the interior of W is injective. This being the case, if $f(\Sigma)$ is a CMC surface and W lies on the mean convex side of Σ , we call the image surface $f(\Sigma)$ a *strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surface*.

We note that, by elementary separation properties, any properly embedded CMC surface in \mathbb{R}^3 is always strongly Alexandrov embedded. Furthermore, by item 1 of Theorem 2.3 below, any strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surface in \mathbb{R}^3 with bounded second fundamental form is properly immersed in \mathbb{R}^3 .

Recall that the only compact Alexandrov embedded² CMC surfaces in \mathbb{R}^3 are spheres by the classical result of Alexandrov [1]. Hence, from this point on, we will only consider surfaces M which are noncompact and connected.

Definition 2.2 Suppose $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a connected, noncompact, strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surface with bounded second fundamental form.

1. $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is the set of all connected, strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surfaces $\Sigma \subset \mathbb{R}^3$, which are obtained in the following way.

There exists a sequence of points $p_n \in M$, $\lim_{n \rightarrow \infty} |p_n| = \infty$, such that the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ converge C^2 on compact subsets of \mathbb{R}^3 to a strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surface Σ' , and Σ is a connected component of Σ' passing through the origin. Actually we consider the immersed surfaces in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ to be *pointed* in the sense that if such a surface is not embedded at the origin, then we consider the surface to represent two different elements in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ depending on a choice of one of the two preimages of the origin.

2. $\Delta \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ is called \mathcal{T} -invariant, if $\Sigma \in \Delta$ implies $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) \subset \Delta$.
3. A nonempty subset $\Delta \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ is called a *minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set*, if it is \mathcal{T} -invariant and contains no smaller nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant subsets.
4. If $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ and Σ lies in a minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$, then Σ is called a *minimal element* of $\mathcal{T}(M)$.

²A compact surface Σ immersed in \mathbb{R}^3 is *Alexandrov embedded* if Σ is the boundary of a compact three-manifold immersed in \mathbb{R}^3 .

With these definitions in hand, we now state our Dynamics Theorem; in the statement of this theorem and throughout the remainder of this paper, $\mathbb{B}(p, R)$ denotes the open ball in \mathbb{R}^3 of radius R centered at the point p and $\mathbb{B}(R)$ denotes the open ball of radius R centered at the origin in \mathbb{R}^3 .

Theorem 2.3 (Dynamics Theorem for CMC surfaces in \mathbb{R}^3) *Let $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be a connected, noncompact, strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surface with bounded second fundamental form. Let W be the associated complete flat three-manifold on the mean convex side of M . Then the following statements hold:*

1. M is properly immersed in \mathbb{R}^3 .
2. There exist positive constants c_1, c_2 depending only on the norm of the second fundamental form of M , such that for any $p \in M$ and $R > 1$,

$$c_1 \leq \frac{\text{Area}(M \cap \mathbb{B}(p, R))}{\text{Volume}(W \cap \mathbb{B}(p, R))} \leq c_2. \quad (1)$$

In particular, $\text{Area}(M \cap \mathbb{B}(R)) \leq cR^3$, for some constant $c > 0$ which depends only on a bound for the norm of the second fundamental form of M . Furthermore, M has a regular neighborhood of radius ε in W , where $\varepsilon > 0$ only depends on the norm of the second fundamental form of M .

3. W is a handlebody³ and every point in W is a distance of less than $\frac{1}{H}$ from ∂W , where H is the mean curvature of M .
4. $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is nonempty and \mathcal{T} -invariant.
5. $\mathcal{T}(M)$ has a natural compact topological space structure induced by a metric $d_{\mathcal{T}(M)}$. The metric $d_{\mathcal{T}(M)}$ is induced by the Hausdorff distance between compact subsets of \mathbb{R}^3 .
6. If M is an element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$, then $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is a connected space. In particular, if M is invariant under a translation, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is connected.
7. A nonempty set $\Delta \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ is a minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set if and only if whenever $\Sigma \in \Delta$, then $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \Delta$.
8. Every nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a nonempty minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant subset. In particular, since $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is itself a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ always contains minimal elements.
9. Any minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is a compact connected subspace of $\mathcal{T}(M)$.

Proof. Corollary 5.2 in [22] implies items 1 and 2.

We now prove item 3. The proof that W is a handlebody is based on topological techniques used previously to study the topology of complete, orientable flat three-manifolds X with minimal surfaces as their boundaries. These techniques were first developed by

³A *handlebody* is a three-manifold with boundary which is homeomorphic to a closed regular neighborhood of some connected, properly embedded simplicial one-complex in \mathbb{R}^3 .

Frohman and Meeks [8] and later generalized by Freedman [7]. An important consequence of the results and theory developed in these papers is that if ∂X is mean convex, X is not a handlebody, and X is not a Riemannian product of a flat surface with an interval, then X contains an orientable, noncompact, embedded, stable minimal surface Σ with compact boundary. Suppose now that $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a strongly Alexandrov embedded *CMC* surface with associated W . This being the case, since M is not totally geodesic, W cannot be a Riemannian product of a flat surface with an interval. Therefore, if W is not a handlebody, there exists an orientable, noncompact, embedded stable minimal surface $\Sigma \subset W$ with compact boundary. Since Σ is orientable and stable, a result of Fisher-Colbrie [6] implies Σ has finite total curvature. It is well known that such a Σ has an end E asymptotic to an end of a catenoid or a plane [25]. We will obtain a contradiction when E is a catenoidal type end; the case where E is a planar end can be treated in the same manner. After a rotation of M , assume that this catenoid is a vertical catenoid and E is graph over the complement of a disk in the (x_1, x_2) -plane; assume the disk is $\mathbb{B}(R) \cap \{x_3 = 0\}$ for some large R . Let S^2 be a sphere in \mathbb{R}^3 with mean curvature equal to the mean curvature of M , which lies below E and which is disjoint from the solid cylinder $\{(x_1, x_2, x_3) \mid x_1^2 + x_2^2 \leq R^2\}$. By vertically translating S^2 upward across the (x_1, x_2) -plane and applying the maximum principle for *CMC* surfaces, we find that as S^2 translates across E , the portions of the translated sphere that lie above E do not intersect $M = \partial W$. Thus, some vertical translate \widehat{S}^2 of S^2 lies inside W . Next translate \widehat{S}^2 inside W so that it touches ∂W a first time. The usual application of the maximum principle for *CMC* surfaces now gives the desired contradiction.

Note that if some point $p \in W$ had distance at least $\frac{1}{H}$ from ∂W , then $\partial \mathbb{B}(p, \frac{1}{H})$ is a sphere of mean curvature H in W . The arguments in the previous paragraph show that no such sphere can exist, and this contradiction completes the proof of item 3.

The uniform local area estimates for M given in item 2 and the bound on the second fundamental form of M , together with standard compactness arguments, imply that for any divergent sequence of points $\{p_n\}_n$ in M , a subsequence of the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ converges on compact subsets of \mathbb{R}^3 to a strongly Alexandrov embedded *CMC* surface \mathbb{M}_∞ in \mathbb{R}^3 . The component M_∞ of \mathbb{M}_∞ passing through the origin is a surface in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ (if M_∞ is not embedded at the origin, then one obtains two elements in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ depending on a choice of one of the two pointed components). Hence, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is nonempty.

Let $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ and $\Sigma' \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$. By definition of $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$, any compact domain of Σ' can be approximated arbitrarily well by translations of compact domains “at infinity” in Σ . In turn, by definition of $\mathcal{T}(M)$, these compact domains “at infinity” in Σ can be approximated arbitrarily well by translated compact domains “at infinity” on M . Hence, a standard diagonal argument implies that $\Sigma' \in \mathcal{T}(M)$. Thus, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is \mathcal{T} -invariant, which proves item 4.

Suppose now that $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ is embedded at the origin. In this case, there exists an $\varepsilon > 0$ depending only on the bound of the second fundamental form of M , so that there exists a disk $D(\Sigma) \subset \Sigma \cap \overline{\mathbb{B}}(\varepsilon)$ with $\partial D(\Sigma) \subset \partial \overline{\mathbb{B}}(\varepsilon)$, $\vec{0} = (0, 0, 0) \in D(\Sigma)$ and such that $D(\Sigma)$ is a graph with gradient at most 1 over its projection to the tangent plane $T_{\vec{0}}D(\Sigma) \subset \mathbb{R}^3$. Given another such $\Sigma' \in \mathcal{T}(M)$, define

$$d_{\mathcal{T}(M)}(\Sigma, \Sigma') = d_{\mathcal{H}}(D(\Sigma), D(\Sigma')),$$

where $d_{\mathcal{H}}$ is the Hausdorff distance. If $\vec{0}$ is not a point where Σ is embedded, then since we consider Σ to represent one of two different pointed surfaces in $\mathcal{T}(M)$, we choose $D(\Sigma)$ to be the disk in $\Sigma \cap \mathbb{B}(\varepsilon)$ containing the chosen point. With this modification, the above metric is well-defined on $\mathcal{T}(M)$.

Using the fact that the surfaces in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ have uniform local area and curvature estimates (see item 2), we will now prove $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is sequentially compact and hence compact. Let $\{\Sigma_n\}_n$ be a sequence of surfaces in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and let $\{D(\Sigma_n)\}_n$ be the related sequence of graphical disks defined in the previous paragraph. A standard compactness argument implies that a subsequence, $\{D(\Sigma_{n_i})\}_{n_i}$ of these disks converges to a graphical *CMC* disk D_∞ . Using item 2, it is straightforward to show that D_∞ lies on a complete, strongly Alexandrov embedded surface Σ_∞ with the same constant mean curvature as M . Furthermore, Σ_∞ is a limit of compact domains $\Delta_{n_i} \subset \Sigma_{n_i}$. In turn, the Δ_{n_i} 's are limits of translations of compact domains in M , where the translations diverge to infinity. Hence, Σ_∞ is in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and by definition of $d_{\mathcal{T}(M)}$, a subsequence of $\{\Sigma_n\}_n$ converges to Σ_∞ . Thus, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is a compact metric space with respect to the metric $d_{\mathcal{T}(M)}$. We remark that this compactness argument can be easily modified to prove that the topology of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is independent of the sufficiently small radius ε used to define $d_{\mathcal{T}(M)}$. It follows that the topological structure on $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is determined (ε chosen sufficiently small), and it is in this sense that the topological structure is natural. This completes the proof of item 5.

Suppose now that $M \in \mathcal{T}(M)$. Note that whenever $X \in \mathcal{T}(M)$, then the path connected set of translates $\text{Trans}(X) = \{X - q \mid q \in X\}$ is a subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. In particular, $\text{Trans}(M)$ is a subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. We claim that the closure of $\text{Trans}(M)$ in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is equal to $\mathcal{T}(M)$. By definition of closure, the closure of $\text{Trans}(M)$ is a subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. Using the definition of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and the metric space structure on $\mathcal{T}(M)$, it is straightforward to check that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is contained in the closure of $\text{Trans}(M)$; hence, $\overline{\text{Trans}(M)} = \mathcal{T}(M)$. Since the closure of a path connected set in a topological space is always connected, we conclude that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is connected, which completes the proof of item 6.

