AGENDA

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION REGULAR MEETING

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13, 2026, 6:00 PM

OJAI CITY HALL, COUNCIL CHAMBERS, 401 S VENTURA ST, OJAI, CA

VIEWING & ACCESS

Public participation is encouraged! The meetings are conducted in a hybrid model, providing both in-person attendance and virtual public comment via the Zoom link below. Virtual attendance via Zoom is the only way to remotely provide public comment. Pre-registration is not required for public comment via Zoom. Instead, Zoom participants will utilize the "hand-raise" function to indicate their desire to speak on an item. The meeting is also livestreamed on the City's website at ojai.ca.gov/525/2968/Public-Meetings, on YouTube at youtube.com/@ojaicity, and on Spectrum Channel 10. See "Public Comment Options" below for further instruction.

ZOOM LINK - August 13, 2026 - Regular Meeting

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS
Public Communications is the time set aside during the meeting for members of the public to address the legislative body on items of City business other than scheduled agenda items. Matters raised at this time may be briefly discussed by members of the legislative body and will generally be referred to staff and/or placed on a subsequent agenda. Under State law, other than for emergency items, no action can be taken.

MUSEUM REPRESENTATIVE REPORT

CONSENT CALENDAR
All matters listed on the Consent Calendar are to be considered routine by the legislative body and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed below. There will be no discussion of

these items unless, before the legislative body votes on the motion to adopt, specific items are removed from the Consent Calendar for discussion and separate motions.

1. **Minutes HPC regular meeting of July 9, 2026**
   RECOMMENDATION: Approve.
   Minutes, HPC, July 9, 2026

DISCUSSION ITEM(S)

2. **Provide Comments to the Planning Commission Regarding the Historic Resources Report Prepared Architectural Resources Group – Design Review Permit (DRP 25-011) Regarding a Proposed Change in Use From an Office Use to a Health Spa & Wellness Center Use, Zone Change from Public, Quasi-Public (P-L) to Village Mixed Use (VMU), and General Plan Land Use Amendment from Public/Quasi-Public (P) to Village Mixed Use (VMU); located at 107 North Ventura Street (Formerly: World University) – Assessor's Parcel No. 021-0-106-040 and currently residential use at 107 W. Matilija Street Assessor's Parcel No. 021-0-106-030. The existing General Plan Land Use Designation of the subject site is Public/Quasi-Public (P) and existing Zoning Classification of the subject site is Public, Quasi-Public (P-L). Property Owner: 107 Ventura LLC. Applicant/Representative: Jeremy McBride**
   RECOMMENDATION:
   That the Historic Preservation Commission review the Historic Resources Report and provide comments on the report and associated project which would then be forwarded to Planning Commission for review and consideration.
   Administrative Report
   Attachment A - Historic Resources Report
   Attachment B - Project Description
   Attachment C - Plans

3. **Annual 2026 Historic Preservation Award**
   RECOMMENDATION:
   1. Review and discuss biographies of nominees for 2026 Annual Historic Preservation Awards;
   2. Select nominees to receive awards; and
   3. Request staff to draft a resolution for the Commission to adopt, making a recommendation to the City Council to ratify the Commission's decision.

   Administrative Report
   Attachment A - Biographies

4. **Ventura & Ojai Valley Railroad Heritage Trail**
   RECOMMENDATION: Receive Ad Hoc Committee's report (Walker & Bisaccia).
   Administrative Report

5. **Historic Resource Inventory Survey Update**
   RECOMMENDATION: Receive and file report from Ad-hoc members.
   Administrative Report

6. **City Beautiful Award Discussion**
   RECOMMENDATION:
   1. Receive City Beautiful Award liaison's report; and
   2. Discuss and formulate next steps.

Administrative Report
Attachment A - Documents submitted by Commissioner Aikens

7. **Historic Preservation Commission Functions and Powers**
   RECOMMENDATION:
   1. Receive Commission liaison's report; and
   2. Discuss and formulate next steps.

   Administrative Report
   Attachment A - Chair McHatton draft changes

8. **Maintenance and Protections of City owned Landmarks**
   RECOMMENDATION: Each Commissioner may report monthly on the condition of the selected landmark.
   Administrative Report

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

9. **Education Update**
   RECOMMENDATION: Receive and file.
   Note - Education

10. **Future Agenda Items**
    RECOMMENDATION: Review.
    Future Agenda Items list

ADJOURNMENT
The next regular meeting of the Historic Preservation Commission is Thursday, September 10, 2026.

Posted August 7, 2026 at 9:00 a.m.
Shari Herbruck, Principal Planning and Building Technician
shari.herbruck@ojai.ca.gov

WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS
All written public comments will be published here for public access. Please see "Public Comment Options" below for detailed instructions on how to submit.

ACCOMMODATIONS

In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please call (805) 646-5581. Notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting.

If you feel that a language interpreter is necessary for you to participate in this meeting, notification 48 hours prior to the meeting will enable the City to make reasonable arrangements for an interpreter to assure your participation/understanding of this meeting.

Si considera que un intérprete de idiomas es necesario para participar en esta reunión, la

notificación 48 horas antes de la reunión le permitirá a la Ciudad hacer arreglos razonables para que un intérprete asegure su participación/comprensión de esta reunión del Concejo Municipal.

Para Español por favor llame al (805) 646-5581 ext. 100 o por correo electronico a cityclerk@ojai.ca.gov.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Agenda reports and other disclosable public records related to agenda items are available on the City's website at ojai.ca.gov/525/2968/Public-Meetings and at City Hall located at 401 S. Ventura Street, Ojai, California, during regular business hours, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT OPTIONS

Written Comments: In order for staff to provide written public comments timely to the legislative body, written/emailed public comments must be submitted no later than 3:00 p.m. on the day before the meeting.

You may always submit written comments to the City via mail, in person at City Hall, or via email to **the email address listed above (under Adjournment).** If your written comment is received by 3:00 p.m. on the day before the meeting date, your comments will be distributed to the legislative body and recorded on the City website. Written comments received after 3:00 p.m. may not be distributed or recorded on the City website until after the meeting.

Verbal Comments: Verbal Comments will be received on any item on the agenda at the time the agenda item is heard. Comments may be made in person at the meeting or through Zoom, via the link at the top of the Agenda. Pre-registration is not required for public comment via Zoom. Instead, Zoom participants will utilize the hand-raise function to indicate their desire to speak on an item.

