

P A S T
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July 26, 2023

Sean Sesanto, Associate Planner
City of Capitola Planning Department
420 Capitola Ave.
Capitola, CA 95010

Re: 1500 Wharf Rd., Unit #7, Capitola, CA – SOI Standards Design Review Letter
APN. 035-194-05

Dear Mr. Sesanto:

PAST Consultants, LLC (PAST) respectfully submits our Secretary of the Interior’s Standards Compliance Review of the property located at 1500 Wharf Road, Unit #7, Capitola, California. The subject property is part of the Venetian Court Condominium complex (circa-1925), also known as the Venetian Court Apartments and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1987. The subject unit sustained wave damage during the significant 2023 California winter storm event.

Existing Site Conditions

On June 13, 2023 PAST Consultants, LLC (PAST) visited the subject property to view the existing conditions of the building. Unit #7 resides in the earliest part of the apartment complex facing the beach. The complex is constructed in the Spanish Revival style (**Figures 1 – 4**).



Figures 1 and 2. Two images of the front (south) elevation, as viewed from the beach.

The single-story apartment is part of a multi-unit apartment building that has a stepped front elevation, angled to take advantage of views to the ocean. The apartment has a flat roof with a parapet, clay-barrel tiles over the parapet, replaced windows and front door and troweled stucco wall cladding. The 2023 storm damage has destroyed the south (front) elevation wall and windows. The rear elevation faces an alley that services additional units to the east (**Figures 3 and 4**).



Figures 3 and 4. Two images of the rear (north) elevation, as viewed from the alley. The horizontal window (arrow) is not original to the building.

Sanborn Map Analysis

The 1933 Sanborn map shows the subject property (**Figure 5**).

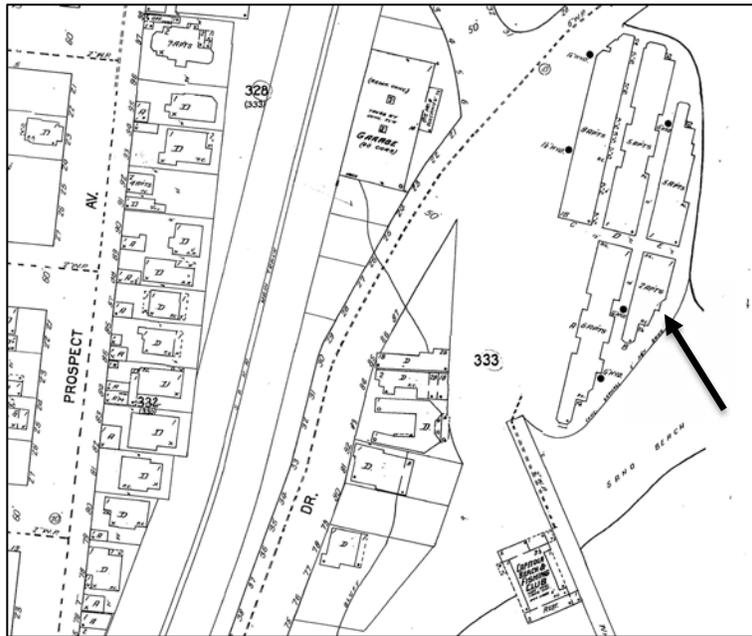
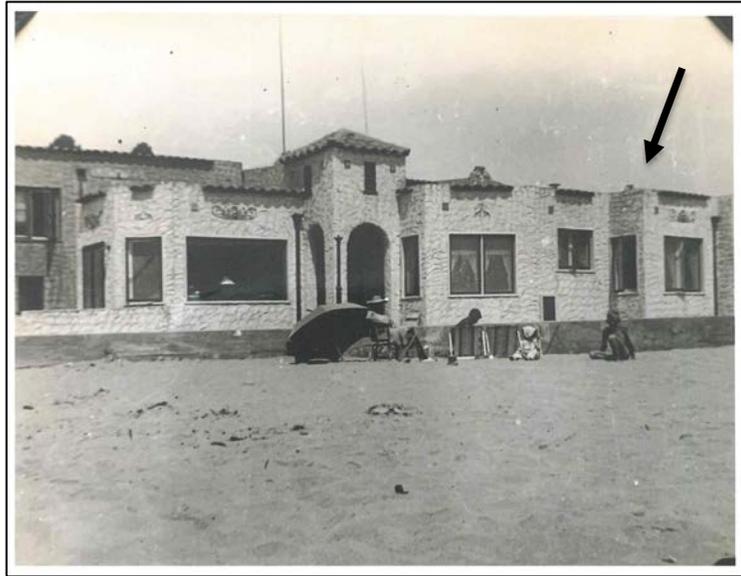


Figure 5. Image of the 1933 Sanborn map, showing the subject property with an arrow.

The complex was designed by the San Jose architectural firm of Wolfe and Higgins and is their only known Santa Cruz County project. The subject unit is contained in the first structure to be completed (1925) on the site. Originally, the building contained two units, which have been subdivided. The present unit is a 400-sf, studio apartment. Original fenestration consisted of wood-framed, multi-light casement windows and French doors. All windows on the building have been replaced. The window openings on the south elevation were altered previously (**Figures 6 and 7**).¹



Figures 6 and 7. Top image is a circa-1950s image of the subject unit. Bottom image is taken from the 1987 National Register Registration Form. Note the conversion of a window to a front (south) elevation door and enlargement of window openings in the subject unit (*Courtesy: City of Capitola Planning Department*).

¹ See Charles Rowe, *Venetian Court Apartments, National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (listed, 4/2/1987), for a complete inventory and developmental history.