We now prove item 7. Suppose Δ is a nonempty, minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set and $\Sigma \in \Delta$. By definition of \mathcal{T} -invariance, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) \subset \Delta$. By item 4, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ is a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set. By definition of minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \Delta$, which proves one of the desired implications. Suppose now that $\Delta \subset \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ is nonempty and that whenever $\Sigma \in \Delta$, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \Delta$; it follows that Δ is a \mathcal{T} -invariant set. If $\Delta' \subset \Delta$ is a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set, then there exists a $\Sigma' \in \Delta'$, and then $\Delta = \mathcal{T}(\Sigma') \subset \Delta' \subset \Delta$. Hence, $\Delta' = \Delta$, which means Δ is a minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set and item 7 is proved.

Now we prove item 8 through an application of Zorn's lemma. Suppose $\Delta \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ is a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set and $\Sigma \in \Delta$. Using the definition of \mathcal{T} -invariance, it is elementary to prove that $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ is a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set in Δ which is a closed subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$; essentially, this is because the set of limit points of a set in a topological space forms a closed set (also see the proofs of items 4 and 5 for this type of argument). Next consider the set Λ of all nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant subsets of Δ which are closed sets in $\mathcal{T}(M)$, and as we just observed, this collection is nonempty. Also, observe that Λ has a partial ordering induced by inclusion \subset .

We first check that any linearly ordered set in Λ has a lower bound, and then apply Zorn's Lemma to obtain a minimal element of Λ . To do this, suppose $\Lambda' \subset \Lambda$ is a nonempty linearly ordered subset and we will prove that the intersection $\bigcap_{\Delta' \in \Lambda'} \Delta'$ is an element of Λ .

In our case, this means that we only need to prove that such an intersection is nonempty, because the intersection of closed (respectively \mathcal{T} -invariant) sets in a topological space is a closed set (respectively \mathcal{T} -invariant) set. Since each element of Λ' is a closed subset of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and the finite intersection property holds for the collection Λ' , then the compactness of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ implies $\bigcap_{\Delta' \in \Lambda'} \Delta' \neq \emptyset$. Thus, $\bigcap_{\Delta' \in \Lambda'} \Delta' \in \Lambda$ is a lower bound for Λ' . By Zorn's lemma applied to Λ under the partial ordering \subset , Δ contains a smallest, nonempty, closed \mathcal{T} -invariant subset Ω . We now check that Ω is a nonempty minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant subset of Δ . If Ω' is a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant subset of Ω , then there exists a $\Sigma' \in \Omega'$. By our previous arguments, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma') \subset \Omega' \subset \Omega$ is a nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set in Δ which is a closed set in $\mathcal{T}(M)$, i.e., $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma') \in \Lambda$. Hence, by the minimality property of Ω in Λ , we have $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma') = \Omega' = \Omega$. Thus, Ω is a nonempty, minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant subset of Δ , which proves item 8.

Let $\Delta \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ be a nonempty, minimal \mathcal{T} -invariant set and let $\Sigma \in \Delta$. By item 7, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \Delta$. Since $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ is a closed set in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is compact, then Δ is compact. Since $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \Delta$, item 6 implies Δ is also connected which completes the proof of item 9. \square

Remark 2.4 It turns out that any complete, connected, noncompact, embedded *CMC* surface $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ with compact boundary and bounded second fundamental form, is properly embedded in \mathbb{R}^3 , has a fixed sized regular neighborhood on its mean convex side and so has cubical area growth; these properties of M follow from simple modifications of the proof of these properties in the case when M has empty boundary (see [19, 22]). For such an M , the space $\mathcal{T}(M)$ also can be defined and consists of a nonempty set of strongly Alexandrov embedded *CMC* surfaces without boundary. We will use this remark in the next section where M is allowed to have compact boundary. Also we note that items 4 - 9 of the Dynamics Theorem make sense under small modifications and hold for properly embedded separating *CMC* hypersurfaces M with bounded second fundamental form in noncompact homogeneous n -manifolds N , where $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is the set of connected properly immersed surfaces that pass through a fixed base point of N and which are components of limits of M under a sequence of “translational” isometries of N which take a divergent sequence of points in M to the base point; see [20] for details.

3 The Minimal Element Theorem.

In this section, we give several applications of the Dynamics Theorem to the theory of complete embedded *CMC* surfaces M in \mathbb{R}^3 with bounded second fundamental form and compact boundary. We will obtain several results concerning the geometry of minimal elements in $\mathcal{T}(M)$, when the area growth of M is less than cubical in R or when the genus of the surfaces $M \cap \mathbb{B}(R)$ grows less than cubically in R . With this in mind, we now define some growth constants for the area and genus of M in \mathbb{R}^3 .

For any $p \in M$, we denote by $M(p, R)$ the connected component of $M \cap \mathbb{B}(p, R)$ which contains p ; if M is not embedded at p and there are two immersed components $M(p, R)$, $M'(p, R)$ corresponding to two pointed immersions, then in what follows we will consider both of these components separately.

Definition 3.1 (Growth Constants) For $n = 1, 2, 3$, we define:

$$A_{\text{sup}}(M, n) = \limsup \sup_{p \in M} (\text{Area}[M(p, R)] \cdot R^{-n}),$$

$$A_{\text{inf}}(M, n) = \liminf \inf_{p \in M} (\text{Area}[M(p, R)] \cdot R^{-n}),$$

$$G_{\text{sup}}(M, n) = \limsup \sup_{p \in M} (\text{Genus}[M(p, R)] \cdot R^{-n}),$$

$$G_{\text{inf}}(M, n) = \liminf \inf_{p \in M} (\text{Genus}[M(p, R)] \cdot R^{-n}).$$

In the above definition, note that $\sup_{p \in M} (\text{Area}[M(p, R)] \cdot R^{-n})$ and the other similar expressions are functions from $(0, \infty)$ to \mathbb{R} and therefore they each have a limsup or a liminf, respectively.

By item 2 of Theorem 2.3 and Remark 2.4, $A_{\text{sup}}(M, 3)$ is a finite number. We now check that $G_{\text{sup}}(M, 3)$ is also finite. Since M has bounded second fundamental form, it admits a triangulation T whose edges are geodesic arcs or smooth arcs in the boundary of M of lengths bounded between two small positive numbers, and so that the areas of 2-simplices in T also are bounded between two small positive numbers. Let $T(M(p, R))$ be the set of simplices in T which intersect $M(p, R)$. Note that for R large, the number of edges in $T(M(p, R))$ which intersect $M(p, R)$ is less than some constant K times the area of $M(p, R)$, where K depends only on the second fundamental form of M . Hence, the number of generators of the first homology group $H_1(T(M(p, R)), \mathbb{R})$ is less than K times the area of $M(p, R)$. Since $\text{Genus}[M(p, R)]$ corresponds to at least $\text{Genus}[M(p, R)]$ linearly independent homology classes in $H_1(T(M(p, R)), \mathbb{R})$, then

$$\text{Genus}[M(p, R)] \leq K \text{Area}[M(p, R)] \quad \text{for } R \text{ large.} \quad (2)$$

In particular, since $A_{\text{sup}}(M, 3)$ is finite, equation (2) implies that $G_{\text{sup}}(M, 3)$ is also finite.

Definition 3.2 Suppose that $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a connected, complete embedded CMC surface with compact boundary (possibly empty) and with bounded second fundamental form.

1. For any divergent sequence of points $p_n \in M$, a subsequence of the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ converges to a properly immersed surface of the same constant mean curvature which bounds a smooth open subdomain on its mean convex side. $\mathbb{T}(M)$ denotes the collection of all such limit surfaces.
2. If there exists a constant $C > 0$ such that for all $p, q \in M$ with $d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p, q) \geq 1$, $d_M(p, q) \leq C \cdot d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p, q)$, then we say that M is *chord-arc*. (Note that the triangle inequality implies that if M is chord-arc and $p, q \in M$ with $d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p, q) < 1$, then $d_M(p, q) < 6C$.)

We note that in the above definition and in Theorem 3.3 below, the embedded hypothesis on the surface M can be replaced by the weaker hypothesis that M has a fixed size one-sided neighborhood on its mean convex side (see Remark 2.4).

We now state the main theorem of this section. For the statement of this theorem, recall that a plane $P \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a *plane of Alexandrov symmetry* for a surface $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$, if it is a plane of symmetry which separates M into two open components M^+ , M^- , each of which is a graph over a fixed subdomain of P .

Theorem 3.3 (Minimal Element Theorem) *Let $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be a complete, noncompact, connected embedded CMC surface with possibly empty compact boundary and bounded second fundamental form. Then the following statements hold.*

1. *If $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ is a minimal element, then either every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is the translation of a fixed Delaunay surface or every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ has one end. In particular, if $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ is a minimal element, then every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is connected and $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$.*
2. *Minimal elements of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ are chord-arc.*
3. *Let Σ be a minimal element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. For all $D, \varepsilon > 0$, there exists a $d_{\varepsilon, D} > 0$ such that the following statement holds. For every compact domain $X \subset \Sigma$ with extrinsic diameter less than D and for each $q \in \Sigma$, there exists a smooth compact, domain $X_{q, \varepsilon} \subset \Sigma$ and a translation, $\tau: \mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^3$, such that*

$$d_{\Sigma}(q, X_{q, \varepsilon}) < d_{\varepsilon, D} \quad \text{and} \quad d_{\mathcal{H}}(X, \tau(X_{q, \varepsilon})) < \varepsilon,$$

where d_{Σ} is distance function on Σ and $d_{\mathcal{H}}$ is the Hausdorff distance on compact sets in \mathbb{R}^3 . Furthermore, if X is connected, then $X_{q, \varepsilon}$ can be chosen to be connected.

4. *If M has empty boundary and lies in the halfspace $\{x_3 \geq 0\}$, then some minimal element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ has the (x_1, x_2) -plane as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.*
5. *If M has an end representative⁴ E such that $\mathbb{R}^3 - E$ contains balls of arbitrarily large radius, then $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a surface with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.*
6. *The following statements are equivalent:*
 - (a) $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 3) = 0$.
 - (b) $G_{\text{inf}}(M, 3) = 0$.
 - (c) $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.
 - (d) $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 2)$ is finite.
 - (e) $G_{\text{inf}}(M, 2)$ is finite.
7. *If M has an infinite number of ends, then there exists a minimal element in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.*
8. *If $\mathcal{T}(M)$ does not contain an element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry, then the following statements hold.*

- (a) *There exists a constant F such that for any end representative E of a surface in $\mathbb{T}(M)$, there exists a positive number $R(E)$ such that*

$$[\mathbb{R}^3 - \mathbb{B}(R(E))] \subset \{x \in \mathbb{R}^3 \mid d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(x, E) < F\}.$$

In particular, if E_1 and E_2 are end representatives of a surface in $\mathbb{T}(M)$, then for R sufficiently large, the Hausdorff distance between $E_1 - \mathbb{B}(R)$ and $E_2 - \mathbb{B}(R)$ is bounded from above by F .

⁴A proper noncompact domain $E \subset M$ is called an *end representative* for M if it is connected and has compact boundary.