IMPORTANT NOTES:
All materials related to an item on this agenda, including written public comments, will be available for public inspection in the City Clerk's Office at City Hall, and following the meeting, will be accessible on the City of Ojai's website at ojai.ca.gov.

As a government agency, the City of Ojai is subject to the California Public Records Act (Government Code § 6250 et seq.). Please be advised that all communications submitted to City officials and staff are subject to public disclosure under the California Public Records Act. There are limited exceptions that allow the City to redact personal information under the California Public Records Act. If you have concerns regarding privacy, please do not include your personal identifying information, such as your name, e-mail, phone number, and home address in your correspondence to the City, including, but not limited to, public comment.

If you challenge the actions of this Commission/Committee in court, you may be limited to raising only those issues you or someone else raised at the public hearing described in the public notices, or in written correspondence delivered to the Commission/Committee at, or prior to, the public hearing (California Government Code Section 65009).

Any legal action by an applicant seeking to obtain a judicial review of the Commission/Committee's decision on a Hearing listed on this Agenda may be subject to the 90-day filing period of and governed by Code of Civil Procedure Section 1094.6.

LEVINE ACT WARNING

Applicants and their agents before this Commission/Committee are subject to the campaign disclosure provisions detailed in Government Code Section 84308. No City Commissioner/Committee member may accept, solicit, or direct a contribution of more than $500 from any party or agent for 12 months subsequent to the date a final decision is rendered by the City. This prohibition commences when your application has been filed, or the proceeding is otherwise initiated.

A party to a City proceeding, which includes both applicants and agents, shall disclose on the record of the proceeding any contribution of more than $500 made to any Commissioner/Committee member by the applicant or agent, during the preceding 12 months. No party to a City proceeding, or agent, shall make a contribution to a Commissioner/Committee member during the proceeding and for 12 months following the date a final decision is rendered by the City.

Prior to rendering a decision on a City proceeding, any Commissioner/Committee member who received a contribution of more than $500 within the preceding 12 months from any party, or agent, to a proceeding shall disclose that fact on the record of the proceeding and shall be disqualified from participating in the proceeding. However, if any Commissioner/Committee member receives a contribution that otherwise would require disqualification and returns the contribution within 30 days of knowing about the contribution and the relevant proceeding, the Commissioner/Committee member shall be permitted to participate in the proceeding.

If you believe that these provisions apply to you or a Commissioner/Committee member, please inform the City Clerk at the earliest possible opportunity. Failure to do so may affect the City's ability to process your application.

CITY OF OJAI
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

****DRAFT** HPC MINUTES**
Regular Meeting
July 9, 2026

Call to Order

Chair McHatton called the *regular* meeting of the Ojai Historic Preservation Commission to order on Thursday, July 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in person and via teleconference.

Roll Call

On a call of the roll, the following Historic Preservation Commissioners were present in person: Chair McHatton, Vice Chair Sims, and Commissioners, Moore, Aikens, Walker, Bisaccia, and Niessen.
Absent: None
Staff present: The following were present in person: Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner and Cody Parker, Associate Attorney.

Pledge of Allegiance Chair McHatton led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Public Communication Chair McHatton opened public communication. There was none.

Museum Report Commissioner Aikens presented the report.

Consent Item(s)

1. Minutes of June 7, 2026, regular meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Walker moved and Vice Chair Sims seconded the motion to approve June 7, 2026, regular meeting minutes with an edit to remove a misleading sentence regarding CEQA.

AYES: Chair McHatton, Commissioner Niessen, Sims, and Moore
NOES: None
ABSENT: None
ABSTAIN: Bisaccia

The minutes were approved with the suggested edit.

Discussion Items

2. **Annual Historic Preservation Awards 2026**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

The Commission reviewed the criteria for the Historic Preservation Award.
Potential candidates were identified to be discussed further.
Commissioners were assigned the preparation of biographies for review at the next HPC meeting.

The report was received and filed.

3. **Maintenance and Protections of Historic Landmark No. 24 the Ojai Nordhoff Grammar School aka. Chaparral High School (former Ojai Unified School District Offices), located at 414 E. Ojai Avenue**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Commissioner Walker commented.

Commissioner Aikens asked Attorney Parker a question.
Attorney Parker answered.

The Commission discussed the maintenance, preservation and protections the City can engage in for Landmark No. 24 "Nordhoff Grammar School" located at 414 E. Ojai Avenue with Attorney Parker and Principal Macaluso.

The Commission discussed using MyOjai to make code compliance notifications with Principal Planner Macaluso.

Chair McHatton opened the item for public comment.

Former City Council Member Bill Weirick commented on the history of the landmarking of the building.

Chair McHatton asked former City Council Member Weirick a question.
Former City Council Member Weirick answered.

School District Trustee Kathy Smith commented about which parts of the property qualify as historic.

Member of the Public Allen Hoitmallo commented.

The Commission discussed the potential for rehabilitation or repurposing.

Chair McHatton invited School District Trustee Smith to the podium and asked a question.
Trustee Smith answered.

Vice Chair Sims commented.

The Commission discussed further and emphasized improved communication moving forward.

Commissioner Walker asked Attorney Parker a question.
Principal Planner Macaluso answered.

The Commission discussed and emphasized communication.

The report was received and filed.

4. **Maintenance and Protection of Historic Landmarks pursuant to Title 4 Chapter 8 (Historic Preservation Law) of the Ojai Municipal Code**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Chair McHatton brought up the idea of having Commissioners pick city owned "building buddies" that are landmarked to check up on once a month.

Commissioner Aikens stated that he approves of the idea.
Other Commissioners indicated agreement and approval.
Vice Chair Sims stated that she does not approve of the idea.

Chair McHatton asked Principal Macaluso a question.
Principal Planner Macaluso answered.

The Commission discussed.

Commissioner Moore stated that this discussion should be on the agenda each month as a reoccurring item.

The Commission chose "building buddies" to check up on monthly.

Commissioners Bisaccia and Walker chose the Arcade and the Sespe Stone Wall, Commissioner Aikens chose the Ojai Museum and the Ojai Jail, Commissioner Niessen and Chair McHatton chose the Libbey Courts, and Commissioner Moore chose the Smith Hobson.