Construction Chronology

Based on the Sanborn maps, Assessor records and historic images from the obtained from the City of Capitola Planning Department, the following is the estimated building chronology:

- Circa-1925. Construct original multi-apartment building in the Spanish Revival style.
- Circa-1950s. Subdivide original apartment into two apartments. Modify original window openings; install new entrance door on south elevation.
- Circa-1980s. Install horizontal window on rear elevation. Replace window sash at a later date.

Remaining Character Defining Features

The remaining character-defining features are:

- Flat roof with parapet.
- Decorative clay-barrel roof tiles over on rear parapet of both elevations.
- Heavily textured stucco wall cladding.
- Decorative cement plaster relief details on roof parapet.

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards

Two publications provide both the standards and guidelines for analyzing new additions to historic buildings for conformance with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*:

- *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*: Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995, 1998, 2017; and
- *Preservation Brief 14, New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns*: Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, August 2010.

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties (Standards)* provides the framework for evaluating the impacts of additions and alterations to historic buildings. The *Standards* describe four treatment approaches: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction. The *Standards* require that the treatment approach be determined first, as a different set of standards apply to each approach. For the proposed project, the treatment approach is rehabilitation. The *Standards* describe rehabilitation as:

In *Rehabilitation*, historic building materials and character-defining features are protected and maintained as they are in the treatment Preservation; however, an assumption is made prior to work that existing historic fabric has become damaged or deteriorated over time and,

as a result, more repair and replacement will be required. Thus, latitude is given in the Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation to replace extensively deteriorated, damaged, or missing features using either traditional or substitute materials. Of the four treatments, only Rehabilitation includes an opportunity to make possible an efficient contemporary use through alterations and additions.²

The ten *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 shall 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.

² *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*: Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1995, 62.

Proposed Project

The apartment complex has been subject to numerous storm events throughout its history. The subject building located immediately on the beach has been particularly hard hit over the years. The first major flood event, which struck the city in 1926, damaged the foundations of the subject building.³ The proposed project design offers design solutions to mitigate future flood damage.

The proposed project is presented in drawings by Roy Horn Design and dated 5/1/2023 and revised 6/21/2023. The proposed design includes:

- Reconstruct the failed south elevation wall by modifying the wall's angle and connecting it to the projecting wall containing the entrance. This change will remove the right angle between the existing walls, which is where storm water flow has been directed in the past.
- Install new and smaller horizontal window, new overhang and trash/recycling compartment on rear (north) elevation.
- Retain and repair existing character defining features of the building.

Evaluation of Proposed Alterations

For the proposed alterations to the subject building, the following lists the ten *Standards* for rehabilitation, with an evaluation given below each standard.

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.*

The proposed building alterations will allow the property to retain its residential building use, in keeping with this *Standard*.

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.*

While the proposed south-elevation building wall modification changes the original angle of the building wall, the proposed change will protect the historic resource by preventing water from collecting at the building and causing further damage. The proposed building wall modification uses the same angle as the adjacent Unit's building wall and will be finished in a stucco pattern that matches the original in texture and application method.

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.*

The proposed rehabilitation design does not add conjectural features or elements from other historic properties that would confuse the remaining character-defining features of the historic house, in keeping with this *Standard*.

³ Charles Row, *National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Venetian Court Apartments*, 1987.

4. *Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.*

This *Standard* does not apply as no changes have acquired historic significance.

5. *Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.*

The proposed rehabilitation design will repair and rehabilitate the distinctive stucco and decorative plaster finishes on the Unit, in keeping with this *Standard*.

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.*

Deteriorated historic stucco and decorative finishes will be repaired using established restoration techniques that will prioritize repair over replacement according to the *Standards*.

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.*

Physical treatments to repair the existing stucco and decorative features will be minimal and not damage the respective substrates, according to this *Standard*.

8. *Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.*

This *Standard* does not apply, as archaeological features are not identified on the site, based on an archaeological consultant's report under separate contract.

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 shall 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.*

South (Primary) Elevation

The proposed modification to the south elevation wall will minimize further storm damage to the historic Venetian Apartment complex by routing storm water flow along the building, rather than funneling the water directly into Unit #7, which has occurred during past storm events. This wall modification does not modify any spatial relationships between the existing condominium units. Window modifications proposed for the south elevation are acceptable, as the fenestration pattern of this Unit has been modified previously. Differentiation is not the priority in this case, as the building is a collection of individual condominiums finished with a stucco pattern and decorative cement plaster details that unify the entire building composition.

North (Rear) Elevation

The proposed window replacement on the rear elevation alters a window opening that has been modified previously. Alterations to previously modified building elevations is acceptable according to the *Standards*. The proposed roof overhang is in keeping with the building's Spanish Revival design and is at the rear of the Unit, where alterations are encouraged by the *Standards*.

The proposed alterations meet this *Standard*.

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.*

The proposed alteration to the front (south) elevation are not reversible; however, historic images of the Venetian Court Apartments reveals that the individual units have been modified at various locations throughout the complex's history. The proposed front elevation modifications will protect the historic resource and its environment.

The proposed roof overhang on the rear elevation is reversible and if it was removed, all aspects of historic integrity will remain on the site, in keeping with this *Standard*.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed design alterations to Unit #7 in the Venetian Court Apartment complex meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. The proposed design does not impact the remaining character-defining features or overall historic integrity of the subject property. Because the proposed alterations to the building meet the *Standards*, the alterations are considered as mitigated to a level of less than a significant impact on the historic resource and do not constitute a substantial adverse change to the historic resource, thus conforming to the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Please contact me with any questions regarding this design review letter.

Sincerely,



Seth A. Bergstein
Principal