(b) *There is a uniform upper bound on the number of ends of any element in $\mathbb{T}(M)$. In particular, there is a uniform upper bound on the number of components of any element in $\mathbb{T}(M)$.*

9. *Suppose Σ is a minimal element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. Then the following statements are equivalent.*

- (a) $A_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, 2) = 0$.
- (b) $G_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, 2) = 0$.
- (c) Σ is a Delaunay surface.
- (d) $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 1)$ is finite.
- (e) $G_{\text{inf}}(M, 1)$ is finite.

The following corollary gives some immediate consequences of Theorem 3.3. The proof of this corollary appears after the proof of Theorem 3.3.

Corollary 3.4 *Let $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be a complete, noncompact, connected, embedded CMC surface with compact boundary and bounded second fundamental form. Then the following statements hold.*

- 1. $A_{\text{sup}}(M, 3) = 0 \implies G_{\text{sup}}(M, 3) = 0 \implies$
 \implies *Every minimal element in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.*
- 2. $A_{\text{sup}}(M, 2) = 0 \implies G_{\text{sup}}(M, 2) = 0 \implies$
 \implies *Every minimal element in $\mathcal{T}(M)$ is a Delaunay surface.*

We make the following conjecture related to the Minimal Element Theorem.

Conjecture 3.5 *Suppose that $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ satisfies the hypotheses of Theorem 3.3. Then for any minimal element $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ and for $n = 1, 2$, or 3 ,*

$$\lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \text{Area}[\Sigma \cap \mathbb{B}(R)] \cdot R^{-n} \quad \text{and} \quad \lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \text{Genus}[\Sigma \cap \mathbb{B}(R)] \cdot R^{-n}$$

exist (possibly infinite). Furthermore,

$$A_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, n) = A_{\text{sup}}(\Sigma, n) = \lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \text{Area}[\Sigma \cap \mathbb{B}(R)] \cdot R^{-n}$$

$$G_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, n) = G_{\text{sup}}(\Sigma, n) = \lim_{R \rightarrow \infty} \text{Genus}[\Sigma \cap \mathbb{B}(R)] \cdot R^{-n}.$$

Proof of Theorem 3.3. We will postpone the proofs of items 1, 2, 3 to after the proofs of the items 4 - 9 of the theorem.

Assume that M has empty boundary and $M \subset \{x_3 \geq 0\}$. We will prove item 4 which states that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with the (x_1, x_2) -plane as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. In [24], Ros and Rosenberg proved that some element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ has a horizontal plane of Alexandrov symmetry; we first give a similar proof of their result. Let W_M be the smooth open domain in $\mathbb{R}^3 - M$ on the mean convex side of M . Note

that $W_M \subset \{x_3 \geq 0\}$. After a vertical translation of M , assume that M is not contained in a smaller halfspace of $\{x_3 \geq 0\}$. Since M has a fixed size regular neighborhood on its mean convex side and M has bounded second fundamental form, then for any sufficiently small $\varepsilon > 0$, $M_\varepsilon = M \cap \{x_3 \leq \varepsilon\}$ is a nonempty smooth graph of small gradient over its projection to $P_0 = \{x_3 = 0\}$; we let $P_t = \{x_3 = t\}$. Note that the mean curvature vector to M_ε is upward pointing. In what follows, $R_{P_t}: \mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^3$ denotes reflection in P_t , while $\Pi: \mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^3$ denotes orthogonal projection onto P_0 .

For any $t > 0$, consider the new surface with boundary, \widehat{M}_t , obtained by reflecting $M_t = M \cap \{x_3 \leq t\}$ across the plane P_t , i.e., $\widehat{M}_t = R_{P_t}(M_t)$. Let $T = \sup\{t \in (0, \infty) \mid \text{for } t' < t, \text{ the surface } M_{t'} \text{ is a graph over its projection to } P_0, \widehat{M}_{t'} \cap M = \partial\widehat{M}_{t'} = \partial M_{t'} \text{ and the infimum of the angles that the tangent spaces to } M \text{ along } \partial M_{t'} \text{ make with vertical planes is bounded away from zero}\}$. Recall that by height estimates for CMC graphs with zero boundary values [24], $\varepsilon < T \leq \frac{1}{H}$, where H is the mean curvature of M .

If there is a point $p \in \partial M_T$ such that the tangent plane $T_p M$ is vertical, then the classical Alexandrov reflection principle implies that the plane P_T is a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Next suppose that the angles that the tangent spaces to M_T make with $(0, 0, 1)$ along ∂M_T are not bounded away from zero. In this case, let $p_n \in \partial M_T$ be a sequence of points such that the tangent planes $T_{p_n} M$ converge to the vertical and let $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ be a related limit of the translated surfaces $M - p_n$. One easily checks that $\Sigma \cap \{x_3 < 0\}$ is a graph over P_0 and that its tangent plane at the origin is vertical. Now the usual application of the boundary Hopf maximum principle at the origin, or equivalently, the Alexandrov reflection argument, implies P_0 is a plane of Alexandrov symmetry for Σ .

Suppose now that the tangent planes of M along ∂M_T are bounded away from the vertical. In this case, P_T is not a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. So, by the usual application of the Alexandrov reflection principle, we conclude that $\widehat{M}_T \cap M = \partial\widehat{M}_T = \partial M_T$. By definition of T , there exist $\delta_n > 0$, $\delta_n \rightarrow 0$, such that $F_n = \widehat{M}_{T+\delta_n} \cap M$ is not contained in $\partial M_{T+\delta_n}$. We first show that not only is $\Pi(F_n)$ contained in the interior of $\Pi(M_T)$, but for some $\eta > 0$, it stays at a positive distance at least η from $\Pi(\partial M_T)$ for δ_n sufficiently small. In fact, since we are assuming that the tangent planes of M along ∂M_T are bounded away by a fixed positive angle from the vertical, if δ is small enough, the tangent planes of M along $\partial M_{T+\delta}$ are also bounded away by a fixed positive angle from the vertical. Thus, the previous statement on the existence of an $\eta > 0$ is a consequence of the existence of a fixed size one-sided regular neighborhood for M in W_M .

The discussion in the previous paragraph implies that there exists a sequence of points $p_n \in M_T$ which stay at least η from ∂M_T and such that the distance from $R_T(p_n)$ and $M - M_T$ is going to zero. The fact that p_n stays at least η from ∂M_T implies that for n large there exists an $\varepsilon > 0$ such that $R_T(\mathbb{B}(p_n, \varepsilon) \cap M)$ is disjoint from M and it is a graph over $\Pi(\mathbb{B}(p_n, \varepsilon) \cap M)$. Consider the element $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ obtained as a limit of the translated surfaces $M - \Pi(p_n)$ and let $p = (0, 0, T) \in \Sigma$. From the way Σ is obtained, p is a positive distance from $\partial\Sigma_T$, $R_T(p) \in \Sigma - \Sigma_T$ and $\widehat{\Sigma}_T$ is tangent to $\Sigma - \Sigma_T$ and lies on its mean convex side. The maximum principle implies that P_T is a plane of Alexandrov symmetry which contradicts the assumption that tangent planes of M along ∂M_T are bounded away by a fixed positive angle from the vertical. This completes the proof that there exists a surface $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ with the (x_1, x_2) -plane as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. It then follows from item 8 of Theorem 2.3 that the nonempty \mathcal{T} -invariant set $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ contains minimal

element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ with the (x_1, x_2) -plane as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry, which proves item 4.

We now prove item 5 holds. Assume now that M has possibly nonempty compact boundary and there exists a sequence of open balls $\mathbb{B}(q_n, n) \subset \mathbb{R}^3 - M$. Note that these balls can be chosen so that they are at distance at least n from the boundary of M and so that there exist points $p_n \in \partial\mathbb{B}(q_n, n) \cap M$. After choosing a subsequence, we may assume that the translated balls $\mathbb{B}(q_n, n) - p_n$ converge to an open halfspace K of \mathbb{R}^3 and a subsequence of the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ gives rise to an element $M_\infty \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ with M_∞ contained in the halfspace $\mathbb{R}^3 - K$ and $\partial M_\infty = \emptyset$. By the previous discussion when M has empty boundary (item 4), $\mathcal{T}(M_\infty) \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. This completes the proof of item 5.

We now prove item 6 in the theorem. First observe that $6d \implies 6a$ and that $6e \implies 6b$. Also, equation (2) implies that $6a \implies 6b$ and that $6d \implies 6e$. We now prove that $6c \implies 6d$. Suppose that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element Σ which has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and let W_Σ denote the embedded three-manifold on the mean convex side of Σ . In this case W_Σ is contained in a slab, and by item 2 of Theorem 2.3, the area growth of Σ is comparable to the volume growth of W_Σ . Note that the volume of W_Σ grows at most like the volume of the slab which contains it, and so, the volume growth of W_Σ and the area growth of Σ are at most quadratic in R . By the definitions of $\mathcal{T}(M)$ and $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 2)$, we see that $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 2)$ is finite which implies $6d$.

In order to complete the proof of item 6, it suffices to show $6b \implies 6c$. However, since the proof of $6b \implies 6c$ uses the fact that $6a \implies 6c$, we first show that $6a \implies 6c$. Assume that $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 3) = 0$ and we will prove that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a surface Σ which lies in a halfspace of \mathbb{R}^3 . Since $A_{\text{inf}}(M, 3) = 0$, we can find a sequence of points $\{p_n\}_n \subset M$ and positive numbers R_n , $R_n \rightarrow \infty$, such that the connected component $M(p_n, R_n)$ of $M \cap \overline{\mathbb{B}}(p_n, R_n)$ containing p_n has area less than $\frac{1}{n}R_n^3$. Since M has bounded second fundamental form, there exists an $\varepsilon > 0$ such that for any $q \in \mathbb{R}^3$, if $\mathbb{B}(q, r) \cap M \neq \emptyset$, then $\text{Area}(\mathbb{B}(q, r+1) \cap M) \geq \varepsilon$. Using this observation, together with the inequality $\text{Area}(M \cap \overline{\mathbb{B}}(p_n, R_n)) \leq \frac{1}{n}R_n^3$ and the equality $\text{Volume}(\mathbb{B}(p_n, R_n)) = \frac{4\pi}{3}R_n^3$, it is straightforward to find a sequence of points $q_n \in \mathbb{B}(p_n, R_n)$, numbers k_n , with $k_n \rightarrow \infty$, such that $\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \subset [\mathbb{B}(p_n, \frac{R_n}{2}) - M(p_n, R_n)]$ and such that there are points $s_n \in \partial\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \cap M(p_n, R_n)$ with $|s_n| \rightarrow \infty$ (see Figure 1). Let $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ be a limit surface arising from the sequence of translated surfaces $M(p_n, R_n) - s_n$. Note that Σ is disjoint from the open halfspace obtained from a limit of a subsequence of the translated balls $\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) - s_n$. Since Σ lies in a halfspace of \mathbb{R}^3 , item 4 in the theorem implies $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. The existence of this minimal element proves that $6a \implies 6c$.