The report was received and filed.

5. **City Beautiful Award Discussion – Edward Drummond Libbey**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

City Beautiful Award Liaison Commissioner Aikens presented the report.

Commissioners removed mentions of historic and history from the award description and recipient requirements to avoid confusion and competition with existing historic awards.

The Commission discussed.

Principal Planner Macaluso stated potential next steps to bring the award idea before the City Council.

The Commissioners indicated support for the item and the report was received and filed.

6. **Taormina Advisory Committee Discussion**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

The Commission discussed and determined that a committee does not seem necessary at this time.

The report was received and filed.

7. **Ventura & Ojai Valley Railroad Heritage Trail**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Commissioner Walker presented a design for the Nordhoff and Ojai Train Depot sign.

The Commission vocalized approval of the design.
The Commission discussed funding the signs and sponsorships.

The report was received and filed.

8. **Historic Resource Inventory Survey Update**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Commissioner Walker updated the Commission that HRG did a research trip to Ojai to inform the historical context statement section of the report. They are on track to deliver a Preliminary draft of context statement by the end of July.

The report was received and filed.

9. **Arcade Plaza Adhoc to Research the History**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Commissioner Walker presented the idea of the Adhoc.
Commissioner Walker, Niessen, and Aikens agreed to participate on the Adhoc.

Member of the Public Allan Hoitmallo commented about a missing piano.

The report was received and filed.

10. **Fast Track Process for Historic Landmarking for individual property owners interested in Landmarking and Mill's Act**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Chair McHatton asked Principal Planner Macaluso how to bring this to City Council.

Principal Macaluso stated that it should be discussed during Commissioner Comments at the City Council Meeting. Principal Planner Macaluso also stated that it should be put in writing, run past an attorney, and then be brought before City Council.

The Commission discussed the potential required changes to the existing code to help streamline contributing properties to a State Historic District to apply for the Mills Act and or Landmarking.

The report was received and filed.

11. **Pop-Ups for Historic Preservation Commission**

Principal Planner Macaluso presented the staff report.

Chair McHatton requested to move this item to a future meeting agenda in the interest of time.

The report was received and filed.

Informational Items

12. Education Updates

Chair McHatton presented the updates.

13. Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Aikens requested that a fire fighter come to the next meeting to discuss potential issues with the Arcade, such as historic building fire safety.

Chair McHatton asked attorney Parker if this presentation was permissible.
Attorney Parker said that it was.

Commissioner Aikens said he would reach out to the fire fighter and asked if he should reach out to the Ventura County Ghost Hunter.

The Commission indicated support.
Member of the Public Allan Hoitmallo stated that the spider infestation in the Ojai Valley should be on the future agenda.

City Council Liaison None was present.

Commissioner Comments There were none.

Adjournment

There being no further business at the meeting of the HPC, Chair McHatton adjourned the meeting at 9:24 p.m.

Prepared and submitted by:

Catalina Niessen
Catalina Niessen, HPC Secretary

Approved by:

_____
Gina McHatton, Historic Preservation Commission Chair

Administrative Report

DISCUSSION

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Provide Comments to the Planning Commission Regarding the Historic Resources Report Prepared Architectural Resources Group – Design Review Permit (DRP 25-011) Regarding a Proposed Change in Use From an Office Use to a Health Spa & Wellness Center Use, Zone Change from Public, Quasi-Public (P-L) to Village Mixed Use (VMU), and General Plan Land Use Amendment from Public/Quasi-Public (P) to Village Mixed Use (VMU); located at 107 North Ventura Street (Formerly: World University) – Assessor's Parcel No. 021-0-106-040 and currently residential use at 107 W. Matilija Street Assessor's Parcel No. 021-0-106-030. The existing General Plan Land Use Designation of the subject site is Public/Quasi-Public (P) and existing Zoning Classification of the subject site is Public, Quasi-Public (P-L). Property Owner: 107 Ventura LLC. Applicant/Representative: Jeremy McBride.

Recommendation

That the Historic Preservation Commission review the Historic Resources Report and provide comments on the report and associated project which would then be forwarded to Planning Commission for review and consideration.

SUMMARY

The Planning Commission voted at their August 5 meeting to send the historic resources report to the Historic Preservation Commission for comments, and for those comments to then be forwarded to the Planning Commission for further review and consideration at their August 19, 2026 regularly scheduled meeting. The Historic Preservation Commission is being asked to review the report prepared by Architectural Resources Group on the proposed project.

The action for the matter being referred to the Historic Preservation Commission is consistent with Section 4-8.05 subsection (o) of the Ojai Municipal Code which reads, "*Review proposed amendments, etc.* At the request of the Council or Planning Commission, review proposed zoning amendments, applications for permits, or applications for zoning variances that affect proposed or

designated landmarks and historic districts. Review and comment within 30-days of submission for the public record of any all historic resources reports prepared for any other development project requiring a design review permit, conditional use permit, development agreement, or other zoning code permit."

The proposed project is focused on the adaptive reuse and repurposing of the existing buildings located at 107 North Ventura Street. The intent is to give the building a new function while maintaining its historic character and significance. Initially, the project was brought before the Planning Commission in October 2024 for a concept review. No decisions were rendered during this meeting; instead, the Commission and the public provided feedback, which helped inform the direction of future planning. By April 2026, staff had confirmed that the zone change proposal for 107 North Ventura Street was proceeding in a manner consistent with the earlier concept review.

Concurrent with review and under the direction of the Community Development Department, Architectural Resources Group was commissioned to prepare a Historic Resources report for this project with three purposes, (1) whether the site is eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources as a local, state, and/or national landmark, (2) to evaluate the proposed projects impacts on the existing site and building, (3) fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act as it relates to historic resources.

The conclusion is that Architectural Resources Group found the project would not cause physical impairment to the subject site and would not result in any impacts to historic resources on the subject site. Furthermore, the site appears eligible for listing in the California Register of Historic Resources (State landmark) and as a City of Ojai Landmark (Local Landmark); due to the historic period occurring within the last 50-years.

DISCUSSION

Architectural Resources Group (ARG) prepared the Historic Resources Report (HRR) in 2025 and finalized the report recently. The report was prepared for the City of Ojai Community Development Department in connection with the proposed project to rehabilitate the former World University building at 107 North Ventura Street for use as a health spa and wellness center associated with Hotel El Roblar.

