

216 Central Avenue

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To: Orbach, Matthew (morbach@ci.capitola.ca.us) <morbach@ci.capitola.ca.us>

Hi Matt,

Sorry to take so long to respond. I spent some time going over the report from PAST Consultants and was impressed by its thoroughness. I have only a few comments.

Chiefly, even though proposed changes to 216 Central Avenue have been found by PAST Consultants to meet the Secretary of Interior's Standards, I remain concerned whether or not the proposed two-story addition has been brought into scale with the small original house. The bulk of the rear portion with the flattened hipped roof appears too large.

Further, the intersection of Escalona and Central is an entryway into the potential Depot Hill historic district that architectural consultant Franklin Maggi identified twenty years ago. The Germania Verein neighborhood of Depot Hill grew steadily once subdivided by Capitola's owner, Frederick Hihn, in 1884. Many of the first homes on the hill were built by successful German immigrants who had been friends or business associates of the Hihn family. This today is the only surviving residential neighborhood from the founding era of Camp Capitola that can tell the story of how and why the resort was founded. The City recognizes the feasibility of a Depot Hill district and is carefully evaluating the proposed changes to original structures. Historic buildings leading into the district therefore have a focused role in introducing characteristics of the entire neighborhood. And, even though the 112 Central Avenue house was moved to 216 Central Avenue, it remains within the original envelope of the Germania Verein summer community. The estimated year of construction, 1891, identifies the vernacular house as one of the earliest. It is historic.

Real estate and tourism websites, magazine articles, and newspapers commonly depict Capitola as a "beach town with a distinctly European feel." Variations often include the words "quaint," "timeless," and "eclectic." It's clear Depot Hill's historic appearance contributes to the City's sense of place. Since out-of-scale alterations to houses leading into the district are liable to diminish community character, I'm uneasy about the impact of this project.