We now prove that $6b \implies 6c$ and this will complete the proof of item 6. Assume that $G_{\text{inf}}(M, 3) = 0$. Since $G_{\text{inf}}(M, 3) = 0$, there exists a sequence of points $p_n \in M$ and $R_n \rightarrow \infty$, such that the genus of $M(p_n, R_n) \subset \overline{\mathbb{B}}(p_n, R_n)$ is less than $\frac{1}{n}R_n^3$. Using the fact that the genus of disjoint surfaces is additive, a simple geometric argument, which is similar to the argument that proved $6a \implies 6c$, shows that there exists a sequence of numbers k_n , with $k_n \rightarrow \infty$, such that one of the following holds:

1. There are points $q_n \in M(p_n, R_n)$ diverging in \mathbb{R}^3 such that $\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \subset \mathbb{B}(p_n, R_n)$ and

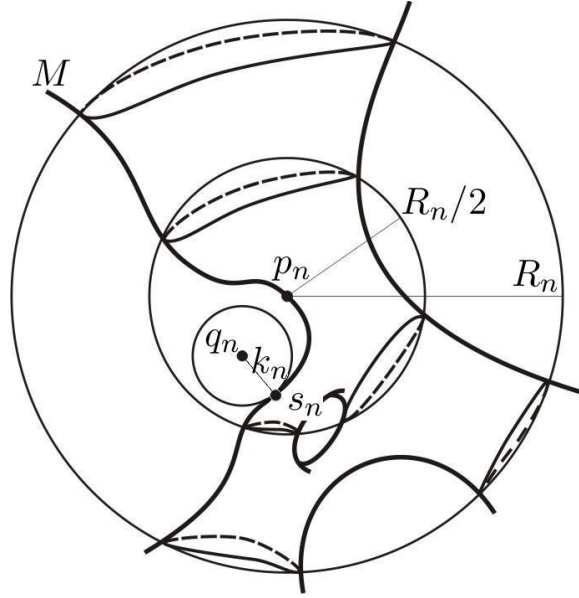


Figure 1: Finding large balls in the complement of $M(p_n, R_n)$

$M(q_n, k_n)$ has genus zero.

2. There are points $s_n \in \mathbb{B}(p_n, R_n)$ diverging in \mathbb{R}^3 such that $\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \subset \mathbb{B}(p_n, \frac{R_n}{2}) - M(p_n, R_n)$ and $s_n \in \partial\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \cap M(p_n, R_n)$.

If statement 2 holds, then our previous arguments imply that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a surface Σ which lies in a halfspace of \mathbb{R}^3 and that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Thus, we may assume statement 1 holds.

Since statement 1 holds, then the sequence of translated surfaces $M - q_n$ yields a limit surface $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ of genus zero. If Σ has a finite number of ends, then Σ has an annular end E . By the main theorem in [17], E is contained in a solid cylinder in \mathbb{R}^3 . Under a sequence of translations of E , we obtain a limit surface $D \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ which is contained in a solid cylinder. By item 4, there is a minimal element $D' \in \mathcal{T}(D) \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ which has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.

Suppose now M has an infinite number of ends. For each $n \in \mathbb{N}$, there exists numbers, T_n with $T_n \rightarrow \infty$, such that the number $k(n)$ of noncompact components,

$$\{\Sigma_1(T_n), \Sigma_2(T_n), \dots, \Sigma_{k(n)}(T_n)\},$$

in $M - \mathbb{B}(T_n)$ is at least n . Fix points $p_i(n) \in \Sigma_i(T_n) \cap \partial\mathbb{B}(2T_n)$, for each $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, k(n)\}$. Note that $\sum_{i=1}^{k(n)} \text{Area}(M(p_i(n), T_n)) \leq \text{Area}(M \cap \mathbb{B}(3T_n))$. If M has no boundary, then $\text{Area}(M \cap \mathbb{B}(3T_n)) \leq c'(3T_n)^3 = cT_n^3$ (see item 2 of Theorem 2.3). However the proof of the existence of a fixed size regular neighborhood on the mean convex side of such an M also shows that for T_n large, $M - \mathbb{B}(T_n)$ has a fixed size regular neighborhood on its mean convex side even when M has nonempty boundary. Therefore, in any case, we obtain that

for all n , there exists an i , such that

$$\text{Area}(M(p_i(n), T_n)) \leq \frac{c}{n} T_n^3.$$

By definition of $A(M, 3)$, we conclude that $A(M, 3) = 0$. Since we have shown that $6a \implies 6c$, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ contains a minimal element Σ' with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Since $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Thus $6b \implies 6c$ which completes the proof of item 6.

We next prove item 7. Assume that M has infinite number of ends. By the arguments in the previous paragraph, $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a minimal element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. This proves that item 7 holds.

We next prove item 8a. Arguing by contrapositive, suppose that the conclusion of item 8a fails to hold and we will prove that $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains an element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Since the conclusion of 8a fails to hold, there exists a sequence of surfaces $\Sigma(n) \in \mathbb{T}(M)$ with end representatives $E(n)$, and positive numbers $F(n) \rightarrow \infty$ as $n \rightarrow \infty$ such that for any $R(n) > 0$, there exist balls B_n of radius $F(n)$ such that

$$B_n \subset [\mathbb{R}^3 - (\mathbb{B}(R(n)) \cup E(n))].$$

Choose $R(n) > F(n)$ sufficiently large so that $\partial E(n) \subset \mathbb{B}(\frac{R(n)}{2})$ and let B_n be the related ball of radius $F(n)$ which lies outside of $\mathbb{B}(R(n))$ and which is disjoint from $E(n)$. After rotating B_n around an axis passing through the origin, we obtain a new ball $K_n \subset \mathbb{R}^3 - (\mathbb{B}(R(n)) \cup E(n))$ of radius $F(n)$ such that ∂K_n intersects $E(n)$ at a point p_n . After choosing a subsequence, suppose that $E(n) - p_n$ converges to a surface $\Sigma_\infty \in \mathbb{T}(M)$ which lies in a halfspace of \mathbb{R}^3 , the halfspace being a limit of some subsequence of translated balls $B_n - p_n$. By item 4, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma_\infty) \subset \mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a surface with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry, which completes the proof of item 8a.

The proof of item 8b is a straightforward modification of the proof of item 7 and will be left to the reader.

We now prove that item 9 holds. First observe that $9d \implies 9a$ and that $9e \implies 9b$. Also, equation (2) implies that $9a \implies 9b$ and that $9d \implies 9e$. An argument similar to the proof of $6c \implies 6d$ shows that $9c \implies 9d$. In order to complete the proof of item 9, it suffices to show $9b \implies 9c$. Let Σ be a minimal element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. By item 6, there exists a minimal element of $\Sigma' \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. By minimality of Σ , $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma')$, and so Σ also has a plane P of Alexandrov symmetry (the same plane as Σ' up to some translation). In particular, Σ lies in a fixed size slab in \mathbb{R}^3 .

After a possible rotation of Σ , assume that $P = \{x_3 = 0\}$ and so, $\Sigma \subset \{-a \leq x_3 \leq a\}$ for some $a > 0$. Since $G_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, 2) = 0$, there exists a sequence of points $p_n = (x_1(n), x_2(n), 0) \in \Sigma$, numbers R_n with $R_n \rightarrow \infty$, such that $\text{Genus}(\Sigma(p_n, R_n)) < \frac{1}{n} R_n^2$. Similar to the proof of $6b \implies 6c$, the fact that $G_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, 2) = 0$ implies one of the following statements holds.

1. There exist a divergent sequence of points $q_n \in \mathbb{B}(p_n, R_n) \cap \Sigma(p_n, R_n) \cap P$ and positive numbers $k_n < \frac{R_n}{2}$ with $k_n \rightarrow \infty$ such that $\text{Genus}(\Sigma(q_n, k_n)) = 0$.
2. There exists a divergent sequence of points $q_n \in P$ and positive numbers k_n with $k_n \rightarrow \infty$ such that $\mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \subset [\mathbb{B}(p_n, \frac{R_n}{2}) - \Sigma(q_n, R_n)]$ and points $s_n \in \partial \mathbb{B}(q_n, k_n) \cap \Sigma(p_n, R_n)$ with $|s_n| \rightarrow \infty$.

We will consider the two cases above separately. If statement 1 holds, then a subsequence of the translated surfaces $\Sigma - q_n$ yields a limit surface $\Sigma_\infty \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ of genus 0 with P as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. If Σ_∞ has a finite number of ends, then it has an annular end. In this case, the end is asymptotic to a Delaunay surface. Therefore $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ contains a Delaunay surface Σ' and since Σ is a minimal element, $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma')$ which implies Σ itself is a Delaunay surface. Suppose Σ_∞ has an infinite number of ends. Note that Σ_∞ lies in a slab which implies that $\text{Area}(\Sigma_\infty \cap \mathbb{B}(R)) \leq C_2 R^2$. In this case, a modification of the end of the proof that $\delta b \implies \delta c$ shows that for each $n \in \mathbb{N}$, there exist numbers T_n with $T_n \rightarrow \infty$ such that the number $k(n)$ of components $\{\Sigma_1(T_n), \Sigma_2(T_n), \dots, \Sigma_{k(n)}(T_n)\}$ in $\Sigma_\infty - \mathbb{B}(T_n)$ is at least n and, after possibly reindexing, there is a point $p_1(n) \in \Sigma_1(T_n) \cap \partial \mathbb{B}(2T_n)$, a constant c_3 such that $\text{Area}(\Sigma_1(p_1(n), T_n)) \leq \frac{c_3}{n} T_n^2$. This implies that one can find diverging points $q_n \in \mathbb{B}(p_1(n), T_n) \cap P$ and numbers $r_n \rightarrow \infty$ such that $\mathbb{B}(q_n, r_n) \subset [\mathbb{B}(p_1(n), \frac{T_n}{2}) - \Sigma_1(p_1(n), T_n)]$ and there are points $s_n \in \overline{\mathbb{B}(q_n, r_n)} \cap \Sigma_1(p_1(n), T_n)$ such that $|s_n| \rightarrow \infty$. It follows that a subsequence of the surfaces $\Sigma_1(p_1(n), T_n) - s_n$ converges to a surface $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma_\infty)$ which lies in halfspace whose boundary plane is a vertical plane. Item δ of Theorem 2.3 implies that $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma_\infty)$ contains a surface Σ' with the plane P as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry as well as a vertical plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Therefore, Σ' is cylindrically bounded and so it is a Delaunay surface. Since $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma')$, Σ is a Delaunay surface.

We now consider the case where statement 2 holds. A straightforward modification of the proof of the case where statement 1 holds then demonstrates that there is a $\Sigma' \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ with the plane P and a vertical plane as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. As before, we conclude that Σ is a Delaunay surface. This completes the proof of item 9.

We now prove item 1. Let Σ be a minimal element in $\mathcal{T}(M)$. If Σ has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ has a surface Σ' with more than one end, then Theorem 4.1, which does not depend on the proof of this item, implies that Σ' has at least one annular end, from which it follows that $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ contains a Delaunay surface D . Since Σ and D are minimal elements of $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$, then $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \mathcal{T}(D)$, and so Σ is a translation of D . Since Σ is a Delaunay surface (a translation of D), then clearly every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is also a translation of a Delaunay surface, which proves item 1 under the additional hypothesis that Σ has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry.