Built by Ojai First Baptist Church from 1949–1951 for offices and social use, the building later served as Ojai City Hall, Police Department, and Chamber of Commerce until the mid-1970s. In 1976, Dr. Benito F. Reyes and Dominga Reyes bought it to establish World University, a New Age, Theosophy, and liberal arts institution, operating from 1977 to 2017 before being shut down due to lack of accreditation. Hotel El Roblar's owners purchased the site in 2023–2024 with the intentions of transforming the site into a spa and wellness center.

The office building at the subject site appears eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and as a City of Ojai Landmark. Because its historic period of significance (1976-1992) occurs within the last 50 years, the building does not meet the age threshold for consideration on the National Register of Historic Places at this time. Since the building appears eligible under local and state registration programs, it meets the definition of a historical resource for the purposes of the California Environmental Quality Act.

ARG conducted an analysis of the Project and evaluated its potential to impact historical resources. ARG finds that the Project would not cause physical impairment to 107 N. Ventura Street in such a way that it would no longer be eligible for state or local designation. The building would retain all of its character-defining features and would continue to retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance following the completion of the Project. Furthermore, the building's proposed rehabilitation complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Thus, the proposed work would not result in any impacts to historical resources on the Project Site.

Because the proposed project does not involve the addition of square footage to the subject building, and exterior site improvements are limited to the replacement of a paved parking lot with landscaping and other items supporting the new use at the rear (to the west) of the subject building, which has minimal to no visibility from the public right-of-way, the scale and nature of the proposed improvements would not materially impair the Site's existing setting. Thus, the potential area of impact is limited to the subject site, and the proposed project would not result in any indirect impacts to historical resources in the vicinity of the Site. For this reason, further evaluation of indirect impacts is not included. The full report prepared by ARG is provided as Attachment A.

CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT

When a project is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the traditional, extensive environmental analysis—such as an Initial Study, Negative Declaration, or Environmental Impact Report — is not required. Instead, the analysis shifts to a highly focused preliminary review phase. The main goal of this analysis is to document that the project fits the criteria under the specific exemption(s).

The project is described to be Categorically Exempt from the provisions of CEQA in accordance with Section 15301 – Class 1 – (Existing Facilities) and Section 15303 – Class 3 – (New construction or conversion of small structures).

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use beyond that existing at the time of the lead agency's determination. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion of an existing use.

Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures, and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure(s). As described above, the project does not involve an expansion, but does include minor alternations to the site including the removal of onsite parking spaces and trash enclosure. However, a parking demand analysis performed by Associate Traffic Engineers (a traffic engineering firm) identified sufficient parking between the Hotel El Roblar and the subject site; both under the same ownership and control. Furthermore, the site does include a change in use from office to health/fitness facility. The change in use does not include

the expansion of any of the existing structures and the existing residential use onsite would remain unchanged.

Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 (Exceptions), a categorical exemption is not allowed if the project would have one of the following impacts: 1) cumulative impact; 2) significant effect; 3) impact to scenic highways; 4) hazardous impact due to project being located on any hazardous materials list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; and 5) impact on historical resources.

The proposed project has been reviewed under Section 15300.2 for any characteristics or circumstances that might invalidate findings that the project is exempt under Section 15301 (Class 1) and Section 15303 (Class 3). As substantiated and discussed in detail in the attached supplemental information (Attachment A) associated with historic resources, ARG prepared a historic resources report which identified the site as being eligible for local and state landmark status, and further identified the project would not cause physical impairment to 107 North Ventura Street in such a way that it would no longer be eligible for state or local designation.

The building would retain all of its character-defining features and would continue to retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance following the completion of the project. Furthermore, the proposed project would not have a significant impact, and exceptions under Section 15300.2 would not prohibit the use of an exemption(s) for this project. Therefore, no further environmental review is necessary.

Prepared and Submitted by: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director

Attachments:

A – ARG - Historic Resources Report
B – Project Description
C – Project Plans



107 N. Ventura Street
Ojai, California 93023

Historic Resources Report

Prepared for:

City of Ojai, Community Development Department

Prepared by:

Architectural Resources Group

April 2, 2025

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1. Executive Summary

1.1. Introduction

Architectural Resources Group (ARG) has prepared this Historic Resources Report (HRR) related to the proposed development project ("the Project") at 107 N. Ventura Street, in the City of Ojai. The Project Site comprises two adjacent rectangular parcels (APNs 021010604 and 021010603) at the southwest corner of N. Ventura and W. Matilija streets. The Site is developed with two buildings:

- A one-story institutional building located at 107 N. Ventura Street, which comprises the eastern parcel and a portion of the western parcel (completed 1951; formerly World University of America or World University, 1976-2017)
- A one-story single-family residence, which is located at the northwest corner of the western parcel (107 W. Matilija Street; built 1939)

The Project includes the rehabilitation of the former World University building for use as a hotel spa associated with the Hotel El Roblar property, which is located across Ventura Street from the Site, at 122 E. Ojai Avenue. It proposes the replacement of a paved area behind (to the west of) 107 N. Ventura Street with a landscaped courtyard, new interior finishes and fixtures, and minimal exterior changes to the subject building. See *Section 6.3*, for a more detailed description of the Project.

Because the Project is limited to the former World University building and its surrounding hardscape, and no work is being proposed on the residence (107 W. Matilija Street) on the Site, further evaluation of the residence is not included in this report.

The purpose of this report is to fulfill the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as they relate to historical resources. CEQA states that "a project that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an historical resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment."[1] An evaluation of potential impacts under CEQA includes both a determination of whether, and the extent to which, historical resources as defined by CEQA are present on and adjacent to the Site and, if so, the identification of potential impacts to historical resources caused by the Project.

In summary, the subject building at 107 N. Ventura Street appears eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources and as a City of Ojai Landmark. Because its historic period of significance (1976-1992) occurs within the last 50 years, the building does not meet the age threshold for consideration on the National Register of Historic Places at this time. Since the building appears eligible under local and state registration programs, it meets the definition of a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA.[2]

ARG conducted an analysis of the Project and evaluated its potential to impact historical resources. ARG finds that the Project would not cause physical impairment to 107 N. Ventura Street in such a way

[1] California Public Resources Code, Section 21084.1.

