

APR 03 2023

Planning & Building Services

To: The Mendocino Historical Review Board

From: Andrea Shepard, 44901 Pine Street, Mendocino

Date: March 25, 2023

Re: MHRB 2022-0014 (Trimble)

Summary:

I understand that the above-referenced project is currently under review by the Mendocino Historical Review Board. I have looked over the filing and, as a resident of the immediate neighborhood of this project, I am suggesting that the MHRB might want to:

- Require that story poles be installed to indicate the footprints and heights of the proposed residence and various sheds to assist the community's and Board's assessment of the visual impact of the proposed residence;
- Require that the proposed viewing platform be eliminated as inconsistent with the character of the neighborhood and the overall historic district;
- Consider whether the protruding, polygonal structure on the southeast corner of the proposed structure is consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood;
- Consider whether the large round window on the Ukiah-facing elevation is consistent with the historic character of the neighborhood; and
- Consider whether potential code violations in the placement and housing of utilities should be addressed.

Background:

Thank you for carefully considering whether the design of the proposed residence at the corner of School and Ukiah Streets is consistent with the historic district as a whole and with the immediate neighborhood. I appreciate the opportunity to express my concerns about the proposed residence.

As you are aware, the part of the historic district in which this residence would be constructed has many visitors to the restaurants, and to historic Nicholson House and Blue Door Inn. The only two-story structure on the north side of Ukiah Street in the block where the proposed residence would be constructed is on the corner of Ukiah and Howard: the "Bowman" house built circa 1878 and is now a private residence. On the south side, the building that is now the

Blue Door Inn was constructed circa 1882 by the doctor of Mendocino, Andrew McCornack. Nicholson House, also on the south side of Ukiah was constructed circa 1891 and has recently been totally restored in a manner consistent with the original structure. All three of these structures appear to have largely retained their original architecture.

The proposed new residence is a two-story building with various decks and sheds, on a small lot on the northwest corner of the intersection. The proposed residence is, as I understand it, at the maximum height limit established by the current code of regulations for the historic district, but necessarily has a small footprint that seems disproportionate to its height. Given the southward slope of land, I understand that there is some question about whether the proposed residence would, in fact, be substantially narrower but taller than Nicholson House directly across Ukiah Steet. Whether or not that is the case, I am concerned that this new structure will have a major impact on the historic character of the immediate neighborhood, substantively changing the intersection of School and Ukiah. Additionally, the proposed project's south elevation, facing Ukiah Street, illustrates that the upper gable end siding would be placed vertically, in contracts to the horizontal siding of the residence. This will further accentuate the height of the structure. As a layperson, it is difficult for me to assess the impact of the proposed residence from the plans alone. I therefore suggest that it would be appropriate for the Board to require installation of story poles that demarcate the footprints and the heights of the proposed residence and of the various, proposed sheds.

Aside from the overall height and footprint, I find the proposed view platform, with an external, spiral staircase, to be out of character for the neighborhood and the larger historic district as a whole. I understand that members of the Board shared this concern and I trust the revised plan will not include this platform.

The proposed residence also includes a protruding, polygonal structure on the southeast corner of the residence that will be clearly visible to anyone walking on Ukiah Street. The prominence of this polygonal space, and the incongruous roof systems that intersect it, substantially contribute to the impact of this proposed structure on the neighborhood. I encourage the Board to require that this space be redesigned to be more consistent with the historic character of the town and surrounding structures.

In addition to the many divided light windows, the proposed design includes a prominent, round window facing Ukiah Street which is also not characteristic of buildings in the historic district. There is a round window on an addition to the original building of what is now the Blue Door Inn, but replicating something that might not be optimal, does not seem necessary. It seems that altering the window design to be more in keeping with the neighborhood and the historic town would not be difficult.

There may be some concerns with respect to the various utilities and sheds proposed for the residence that the Board should consider. Based only on my experience working on my house directly north of the proposed residence, I wonder whether:

- The proposed fencing around the water tanks will be high enough to shield the plastic tanks from street view as encouraged throughout the historic district;
- The generator is the code-required distance from combustible, wooden structures;
- The generator and the propane tank are the code-required distances from each other and the residence; and
- The propane tank is the code-required distance from the north property line.

Finally, I understand that there was a suggestion at the March 6, 2023, MHRB meeting that my concerns were motivated by a desire to protect my sight lines. I would like to be clear that I am less concerned about what I would no longer see than I am about the structure I would see instead. Even more importantly, is how this proposed residence would impact the experience of the many visitors to this vibrant neighborhood. I routinely walk my dogs along Ukiah and School Streets and seeing so many people, locals and visitors, drawn to this very special part of the historic district is one of the great delights of living here and indicates the importance of this neighborhood to town's overall appeal.