Thus, arguing by contradiction, suppose that Σ fails to have a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ has a surface with more than one end. Since Σ is a minimal element, then $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\tilde{\Sigma})$ for any $\tilde{\Sigma} \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$, and so no element of $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. By item δb , there is a bound on the number of ends of any surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$. Let $\Sigma' \in \mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ be a surface with the largest possible number n of ends and let $\{E_1, E_2, \dots, E_n\}$ be pairwise disjoint end representatives for its n ends. By item δa , the ends E_1, E_2, \dots, E_n are uniformly close to each other. It now follows from the definition of $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma')$ that every element of $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma')$ must have at least n components, one arising from a limit of translations of each of the ends E_1, E_2, \dots, E_n .

By our choice of n , we find that every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma') \subset \mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ has exactly n components. From the minimality of Σ , Σ must be a component of some element $\Sigma'' \in \mathbb{T}(\Sigma')$. But then our previous arguments imply $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma'')$ contains a surface Δ with $n - 1$ ends coming from translational limits of the components of Σ'' other than Σ and at least two additional components (in fact n components) arising from translational limits of $\Sigma \subset \Sigma''$. Hence, $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma'') \subset \mathbb{T}(\Sigma')$ contains a surface Δ with at least $n + 1$ components, which contradicts the

definition of n . This contradiction completes the proof of item 1.

We are now in a position to prove item 2 of the theorem. The first step in this proof is the following assertion.

Assertion 3.6 *Suppose $\Sigma \in \mathbb{T}(M) \cup \{M\}$ and every element in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is connected. There exists a function $f: [1, \infty) \rightarrow [1, \infty)$ such that for every $\Omega \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ and points $p, q \in \Omega$ with $1 \leq d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p, q) \leq R$, then*

$$d_{\Omega}(p, q) \leq f(R)d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p, q).$$

Furthermore, if no element in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry, then Σ is chord-arc.

Proof. Suppose $\Sigma \in \mathbb{T}(M) \cup \{M\}$ and every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is connected. If there fails to exist the desired function f , then there exists a positive number R , a sequence of surfaces $\Omega(n) \in \mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ and points $p_n, q_n \in \Omega(n)$ such that for $n \in \mathbb{N}$,

$$1 \leq d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p_n, q_n) \leq R \quad \text{and} \quad n \cdot d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p_n, q_n) \leq d_{\Omega(n)}(p_n, q_n).$$

Since every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is connected $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma) = \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$. As $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ is sequentially compact and $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$, the sequence of surfaces $\Omega(n) - p_n \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ can be chosen to converge to a $\Sigma_{\infty} \in \mathbb{T}(\Sigma) = \mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ and the points $q_n - p_n$ converge to a point $q \in \Sigma_{\infty}$. Clearly Σ_{∞} has a component passing through q which is different from a component of Σ_{∞} passing through the origin because the intrinsic distance between $\vec{0} \in \Omega(n) - p_n$ and $q_n - p_n \in \Omega(n) - p_n$ is at least n . But by assumption, every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is connected. This contradiction proves the existence of the desired function f .

Suppose now that $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ contains no element with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and let f be a function satisfying the first statement in the assertion. Since Σ is an end representative of Σ itself, item 5 of the theorem implies that there exists an $R_0 > 0$ such that every ball in \mathbb{R}^3 of radius at least R_0 intersects Σ in some point. Let k be a positive integer greater than $R_0 + 1$. Fix any two points $p, q \in \Sigma$ of extrinsic distance at least $3k$. Let $v = \frac{q-p}{|q-p|}$ and let n be the integer part of $|q-p|$. For $i \in \{1, 2, \dots, n\}$, let $p_i = p + kiv$. By our choice of k , a ball of radius k always intersects Σ at some point. For each i , let $q_i \in \Sigma \cap \bar{\mathbb{B}}(p_i, k)$, where we chose $q_1 = p$ and $q_n = q$. Since for each $i < n$, $d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(q_i, q_{i+1}) \leq 3k$, then $d_{\Sigma}(q_i, q_{i+1}) \leq f(3k)3k$. By the triangle inequality,

$$d_{\Sigma}(p, q) \leq (n-1)f(3k)3k \leq 3f(3k)(nk) \leq 3f(3k)d_{\mathbb{R}^3}(p, q).$$

Thus, Σ is chord-arc, which completes the proof of the assertion. \square

We now return to the proof of item 2. Let $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ be a minimal element. By the last statement in item 1, the minimal element Σ satisfies $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ and so, every surface in $\mathbb{T}(\Sigma)$ is connected. Thus, by Assertion 3.6, if Σ fails to have a plane P of Alexandrov symmetry, then Σ is chord-arc. Suppose now that Σ has a plane P of Alexandrov symmetry. If Σ were to fail to be chord-arc, then the proof of item 9 shows that either Σ is a Delaunay surface or else there exists an $R_0 > 0$ such that every ball B of radius R_0 and centered at a point of P must intersect Σ . In the first case, Σ is a Delaunay surface, which is clearly chord-arc. In the second case, the existence of points in $B \cap \Sigma$ allows one to modify the

proof of Assertion 3.6 in a straightforward manner to show that Σ is chord-arc. Thus, item 2 of the theorem is proved.

In order to prove item 3, we need the following lemma.

Lemma 3.7 *Let Σ be a minimal element in $\mathcal{T}(M)$. For all $D, \varepsilon > 0$, there exists a $d_{\varepsilon, D} > 0$ such that the following statement holds. For any $B_{\Sigma}(p, D) \subset \Sigma$ and for all $q \in \Sigma$, there exists $q' \in \Sigma$ such that $B_{\Sigma}(q', D) \subset B_{\Sigma}(q, d_{\varepsilon, D})$ and $d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p, D) - p, B_{\Sigma}(q', D) - q') < \varepsilon$. Here $B_{\Sigma}(p, R)$ denotes the intrinsic ball of radius R centered at p .*

Proof. Arguing by contradiction, suppose that the claim in the lemma is false. Then there exist $D, \varepsilon > 0$ such that the following holds. For all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, there exist intrinsic balls $B_{\Sigma}(p_n, D) \subset \Sigma$ and $q_n \in \Sigma$ such that for any $B_{\Sigma}(q', D) \subset B_{\Sigma}(q_n, n)$, then $d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p_n, D) - p_n, B_{\Sigma}(q', D) - q') > \varepsilon$. In what follows, we further simplify the notation and we let $B_{\Sigma}(p)$ denote $B_{\Sigma}(p, D)$. After going to a subsequence, we can assume that the set of translated surfaces, $\Sigma - p_n$, converges C^2 to a complete, strongly Alexandrov embedded, CMC surface Σ_{∞} passing through the origin $\vec{0}$. By item 1, Σ_{∞} is connected and we consider it to be pointed so that $B_{\Sigma}(p_n) - p_n$ converges to $B_{\Sigma_{\infty}}(\vec{0})$. Also, we can assume that $B_{\Sigma}(q_n, n) - q_n$ converges to a complete, connected, pointed, strongly Alexandrov embedded CMC surface Σ'_{∞} . The previous discussion implies that for any $z \in \Sigma'_{\infty}$, there exists a sequence $B_{\Sigma}(z_n) \subset B_{\Sigma}(q_n, n)$, such that

$$d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(z_n) - z_n, B_{\Sigma'_{\infty}}(z) - z) < \frac{\varepsilon}{4} \quad \text{for } n \text{ large.} \quad (3)$$

Furthermore, we can also assume that

$$d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p_n) - p_n, B_{\Sigma_{\infty}}(\vec{0})) < \frac{\varepsilon}{4}, \quad (4)$$

and since $B_{\Sigma}(z_n) \subset B_{\Sigma}(q_n, n)$, then

$$d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p_n) - p_n, B_{\Sigma}(z_n) - z_n) > \varepsilon. \quad (5)$$

Recall that since Σ is a minimal element, item 7 in Theorem 2.3 implies that

$$\Sigma, \Sigma_{\infty}, \Sigma'_{\infty} \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma) = \mathcal{T}(\Sigma_{\infty}) = \mathcal{T}(\Sigma'_{\infty}).$$

In order to obtain a contradiction it suffices to show that there exists $\alpha > 0$ such that

$$d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma'_{\infty}}(z) - z, B_{\Sigma_{\infty}}(\vec{0})) > \alpha$$

for any $z \in \Sigma'_{\infty}$ because this inequality clearly implies that $\Sigma_{\infty} \notin \mathcal{T}(\Sigma'_{\infty})$. Fix $z \in \Sigma'_{\infty}$ and let z_n and p_n be as given by equations (3) and (4).

In what follows, we are going to start with equation (5), apply the triangle inequality for the Hausdorff distance between compact sets, then apply the triangle inequality and equation (3), and finally we apply (4). For n large,

$$\begin{aligned} \varepsilon &< d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p_n) - p_n, B_{\Sigma}(z_n) - z_n) \leq \\ &\leq d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p_n) - p_n, B_{\Sigma'_{\infty}}(z) - z) + d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma'_{\infty}}(z) - z, B_{\Sigma}(z_n) - z_n) < \\ &< d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma}(p_n) - p_n, B_{\Sigma_{\infty}}(\vec{0})) + d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma_{\infty}}(\vec{0}), B_{\Sigma'_{\infty}}(z) - z) + \frac{\varepsilon}{4} < \\ &< \frac{\varepsilon}{2} + d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma'_{\infty}}(z) - z, B_{\Sigma_{\infty}}(\vec{0})). \end{aligned}$$

This inequality implies $d_{\mathcal{H}}(B_{\Sigma'_\infty}(z) - z, B_{\Sigma_\infty}(\vec{0})) > \frac{\varepsilon}{2}$, which completes the proof of the lemma. \square

Notice that if $X \subset \Sigma$ is a compact domain of intrinsic diameter less than D , then there exists a point $p \in \Sigma$ such that $X \subset B_\Sigma(p, D)$. The next lemma is a consequence of Lemma 3.7 and the following observation regarding the Hausdorff distance: Given three compact sets $A, B, X \subset \Sigma$ with $X \subset A$, if $d_{\mathcal{H}}(A, B) < \varepsilon$, then there exists $X' \subset B$ such that $d_{\mathcal{H}}(X, X') < \varepsilon$.

Lemma 3.8 *Let Σ be a minimal element of $\mathcal{T}(M)$. For all $D, \varepsilon > 0$, there exists a $d_{\varepsilon, D} > 0$ such that the following statement hold. For every smooth, connected compact domain $X \subset \Sigma$ with intrinsic diameter less than D and for each $q \in \Sigma$, there exists a smooth compact, connected domain $X_{q, \varepsilon} \subset \Sigma$ and a translation, $i: \mathbb{R}^3 \rightarrow \mathbb{R}^3$, such that*

$$d_\Sigma(q, X_{q, \varepsilon}) < d_{\varepsilon, D} \quad \text{and} \quad d_{\mathcal{H}}(X, i(X_{q, \varepsilon})) < \varepsilon,$$

where d_Σ is distance function on Σ and $d_{\mathcal{H}}$ is the Hausdorff distance on compact sets in \mathbb{R}^3 .

In order to finish the proof of item 3, we remark that item 2 implies intrinsic and extrinsic distances are comparable and so, the above lemma implies the first statement in item 3. The second statement is an immediate consequence of the first statement, which completes the proof.