[2] California Code of Regulations Section 15064.5(a)(1-3).

that it would no longer be eligible for state or local designation. The building would retain all of its character-defining features and would continue to retain sufficient integrity to convey its significance following the completion of the Project. Furthermore, the building's proposed rehabilitation complies with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. Thus, the proposed work would not result in any impacts to historical resources on the Project Site.

Because the Project does not involve the addition of square footage to the subject building, and exterior site improvements are limited to the replacement of a paved parking lot with landscaping at the rear (to the west) of the subject building, which has minimal to no visibility from the public right-of-way, the scale and nature of the proposed improvements would not materially impair the Site's existing setting. Thus, Project's potential area of impact is limited to the Project Site, and the Project would not result in any indirect impacts to historical resources in the vicinity of the Site. For this reason, further evaluation of indirect impacts is not included herein.

1.2. Methodology

Preparation of this report included the following tasks related to research, documentation, and analysis:

- Visited the Site on January 31, 2025, to observe and document the property.
- Reviewed federal and state technical bulletins, local ordinances, and other materials related to the evaluation of historical resources.
- Conducted research related to the history and development of the property.
- Identified applicable historic contexts and themes.
- Evaluated the property against eligibility criteria for listing in the National and California Registers and as an Ojai Landmark.
- Reviewed the Project and evaluated its potential to impact historical resources under CEQA.

Research materials were culled from the following sources: the archives of the Ojai Valley Museum and Museum of Ventura County; the archives of the *Ventura County Star* and other periodicals; building permits obtained from the Ojai Community Development Department; historic aerials accessed through historicaerials.com and UCSB Frame Finder; and other online repositories. A complete list of sources is included at the end of this report.

1.3. Preparer Qualifications

This report was prepared by Evanne St. Charles, Senior Associate, and Brannon Smithwick, with oversight provided by Katie Horak, Principal. Ms. Horak, Ms. St. Charles, and Ms. Smithwick meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualifications Standards*, 36 CFR Part 61, in the discipline of Architectural History.[3] Research and project support were provided by Kiara Hosseinion, Architectural Historian.

[3] National Park Service, "Professional Qualifications Standards," accessed March 2025, https://www.nps.gov/articles/sec-standards-prof-quals.htm.

2. Property Description and Development

2.2. Site and Setting

The subject property that comprises the Project Site is situated near the west end of Downtown Ojai, just north of the National Register-listed Downtown Ojai Historic District. The property comprises two rectangular-shaped parcels at the southwest corner of N. Ventura and W. Matilija streets. It is surrounded by low-scale commercial and institutional buildings along Ojai Avenue and Matilija Street, including the El Roblar Hotel property, at the northeast corner of N. Ventura Street and E. Ojai Avenue, and a commercial building and the Ojai Valley Museum, on adjacent parcels to the south. Residential neighborhoods extend to the north of the property. The majority of the property is developed with a one-story building, 107 N. Ventura Street, which was completed in 1951 as offices for Ojai First Baptist Church and was most recently occupied by World University (1976-2017). A single-family residence, built in 1939 and located at 107 W. Matilija Street, occupies the northwest corner of the parcel, and a paved parking lot runs along the northern edge of the property, fronting W. Matilija Street.

The property's landscaping, which was added between 2018-2019,[4] features young palo verde and olive trees and decorative low plantings. Its hardscaping was also replaced in the last five years and includes concrete walkways and pavers along the Ventura Street setback and concrete paving and raised planters in the building's central courtyard. Low stone piers, which appear to be older, are spaced uniformly along the perimeter of the property's parking lot.

[4] Noted alterations to the landscaping are based on review of Google Street View images.



Aerial view of the Project Site, outlined in dashed red line (Google Maps; adapted by ARG, 2025). Note the current landscaping and hardscaping is not reflected in the aerial view.

Existing Conditions Photographs



View southeast of 107 N. Ventura Street. Note new plantings (ARG, 2025).



View east of the landscape courtyard. Note new concrete paving and planters (ARG, 2025).



View east of the parking lot to the north of the subject building (original site of First Baptist Church sanctuary) (ARG, 2025).



View south of the residence (107 W. Matilija Street) at the west end of the property (no work proposed on this building under the Project) (ARG, 2025).

2.3. 107 N. Ventura Street

Completed in 1951, the subject building features a U-shaped footprint with two one-story wings running east-west, connected at the west end by a double-height central volume. The wings and the central connector volume face a landscaped courtyard, which opens onto N. Ventura Street (described above). A one-story rear addition extends from the south end of the building's west elevation.

The building has a concrete foundation and its roof is flat, likely covered in rolled asphalt. The one-story wings have wide eaves with wood fascia boards; faux wood-slatted enclosures conceal air conditioning units and equipment on the wing rooftops. The rear/west addition includes both a flat roof and a shed roof, with the latter finished in clay tile. The building's walls, including the addition, are constructed of painted concrete masonry units (CMU). Fenestration includes original multi-light double-hung wood windows and a few original multi-light wood doors, vinyl replacement windows, and replacement wood and metal doors.

Constructed in 1991, the rear addition can be accessed either from the interior or through the parking lot. The addition is topped with both a flat roof and a shed roof, which extends to form a covered porch supported by wood posts along its north elevation. The exterior is clad in painted CMU. Fenestration includes vinyl sliding windows and metal doors.

The interior of the building is largely utilitarian in appearance, with painted CMU and plain plaster walls, unfinished concrete floors, and exposed ceilings. The interior has been remodeled over the years and does not retain any significant features or finishes.

North Wing

The north wing is a narrow, rectangular volume. Its north elevation aligns flush with a concrete walkway, which is bordered by the property's paved parking lot and in-ground planters featuring a

variety of drought-resistant plantings. The elevation is finished with painted CMU laid in a running bond pattern. It features three multi-light wood doors with metal hardware. Modern metal light fixtures are positioned beside both the westernmost and easternmost doors. No windows are present on this elevation. A paved breezeway separates the two westernmost doors from the easternmost door, providing access to the central courtyard. On the east wall of the breezeway is another five-light door with metal hardware. A modern metal light fixture is centrally located on the ceiling of the breezeway.