Theorem 3.3 is now proved. \square

Proof of Corollary 3.4. We first prove item 1 of the corollary. By equation (2), $A_{\text{sup}}(M, 3) = 0$ implies $G_{\text{sup}}(M, 3) = 0$. On the other hand, if $G_{\text{sup}}(M, 3) = 0$, then for any $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$, $G_{\text{sup}}(\Sigma, 3) = 0$. In particular, for any minimal element $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(M)$, $G_{\text{inf}}(\Sigma, 3) = 0$. By item 6 of Theorem 3.3, $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ contains a minimal element Σ' with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Since Σ is a minimal element, $\Sigma \in \mathcal{T}(\Sigma')$ and therefore has a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. This proves that item 1 holds.

The proof of item 2 follows from arguments similar to the ones in the proof of item 1, using item 9 of Theorem 3.3 instead of item 6. \square

Remark 3.9 In [20], we give a complete and natural generalization of Theorem 2.3 to the more general case of separating *CMC* hypersurfaces M with bounded second fundamental form in an n -dimensional noncompact homogeneous manifold N . In that paper, we obtain some interesting applications of this generalization to the classical setting where N is \mathbb{R}^n or hyperbolic n -space, \mathbb{H}^n , which are similar to the applications given in Theorem 3.3.

Remark 3.10 In [23], we prove that if $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a strongly Alexandrov embedded *CMC* surface with bounded second fundamental form and $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a Delaunay surface, then every intrinsic isometry of M extends to an isometry of \mathbb{R}^3 . If $\mathcal{T}(M)$ contains a surface with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry, then it is locally rigid⁵(see [26]). Theorem 3.3 gives several different constraints on the geometry or the topology of M that guarantee

⁵ M is *locally rigid* if any one-parameter family of isometric immersions M_t of M , $t \in [0, \varepsilon)$, $M_0 = M$, with same mean curvature as M is obtained by a family of rigid motions of M .

the existence of a Delaunay surface or a surface with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry in $\mathcal{T}(M)$. In relation to these rigidity results, the first author conjectures that *the helicoid is the only complete, embedded, constant mean curvature surface in \mathbb{R}^3 which admits more than one non-congruent, isometric, constant mean curvature immersion into \mathbb{R}^3 with the same constant mean curvature.* Since intrinsic isometries of the helicoid extend to ambient isometries, the second author also conjectures that *an intrinsic isometry of a complete, embedded, constant mean curvature surface in \mathbb{R}^3 extends to an ambient isometry of \mathbb{R}^3 .*

4 Embedded CMC surfaces with a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and more than one end.

In this section we prove the following surprising result that uses techniques from the proof of Theorem 3.3. In the next theorem the hypothesis that the surface M be embedded can be replaced by the weaker condition that it is embedded outside of its Alexandrov plane of symmetry.

Theorem 4.1 *Suppose M is a not necessarily connected, complete embedded CMC surface with bounded second fundamental form, compact boundary, a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and at least n ends. If n is at least two, then M has at least n annular ends. Furthermore, if M has empty boundary and more than one noncompact connected component, then each noncompact component of M is a Delaunay surface.*

The following corollary is an immediate consequence of the above theorem and the result of Meeks [17] that a connected, noncompact, properly embedded CMC surface with one end must have infinite genus.

Corollary 4.2 *Suppose M is a connected, noncompact, complete embedded CMC surface with bounded second fundamental form and a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Then M has finite topology if and only if M has a finite number of ends greater than one.*

In regards to Theorem 4.1 when $n = \infty$, we note that there exist connected surfaces satisfying the hypothesis of the theorem which are periodic and have an infinite number of annular ends.

Proof. We first describe some of the notation that we will use in the proof of the theorem. We will assume that M has a plane P of Alexandrov symmetry and P is the (x_1, x_2) -plane. We let $\mathbb{S}^1(R) = \partial(P \cap \mathbb{B}(R))$. Assume that M is a bigraph over a domain $\Delta \subset P$ and R_0 is chosen sufficiently large, so that $\partial M \subset \mathbb{B}(R_0)$ and $\Delta - \mathbb{B}(R_0)$ contains n noncompact components $\Delta_1, \Delta_2, \dots, \Delta_n$. Let $M_1, M_2 \subset M$ denote the bigraphs with boundary over the respective regions Δ_1, Δ_2 . Let X be the component in $P - (\Delta_1 \cup \Delta_2)$ with exactly two boundary curves ∂_1, ∂_2 , each a proper noncompact curve in P and such that $\partial_1 \subset \partial\Delta_1, \partial_2 \subset \partial\Delta_2$. The curve ∂_1 separates P into two closed, noncompact, simply-connected domains P_1, P_2 , where $\Delta_1 \subset P_1$ and $\Delta_2 \subset P_2$.

Now choose an increasing unbounded sequence of numbers $\{R_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ with $R_1 > R_0$ chosen large enough so that for $i = 1, 2$, the component of $P_i \cap \mathbb{B}(R_1)$ which intersects some fixed point of $P_i \cap \mathbb{S}^1(R_0)$ contains $P_1 \cap \mathbb{S}^1(R_0)$ in its boundary; we will also assume that the

circles $\mathbb{S}^1(R_n)$ are transverse to $\partial\Delta_1 \cup \partial\Delta_2$ for each n . By elementary separation properties, for $i = 1, 2$, there exists a unique component $\sigma_i(n)$ of $P_i \cap \mathbb{S}^1(R_n)$ which separates P_i into two components, exactly one of whose closure is a compact disk $P_i(n)$ with $P_i \cap \mathbb{S}^1(R_0)$ in its boundary; note that the collection of domains $\{P_i(n)\}_n$ forms a compact exhaustion of P_i . See Figure 2.

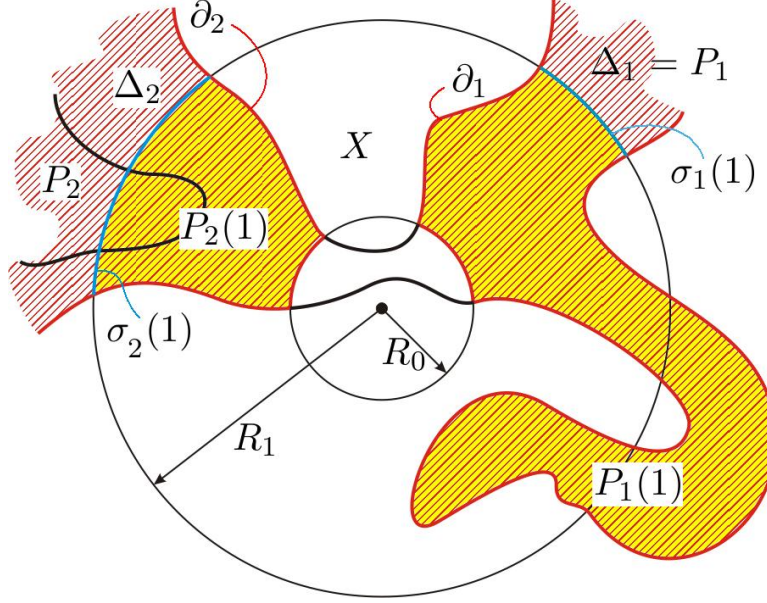


Figure 2: $P_1(1)$ is the yellow shaded region containing $\sigma_1(1)$ and an arc of ∂_1 in its boundary.

Since $\sigma_1(n)$ is disjoint from $\sigma_2(n)$ and each of these sets is a connected arc in $\mathbb{S}^1(R_0)$, then, after possibly replacing the sequence $\{R_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ by a subsequence and possibly reindexing P_1, P_2 , for each $n \in \mathbb{N}$ the arc $\sigma_1(n)$ is contained in the interior of a closed halfspace K_n of \mathbb{R}^3 with boundary plane ∂K_n being a vertical plane passing through the origin $\vec{0}$ of \mathbb{R}^3 . Let $\Delta_1(n) = \Delta_1 \cap P_1(n)$ and let $M_1(n) \subset M_1$ be the compact bigraph over $\Delta_1(n)$. Let \widehat{K}_n be the closed halfspace in \mathbb{R}^3 with $K_n \subset \widehat{K}_n$ and such that the boundary plane $\partial\widehat{K}_n$ is a distance $\frac{2}{H} + R_0$ from ∂K_n , where H is the mean curvature of M . Note that $\partial M_1(n)$ is contained in the union of the solid cylinder over $\overline{\mathbb{B}}(R_0)$ and the halfspace K_n . Thus, the distance from $\partial M(n)$ to $\partial\widehat{K}_n$ is at least $\frac{2}{H}$. By the Alexandrov reflection principle and the $\frac{1}{H}$ height estimate for *CMC* graphs with zero boundary values and constant mean curvature H , we find that $M_1(n) \subset \widehat{K}_n$. After choosing a subsequence, the halfspaces \widehat{K}_n converge on compact subsets of \mathbb{R}^3 to a closed halfspace K . Since for all $n \in \mathbb{N}$, $M_1(n) \subset M_1(n+1)$ and $\bigcup_{i=1}^{\infty} M_1(n) = M_1$, one finds that $M_1 \subset K$. After a horizontal translation and a rotation of M_1 around the x_3 -axis, we may assume that the new surface, which we will also denote by M_1 , lies in $\{(x_1, x_2, x_3) \mid x_2 > 0\}$ and it is a bigraph over a region $\Delta_1 \subset \{(x_1, x_2, 0) \mid x_2 > 0\}$. A straightforward application of the Alexandrov reflection principle and height estimates for *CMC* graphs shows that, after an additional horizontal translation and rotation around the x_3 -axis, Δ_1 also can be assumed to contain divergent sequence of points $p_n = (x_1(n), x_2(n), 0) \in \partial\Delta_1$ such that $\frac{x_2(n)}{x_1(n)} \rightarrow 0$ as n approaches infinity.

See Figure 3.

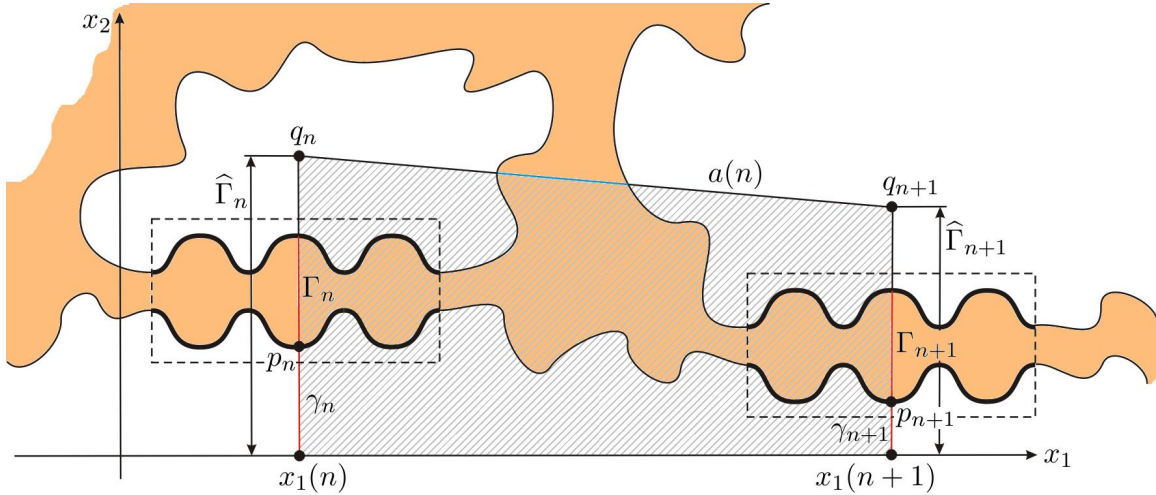


Figure 3: Choosing the points p_n and related data.

Assertion 4.3 *The points p_n can be chosen to satisfy the following additional properties:*

1. *The vertical line segments γ_n joining p_n to $(x_1(n), 0, 0)$ intersect Δ_1 only at p_n and $\frac{x_1(n+1)}{x_1(n)} > n$.*
2. *The surfaces $M_1 - p_n$ converge to a Delaunay surface F with P as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and axis parallel to the x_1 -axis.*

Proof. The proof that the points p_n can be chosen to satisfy statement 1 is clear. To prove that they can also be chosen to satisfy statement 2 can be seen as follows. Let $S_n \subset P$ be the circle passing through the points p_n and $(\frac{x_1(n)}{10}, 0, 0)$ with center on the line $\{(x_1(n), t, 0) \mid t < x_2(n)\}$ and let E_n denote the closed disk with boundary S_n . Consider the family of translated disks $E_n(t) = E_n - (0, t, 0)$ and let t_0 be the largest t such that $E_n(t)$ intersects Δ_1 at some point and let $D_n = E_n(t_0)$. By construction and after possibly replacing by a subsequence, points in $D_n \cap \Delta_1$ satisfy the first statement in the assertion as well as the previous property that the ratio of their x_2 -coordinates to the x_1 -coordinates limit to zero as $n \rightarrow \infty$. Next replace the previous point p_n by any point of $\partial D_n \cap M_1$, to obtain a new sequence of points which we also denote by p_n . A subsequence of the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ converges to a strongly Alexandrov embedded surface $M_\infty \in \mathcal{T}(M)$ which has P as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry and which lies in the halfspace $x_2 \geq 0$. It follows from item 4 of Theorem 3.3 (and its proof) that $\mathcal{T}(\Sigma)$ contains a Delaunay surface D with axis being a bounded distance from the x_1 -axis and which arises from a limit of translates of M_∞ . It is now clear how to choose the desired points described in the assertion, which again we denote by p_n , so that the translated surfaces $M - p_n$ converge to the desired Delaunay surface F . This completes the proof of the assertion. \square

As a reference for the discussion which follows, we refer the reader to Figure 3. By Assertion 4.3, we may assume that around each point p_n , the surface M_1 is closely approximated by a translation of a fixed large compact region of F . Let Γ_n be the largest compact extension of γ_n so that $\Gamma_n - \gamma_n \subset \Delta_1$ and let $\widehat{\Gamma}_n$ be a line segment extension of Γ_n near the end point of Γ_n with positive x_2 -coordinate so that $\widehat{\Gamma}_n \cap \Delta_1 = \Gamma_n \cap \Delta_1$ and so that the length of $\widehat{\Gamma}_n - \Gamma_n$ is less than $\frac{1}{n}$. Let q_n denote the end point of $\widetilde{\Gamma}_n$ which is different from the point p_n . Without loss of generality, we may assume that the line segments $a(n)$ in P joining q_n, q_{n+1} are transverse to $\partial\Delta_1$ and intersect Δ_1 in a finite collection of compact intervals. Note that if we denote by $v(n)$ the upward pointing unit vector perpendicular to $a(n)$, then $v(n)$ converges to $(0, 1, 0)$ as n goes to infinity.

Now fix some large n and consider the compact region $T(n) \subset P$ bounded by the line segments $\widehat{\Gamma}_n, \widehat{\Gamma}_{n+1}, a(n)$ and the line segment joining $(x_1(n), 0, 0)$ to $(x_1(n+1), 0, 0)$. Consider $T(n)$ to lie in \mathbb{R}^2 and let $T(n) \times \mathbb{R} \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be the related convex domain in \mathbb{R}^3 . Let $M_1(n)$ be the component of $M_1 \cap (T(n) \times \mathbb{R})$ which contains the point p_n . Note that $M_1(n)$ is compact with boundary consisting of an almost circle $C(\Gamma_n)$ which is a bigraph over an arc on Γ_n , possibly also an almost circle $C(\Gamma_{n+1})$ which is a bigraph over an interval on Γ_{n+1} and a collection of bigraph components over a collection of intervals I_n in the line segment $a(n)$.

We denote by $\alpha(n)$ the collection of boundary curves of $M_1(n)$. Let $\alpha_2(n)$ be the subcollection of curves in $\alpha(n)$ which intersect either Γ_n or Γ_{n+1} , that is $\alpha_2(n) = \{C(\Gamma_n), C(\Gamma_{n+1})\}$. Clearly, the collection of boundary curves of $M_1(n)$ which are bigraphs over the collection of intervals $I_n = \Delta_1 \cap a(n)$ is $\alpha(n) - \alpha_2(n)$. Let $\alpha_3(n)$ be the subcollection of curves in $\alpha(n) - \alpha_2(n)$ which bound a compact domain $\Delta(\alpha) \subset M_1 - \partial M_1$, and let $\alpha_4(n) = \alpha(n) - (\alpha_2(n) \cup \alpha_3(n))$.

Assertion 4.4 *For n sufficiently large, every boundary curve ∂ of $M_1(n)$ which is a graph over an interval in I_n , bounds a compact domain $\Delta(\partial) \subset M_1 - \partial M_1$; in other words, $\alpha_4(n)$ is empty.*

Proof. For any $\alpha \in \alpha(n)$ let η_α denote the outward pointing conormal to $\alpha \subset \partial M_1(n)$ and let $D(\alpha)$ be the planar disk bounded by α . Consider a boundary component $\partial \in \alpha_4(n)$. By the ‘‘blowing a bubble’’ argument presented in [12], there exists another disk $\widehat{D}(\partial)$ on the mean convex side of M_1 of the same constant mean curvature as M_1 , $\partial\widehat{D}(\partial) = \partial D(\partial)$. Moreover, $\widehat{D}(\partial)$ is a graph over $D(\partial)$ and $\widehat{D}(\partial) \cap (T(n) \times \mathbb{R}) = \partial\widehat{D}(\partial) = \partial$. Let $\widehat{\eta}_\partial$ denote the inward pointing conormal to $\partial\widehat{D}(\partial)$. The disk $\widehat{D}(\partial)$ is constructed so that $\langle \eta_\partial - \widehat{\eta}_\partial, v(n) \rangle \geq 0$. See Figure 4.

The piecewise smooth surface $M_1(n) \cup (\bigcup_{\alpha \in \alpha_2(n) \cup \alpha_3(n)} D(\alpha)) \cup (\bigcup_{\alpha \in \alpha_4(n)} \widehat{D}(\alpha))$ is the boundary of a compact region $W(n) \subset (T(n) \times \mathbb{R})$. An application of the divergence theorem given in [13] to the vector field $v(n)$ considered to be a constant vector field in \mathbb{R}^3 in the region $W(n)$ gives rise to the following equation:

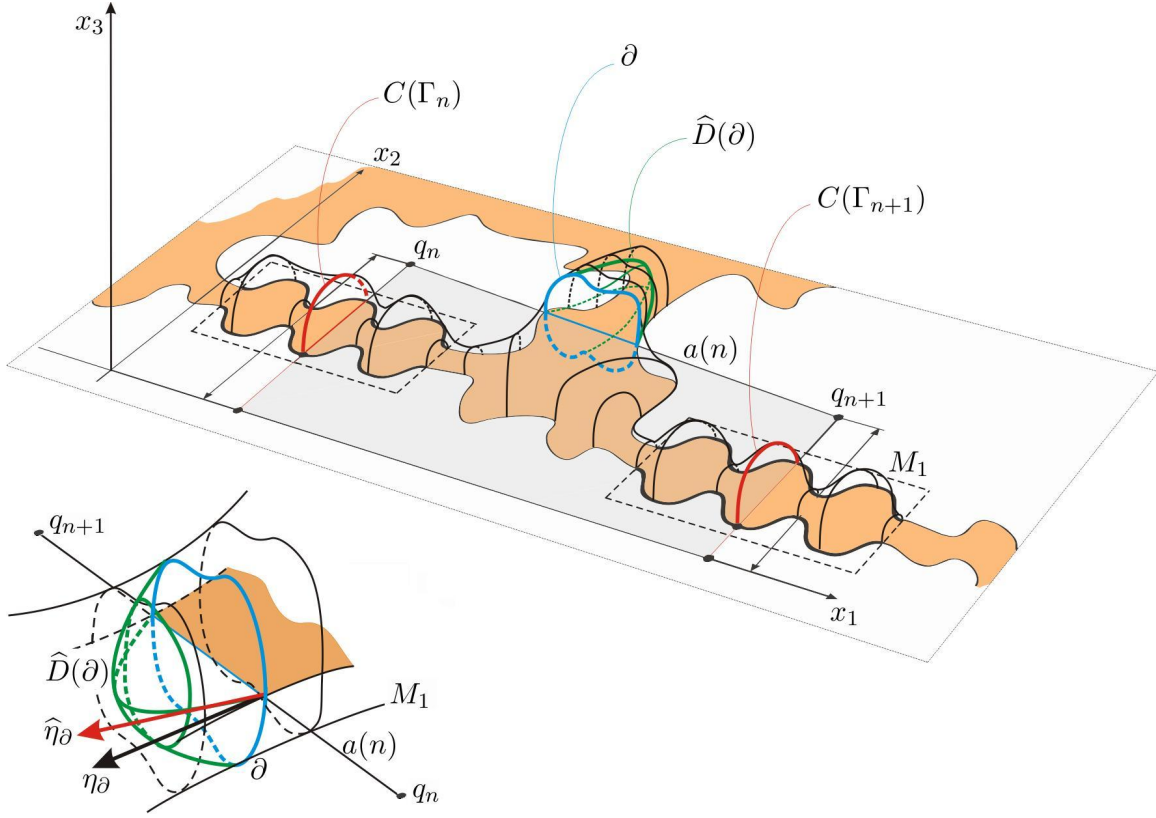


Figure 4: Blowing a bubble $\widehat{D}(\partial)$ on the mean convex side of M_1 .