The north wing's south elevation faces the central landscaped courtyard and is fronted by triangular planters and concrete paving. The elevation is clad in the same painted CMU as seen on the north elevation. Fenestration includes grouped two-over-two light, double-hung wood windows, which flank the breezeway. An AC unit replaced a light in one of the windows. At the west end of the elevation is a tripartite wood window, featuring a fixed two-light window flanked by single-light double-hung windows. A modern metal light fixture is mounted to the wall to the west of the breezeway.

The north wing's east elevation fronts N. Ventura Street. It is aligned with a landscaped planter and concrete pathway. The exterior wall is finished in the same painted CMU cladding. Fenestration on this elevation includes the two-over-two light double-hung wood windows. A painted metal pipe is attached to the elevation, to the south of the window.

South Wing

The south wing is broader than the north wing and is roughly rectangular in plan. Its north elevation aligns with the interior courtyard. The elevation is clad in painted CMU, same as the north wing. The windows are paired, two-over-two light double-hung wood windows, which are partially obscured by bushes. This elevation also features two doors. The east entrance (closest to N. Ventura Street) is a six-light double door with metal hardware. The west entrance comprises an aluminum door flanked by an aluminum sidelight.

The south elevation faces an unassociated paved parking lot and landscaped plant bed. The exterior wall is clad in the same painted CMU as seen on the north elevation. The center of the elevation is inset to form a small rectangular courtyard enclosed by a wood-slatted fence and gate. Windows looking onto the courtyard are grouped fixed and sliding vinyl windows.

The east elevation faces N. Ventura Street and aligns with a concrete pathway and a landscaped planter bed. The exterior wall is finished with the same painted CMU. Fenestration includes a six-light wood door with metal hardware, flanked by two, two-over-two light double-hung wood windows, all of which feature frosted lower panes for privacy. AC units have been installed in the lower sashes of two of the windows, and a modern metal light fixture hangs above the door.

Central Wing

The central wing is oriented in the north-south direction, and the north and south wings are connected to its east elevation. Its east elevation opens onto the central courtyard and is accessible via N. Ventura Street. The elevation is clad in painted CMU, same as the north and south wings. Three

one-over-one light windows line the top half of the elevation. The primary entrance is bound by two painted CMU pilasters and consists of two sets of aluminum doors, each flanked by an aluminum sidelight. A modern metal light fixture is mounted above the two doors, centered on the elevation.

The north elevation is flush with a concrete walkway, which is bordered by the property's paved parking lot and modern, in-ground planters featuring various drought-resistant plantings. The elevation is finished with the same painted CMU as seen on the east elevation. The entrance comprises an aluminum door flanked by an aluminum sidelight. A modern metal light fixture and a metal canopy are mounted above the door.

The west elevation faces a portion of the parking lot and residence on the property. The exterior wall is clad in the same painted CMU as seen on the north elevation. Three painted CMU pilasters are spaced between the windows. Fenestration consists of single and grouped single-hung vinyl windows. Located on the south end is an aluminum door flanked by an aluminum sidelight with a modern metal light fixture mounted above the door.

Existing Conditions Photographs



View east of 107 N. Ventura Street (ARG, 2025).



View southeast of the north wing, north elevation (ARG, 2025).



View south of the north wing, north elevation (ARG, 2025).



View south of the south wing, north elevation, from the courtyard (ARG, 2025).



View northwest of the south wing, south elevation (ARG, 2025).



View northeast of the smaller courtyard along the south wing, south elevation (ARG, 2025).



View west of the central wing, east elevation (ARG, 2025).



View southeast of the central wing, north and west elevations (ARG, 2025).

2.4. Chronology of Development and Use

Following is a chronology of development and use of the subject property. Source materials include building records obtained through the City of Ojai Community Development Department, original drawings, historic newspaper articles, city directories, historic photographs, and aerial photographs.

1890s The land at the southwest corner of Ventura and Matilija Streets (subject property) was donated by Philip K. Miller to the Christian Church congregation, who subsequently built a church on the property (not extant).[5]

[5] Patricia L. Fry, *The Ojai Valley: An Illustrated History*, ed. Elise DePuydt and Craig Walker (Ojai Valley Museum, 2017), 88-89.

1909-18 First Baptist Church purchased the subject property from the Christian Church congregation. After the original church building burned down in the Matilija Canyon Fire, First Baptist Church built a new sanctuary building at the northeast corner of Ventura and Matilija streets (current location of the property's paved surface parking lot).[6]

1939 The residence located at 107 W. Matilija Street (originally 151 W. Matilija Street), on the parcel to the east of the church, was constructed (now part of the Project Site). Research did not indicate who the original owner/occupant of the house was.[7]

1942 Two lots south of First Baptist Church were purchased by the congregation in anticipation of the need for a larger Sunday School wing.[8]

Because the new office/classroom building spanned the adjacent parcel to the south and east of the church sanctuary, the existing residence (107 W. Matilija Street) may have been acquired by First Baptist and incorporated into the property around this time.

Based on city directory research, 107 W. Matilija Street appears to have been used as a residence for church pastors and their families as early as the 1940s.[9]

1949-51 The subject building at 107 N. Ventura Street was constructed to the south of the church sanctuary (not extant) by First Baptist Church for use as offices, classrooms, and a social hall.[10] Construction on the building began in 1949 and reached completion in 1951.[11]

1960-65 Ojai First Baptist Church listed the subject property for sale and made plans to move to its new site on Grand Avenue.[12] Its new church building at 930 Grand Avenue was dedicated in January 1965.[13]

1964-65 Ojai builder, Carl Dodge, purchased the subject property from First Baptist Church for $80,000.[14] Dodge subsequently demolished the sanctuary to make way for a parking lot.[15]

[6] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 91, 188; City of Ojai, Sanborn Map, November 1929.
[7] Ventura County Assessor Portal, accessed March 2025, https://assessor.venturacounty.gov/.
[8] "Quaint Little Church Gone," *Ojai Valley News*, December 9, 1993.
[9] The 1946 Ojai City Directory indicates that Rev. Ernest E. Nichols and his family occupied the house.
[10] "Ojai First Baptist Church," *Ventura County Star*, August 17, 1946; Ventura County Assessor Portal.
[11] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 91.
[12] "Ojai First Baptist Church," *Ventura County Star*, August 27, 1960.
[13] "New Ojai Church Sets Open House Dedication Event," *Ventura County Star*, January 23, 1965.
[14] "Ojai To Get Change to Rent Building," *Ventura County Star*, October 11, 1965.
[15] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 92.

1966-76 In March of 1966, the City of Ojai began leasing 107 N. Ventura Street, which served as an interim location for Ojai City Hall and later the Ojai Police Department and Chamber of Commerce. [16]

For at least a portion of this period, the residence on the Project Site (107 W. Matilija Street) was occupied by a foreman for the Ojai Public Works Department.[17]

1976 A conditional use permit was filed to allow the existing facilities on the subject property to be temporarily used as a college, including a lecture hall, library, classrooms, and administrative offices. [18] The applicant, as stated in the proof of publication notice, was Douglas J. Mahr, Vice President of The World University of America (also known as World University).[19]

1977 World University opened at the subject property.[20]

1983 World University had placed a sign for vegetarian cuisine in front of the residence (107 W. Matilija Street) without obtaining proper authorization.[21]

1991 Permit pulled to construct a one-story library addition which extends from the west elevation of 107 N. Ventura Street. Owner listed as World University of America. Contractor listed as Manchester Builders. Architect listed as Steve Bovee.[22]

2000-05 Permits pulled to repair roof. Owner listed as World University of America. Contractor listed as Kahler Construction.[23]

2005 World University outlined plans to expand the ancillary residence by incorporating vegetarian products, in addition to its use as a bookstore.[24]

2006 Permit pulled to re-roof and install new HVAC system. Owner listed as World University of America. Contractor listed as Mark L. Adams.[25]

2017-18 World University ceased operations and subsequently vacated the property.

Greenhawk LLC acquired the subject property, which was under management of The Becker Group, Inc.[26]

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[16] "Ojai Councilmen Cancel Plans for New City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, August 9, 1966; Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 92.
[17] Ojai City Directories, 1971-1977.
[18] City of Ojai, Memorandum, 1976, on file at the City of Ojai Community Development Department.
[19] Notice, *Ojai Valley News*, August 8, 1976.
[20] "Our Story of Avasthology," World Institute of Avasthology, accessed January 2025, https://www.avastha.org/our-story.
[21] City of Ojai, Memorandum, July 7, 1983, City of Ojai Community Development Department.
[22] City of Ojai, Building Permit No. 1980, 3/8/1991.
[23] City of Ojai, Building Permit No. 3968, 8/16/2000.
[24] Thor Reyes, M.D., World University of America (Ojai), November 17, 2005.
[25] City of Ojai, Building Permit No. 6889, 6/27/2006.
[26] "Deed-restricted affordable housing passes on 4-1 vote," *Ojai Valley News,* October 20, 2022.

The building underwent renovations, including: exterior repainting; the addition of faux wood-slatted mechanical enclosures at the rooftop wings; landscape and hardscape alterations; some window and door replacements; and removal of an iron fence at the courtyard entrance.[27]

2023-24 Owners of Hotel El Roblar acquired the subject property and outlined plans to rehabilitate the building for use as a spa and wellness center.[28]

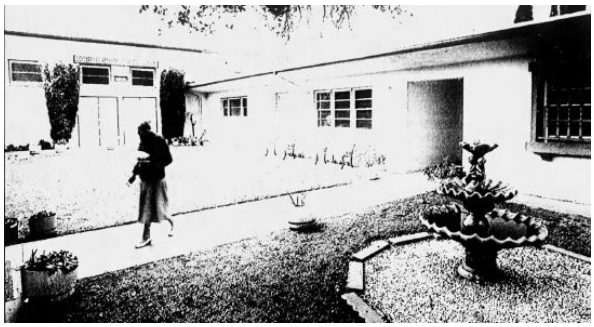
Historic Photographs



View of the World University campus from Ventura Street, 1979 (Los Angeles Times).



Benito and Dominga Reyes in the World University courtyard, 1981 (Los Angeles Times).



View of the World University courtyard, 1989 (Los Angeles Times).

[27] Noted exterior/site alterations are based on review of Google Street View images.

[28] "Hotel El Roblar owner seeks change of use for proposed site of spa and wellness center," *Ojai Valley News*, October 1, 2024.

3. Historical Background and Context

3.1. Pre-History and Early History of Ojai Valley

The area that would become the City of Ojai was originally occupied by the Chumash. Prior to the Euro-American occupation of the region, the Chumash inhabited a vast area including the Channel Islands as well as a coastal strip and inland valleys (including Ojai Valley) stretching from present-day Malibu to present-day Morro Bay. While the Chumash's first contact with European settlers occurred in the mid-1500s, it was not until the 1770s that the region was explored by Spanish missionaries, which led to the enslavement of the region's native inhabitants and destruction of their way of life.[29]

In 1837, approximately 17,700 acres of the Ojai Valley were granted to Fernando Tico for his services performed at Mission San Buenaventura. The land grant changed hands multiple times in the 1850s and '60s until speculator Royce Gaylord Surdam obtained several acres of the rancho in 1874 and platted a townsite he named Nordhoff. The original approximate townsite boundaries were Aliso Street to the north, Santa Ana Street to the south, N. Montgomery Street to the east, and Rincon Street to the west. Given the town's isolation from other parts of Ventura County, development did not begin in earnest until the late 1890s when the construction of the Ventura River and Ojai Valley Railroad branch line was completed through the area, connecting the town to the Southern Pacific Railroad's main line and increasing accessibility to the Ojai Valley.[30]

3.2. Ojai's Civic Development

The Ojai Valley's pastoral setting and benign climate made it a popular winter resort destination for wealthy Easterners beginning in the early 20th century. Around 1907, millionaire glass manufacturer Edward Drummond Libbey began wintering in the town and shortly thereafter commissioned architects Myron Hunt and Elmer Grey to design him a Craftsman residence at the intersection of Foothill and Palomar roads. In April 1914, Libbey and a group of other town leaders met to discuss various improvements to the valley and to form a new body known as the Ojai Valley Men's League (later the Chamber of Commerce), which would be responsible for implementing the planned improvements. The focus of redevelopment was along Ojai Avenue, the town's main thoroughfare.[31] In 1917, Libbey acquired the land on the south side of Ojai Avenue and developed Ojai Civic Center Park (now Libbey Park).[32] With the support of town leaders, Libbey commissioned architects Frank Mead and Richard Requa to create a Spanish/Mission Revival style redevelopment plan for downtown,