$$\sum_{\alpha \in \alpha_2(n) \cup \alpha_3(n)} \left[\int_{\alpha} \langle \eta_{\alpha}, v(n) \rangle - 2H \int_{D(\alpha)} \langle v(n), N(n) \rangle \right] + \sum_{\partial \in \alpha_4(n)} \left[\int_{\partial} \langle \eta_{\partial}, v(n) \rangle - 2H \int_{\widehat{D}(\partial)} \langle v(n), N(n) \rangle \right] = 0, \quad (6)$$

where H is the mean curvature of M and $N(n)$ is the outward pointing conormal to $W(n)$. Note that $\sum_{\alpha \in \alpha_2(n)} \left[\int_{\alpha} \langle \eta_{\alpha}, v \rangle - 2H \int_{D(\alpha)} \langle v(n), N \rangle \right] = \varepsilon(n)$ converges to zero as $n \rightarrow \infty$ because $v(n)$ converges to $(0, 1, 0)$ and the curves $C(\Gamma_n), C(\Gamma_{n+1})$ converge to curves on Delaunay surfaces whose axes are perpendicular to $(0, 1, 0)$. Also note that this application of the divergence theorem in [13] implies that for $\alpha \in \alpha_3(n)$, $\int_{\alpha} \langle \eta_{\alpha}, v(n) \rangle - 2H \int_{D(\alpha)} \langle v(n), N(n) \rangle = 0$. Thus, equation (6) reduces to the equation:

$$\varepsilon(n) + \sum_{\partial \in \alpha_4(n)} \left[\int_{\partial} \langle \eta_{\partial}, v(n) \rangle - 2H \int_{\widehat{D}(\partial)} \langle v(n), N(n) \rangle \right] = 0. \quad (7)$$

On the other hand, for each $\partial \in \alpha_4(n)$

$$\int_{\partial} \langle \eta_{\partial}, v(n) \rangle - 2H \int_{\widehat{D}(\partial)} \langle v(n), N(n) \rangle = \int_{\partial} \langle \eta_{\partial} - \widehat{\eta}_{\partial}, v(n) \rangle \geq 0 \quad (8)$$

and the length of each $\partial \in \alpha_4$ is uniformly bounded from below. Since $\varepsilon(n)$ is going to zero as n goes to infinity, equations (7) and (8) above imply that for n large, the conormals η_{∂} and $\widehat{\eta}_{\partial}$ are approaching each other uniformly (see Figure 4). Note that the intrinsic distance of any point on the graphs $\widehat{D}(\partial)$ to ∂ is uniformly bounded (independent of ∂ and n)⁶. The Harnack inequality, the above remark, the facts that $\widehat{D}(\partial)$ is simply-connected and the second fundamental form of M is bounded, imply that there exists $\delta > 0$ such that if $\int_{\partial} \langle \eta_{\partial} - \widehat{\eta}_{\partial}, v(n) \rangle < \delta$, then there is a disk $\Delta(\partial) \subset M_1 - M_1(n)$ which can be expressed as a small graph over $\widehat{D}(\partial)$. The existence of $\Delta(\partial)$ contradicts that $\partial \in \alpha_4(n)$, which means $\alpha_4(n) = \emptyset$ for n sufficiently large. This contradiction proves the assertion. \square

We now apply Assertion 4.4 to prove the following key partial result in the proof of Theorem 4.1.

Assertion 4.5 *M_1 has at least one annular end.*

Proof. By Assertion 4.4, for some fixed n chosen sufficiently large, every boundary curve α of $M(n)$ in the collection $\alpha(n) - \alpha_2(n)$ bounds a compact domain $\Delta(\alpha) \subset M_1 - \partial M_1$. By the Alexandrov reflection principle and height estimates for *CMC* graphs, we find that the surface $\widehat{M}(n) = M(n) \cup \bigcup_{\alpha \in \alpha(n) - \alpha_2(n)} \Delta(\alpha)$ must have two almost circles in its boundary arising from $\alpha_2(n)$ and that as $k \rightarrow \infty$, there is a fixed half-cylinder $C(n) \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ that contains $\widehat{M}(n) = \bigcup_{n \in \mathbb{N}} \widehat{M}(n) \subset M$. It then follows by the main result in [13] that $\widehat{M}(n)$ is asymptotic to a Delaunay surface, which proves the assertion. \square

It follows from the discussion at the beginning of the proof of Theorem 4.1 and Assertion 4.5 that if M has at least n ends, $n > 1$, then it has at least $n - 1$ annular ends. It remains to prove that if M_1, M_2 are given as in the beginning of the proof of Theorem 4.1 with M_1 having an annular end, then M_2 has an annular end as well. To see this note that the annular end $E_1 \subset M_1$ is asymptotic to a Delaunay surface F and so after a rotation of M , M_1 is a graph over a domain Δ_1 which contains the limiting axis of F , which we can assume to be the positive x_1 -axis. Now translate M_2 in the direction $(-1, 0, 0)$ so that its compact boundary has negative x_1 -coordinates less than $-\frac{2}{H}$, where H is the mean curvature of M ; call the translated surface M'_2 and let $\Delta'_2 \subset P$ be the domain over which M'_2 is a bigraph. If for some $n \in \mathbb{N}$ the line $L_n = \{(n, t, 0) \mid t \in \mathbb{R}\}$ is disjoint from M'_2 , then M'_2 is contained in a halfplane of P and our previous arguments imply M'_2 has an annular end. Thus without loss of generality, we may assume that every line L_n intersects $\partial \Delta'_2$ a first time at some point s_n with positive x_2 -coordinate.

For $\theta \in (0, \frac{\pi}{2}]$, let $r(\theta)$ be the ray with base point the origin and angle θ and let $W(\theta)$ be the closed convex wedge of P bounded by $r(\theta)$ and the positive x_1 -axis. Let θ_0 be the

⁶This uniform intrinsic distance estimate holds since *CMC* graphs are strongly stable (existence of a positive Jacobi function) and there are no strongly stable, complete *CMC* surfaces in \mathbb{R}^3 ; see [19] for a proof of this well known result.

infimum of the set of $\theta \in (0, \frac{\pi}{2}]$ such that $W(\theta) \cap \{s_n\}_{n \in \mathbb{N}}$ is an infinite set. Because of our previous placement of $\partial M'_2$, a simple application of the Alexandrov reflection principle and height estimates for *CMC* graphs with zero boundary values implies that some further translate M''_2 of M'_2 in the direction $(-1, 0, 0)$ must be disjoint from $r(\theta_0)$. Finally, after a clockwise rotation \widehat{M}_2 of M''_2 by angle θ_0 , our previous arguments produce an annular end of \widehat{M}_2 of bounded distance from the positive x_1 -axis. Thus, we conclude that M_2 also has an annular end which completes the proof of the first statement in Theorem 4.1.

We next prove the second statement of the theorem. Suppose $M \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ is a complete, properly embedded *CMC* surface with bounded second fundamental form and with the (x_1, x_2) -plane P as a plane of Alexandrov symmetry. Suppose M contains two noncompact components M_1, M_2 and we will prove that each of these surfaces is a Delaunay surface.

Consider M_1 and M_2 to be two disjoint end representatives of M defined as bigraphs over two disjoint connected domains Δ_1, Δ_2 in P , respectively. By previous argument, one of these domains, say Δ_1 , lies in a halfplane in P which we may assume is $\{x_2 \geq 0\}$. Also, previous arguments imply that after a rigid motion of M , we can further assume that M_1 contains an annular end E^+ with the property that for $n \in \mathbb{N}$ sufficiently large, the line segments $\{(n, t, 0) \mid t > 0\}$ intersect Δ_1 for a first time in a point $p_n \in E_1$. Furthermore, E^+ is asymptotic to the end D^+ of a Delaunay surface. Also we can assume that the half axis of revolution of D^+ lies in P and is a bounded distance from the positive x_1 -axis.

In the discussion which follows, we refer the reader to Figure 5. By the Alexandrov reflection principle and the fact that M_1 cannot be a graph, Δ_1 must not be contained in a convex wedge of P with angle less than π . Therefore, for $n \in \mathbb{N}$ sufficiently large the line segments $\{(-n, t, 0) \mid t > 0\}$ intersect a second annular end Δ_1 in points $p_{-n} \in E^-$ for a first time. In this case the annular end E^- is asymptotic to the end D^- of another Delaunay surface and the half axis of D^- in P is a bounded distance from the negative x_1 -axis.

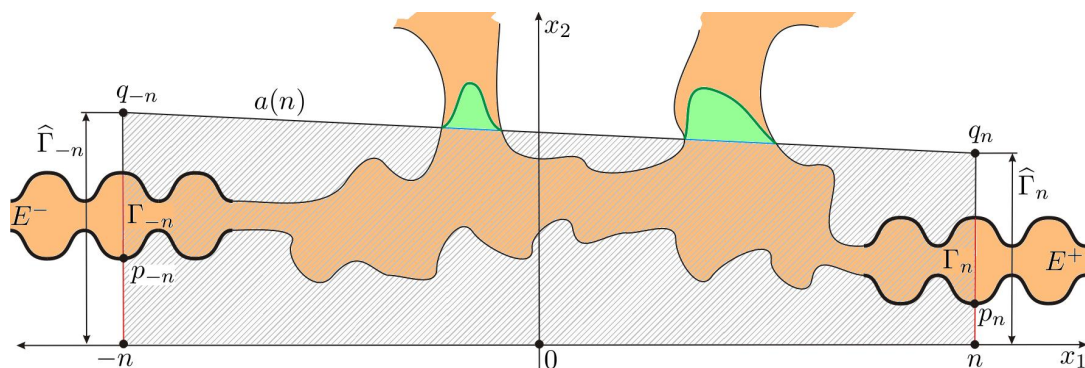


Figure 5: A picture of M_1 with two bubbles blown on its mean convex side.

Similar to our previous arguments, we define for each $n \in \mathbb{Z}$ with $|n|$ sufficiently large, curves $\gamma_n, \Gamma_n, \widehat{\Gamma}_n$ and points q_n as we did before (see Figures 3 and 5). For each $n \in \mathbb{N}$ sufficiently large, we define the line segment $a(n) \subset P$ whose end points are the points q_{-n}, q_n . Now define for any sufficiently large n , the compact region $T(n) \subset P$ bounded

by the line segments $\widehat{\Gamma}_{-n}$, $\widehat{\Gamma}_n$, $a(n)$ and the line segment joining $(-n, 0, 0)$ to $(n, 0, 0)$ and let $T(n) \times \mathbb{R} \subset \mathbb{R}^3$ be the related convex domain in \mathbb{R}^3 . Let $M_1(n)$ be the component of $M_1 \cap (T(n) \times \mathbb{R})$ which contains the point p_{-n} . Note that $M_1(n)$ is compact with boundary consisting of an almost circle $C(\Gamma_{-n})$ which is a bigraph over an arc on Γ_{-n} , possibly also an almost circle $C(\Gamma_n)$ which is a bigraph over an arc on Γ_n and a collection of bigraph components over a collection of intervals I_n in the line segment $a(n)$.

As in previous arguments, an assertion similar to Assertion 4.4 holds in the new setting. With this slightly modified assertion, one finds that the almost circles $C(\Gamma_{-n})$ and $C(\Gamma_n)$ bound a compact domain $\widehat{M}_1(n) \subset M_1$. A slight modification of the proof of Assertion 4.5 implies M_1 is cylindrically bounded and so, by a theorem in [13], M_1 is a Delaunay surface. Note that the axis of M_1 is an infinite line in Δ_1 and so Δ_2 also lies in a halfplane of P . The arguments above prove that M_2 is also a Delaunay surface, which completes the proof of the theorem. \square

Remark 4.6 For every integer $n > 1$, there exists a surface M_n with empty boundary and n ends which satisfies the hypotheses of the surface M in the statement of Theorem 4.1 except for the bounded second fundamental form hypothesis but M has no annular ends. Hence, the hypothesis in the theorem that M have bounded second fundamental form is a necessary one in order for the conclusion of the theorem to hold.

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