[29] "A Brief History of Ojai Valley," *Ojai Valley Museum*, accessed December 2021, https://www.ojaivalleymuseum.org/uploads/6/0/7/9/60799355/history_of_the_ojai_valley-museum_with_images-rvsd_july__2016.pdf.
[30] GPA Consulting, "Historical Resources Evaluation Report for the City of Ojai Ojai Ave/Maricopa Highway Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Improvements Project," Ojai, California, April 2018, 15.
[31] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 220.
[32] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Historic Context Statement for the City of Ojai," prepared for the City of Ojai, May 2009, revised and adopted June 2011, 19.

proposed for construction in phases between 1917 and 1919.[33] Plans included the construction of a "Spanish style"[34] arcade that would front the existing commercial storefronts on Ojai Avenue in order to create a sense of architectural cohesion (completed 1917, extended 1927; Ojai Landmark #5); construction of a pergola on the northern edge of the park, facing the Arcade (1917, demolished 1968, reconstructed 1999); and development of the Ojai Post Office and Tower (201 E. Ojai Avenue, built 1917, enlarged 1938 and 1949; Ojai Landmark #6). Other civic improvements included the paving of Ojai Avenue and the construction of sidewalks.[35] This initial phase of Mead and Requa's plan culminated in the renaming of the town to Ojai.[36]

Shortly after its renaming, Ojai residents began discussing the idea of incorporating. Prompted by the desire for an adequate sewer system, fire protection, and other services, residents officially voted to incorporate on August 5, 1921.[37] Additional municipal properties were built following incorporation, including the Ojai Fire Station (321 E. Ojai Avenue, Ventura County Landmark #62, built 1923) and the Ojai Library (111 E. Ojai Avenue, built in 1928).[38] Redevelopment of Ojai's town center was based on the cohesive urban planning ideals of the City Beautiful Movement and, "inspired other small towns in California to redevelop their civic centers using City Beautiful principles and Spanish architecture."[39]

Following incorporation, Ojai City Hall opened at 252 E. Ojai Avenue, in a former commercial storefront (Burke's realty office) in the Arcade. Glen H. Hickey served as Ojai's first mayor.[40] By 1939, City Hall had relocated to a former restaurant building just east of the Arcade, at 338 E. Ojai Avenue (later housed the Ojai Valley Museum and currently a restaurant).[41] The Ojai Police Department also moved into the building soon thereafter. Ojai City Hall and the Ojai Police Department operated out of this building until moving to 107 N. Ventura Street in 1966 and 1969, respectively.[42]

As with many cities in Southern California, Ojai experienced a population influx after World War II. The number of residents grew from 500 to 2,519 between its 1921 incorporation and 1950.[43] In 1960, a study reported that the population of Ventura County would more than double within 20 years and identified Ojai as ripe for new development due to its "recreational areas [that] would lure many vacationers."[44] By 1960, the population of Ojai Valley had risen to just under 22,000, and Ojai residents were increasingly concerned about what growth may mean for their quaint, pastoral

[33] GPA Consulting, "Historical Resources Evaluation Report for the City of Ojai Ojai Ave/Maricopa Highway Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Improvements Project," 6.
[34] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 220
[35] GPA Consulting, "Historical Resources Evaluation Report for the City of Ojai Ojai Ave/Maricopa Highway Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Improvements Project," 6.
[36] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Historic Context Statement for the City of Ojai," 19.
[37] Ibid.
[38] GPA Consulting, "Historical Resources Evaluation Report for the City of Ojai Ojai Ave/Maricopa Highway Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Improvements Project," 6.
[39] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 223.
[40] GPA Consulting, "Downtown Ojai Historic District," DPR District Record, 6; Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 233.
[41] Ibid.
[42] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*.
[43] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Historic Context Statement for the City of Ojai," 27.
[44] Gary Hachadourian, "Review of the Sixties — Part 3," *Ojai Valley News*, December 28, 1969.

community.[45] Ojai commissioned its first master plan in 1961 in an effort to control future development.[46] In October of 1963, City Council adopted the Ojai General Plan. Among the principal features of the plan included a town center closed to traffic; a scenic highway to take the through-traffic on Highway 150 and route it south of the city; a zoning plan designed to avoid crowded development; and a new civic center, including a new city hall, south of Ojai Avenue, between Signal and Montgomery streets.[47]

By the early 1960s, the City began exploring options for the relocation of Ojai City Hall, either to a new building or an existing facility.[48] In 1962, City Manager Michael Zambory described the existing municipal building at 338 E. Ojai Avenue as "seriously overcrowded and inadequate," having served as both Ojai City Hall and the Ojai Police Department since the 1930s.[49] While the 1963 Ojai General Plan proposed the construction of a new city hall building and civic center adjacent to Civic Center Park, the proposal was not without opposition. Opponents argued that it would be too costly to construct a new facility and that the City should rather explore options for leasing or buying an existing building. This sentiment was described by journalist Jack Smalley in a 1965 *Ventura County Star* article: "A controversy is currently raging on location of [the new city hall] site. Ojai has never, it seems, felt the need for much government. Something modest would suffice quite well."[50]

A referendum on the issue of whether to lease an existing property or construct a new facility continued for several months. In October of 1965, City Council officially voted to move forward with the development of an approximately seven-acre, city-owned site on S. Montgomery Street as the new city hall. In the following month, City Council selected Ojai architect Chalfant Head to design the new building.[51] Meanwhile, the City continued to look for temporary office space to offset crowded conditions in its existing facility. Among the temporary sites considered was the former First Baptist Church property at 107 N. Ventura Street. While City Council had voted to buy the former church property, in an October 6, 1965 referendum, Ojai residents voted against City Council's proposal in a narrow 642-to-662 vote.[52] Nonetheless, in March of 1966, Ojai City officials entered into an agreement with the property's then-owner, Carl Dodge, to rent approximately 1,000 square feet of office space and a meeting hall for council sessions on a temporary basis; they relocated to the site shortly thereafter.[53] On April 12, 1966, voters narrowly upheld the selection of the seven-acre property on S. Montgomery as the future site of a new city hall.[54] However, by August of the same year, City Council ordered the architect to stop work on plans for the new city hall building and instead

[45] Hachadourian, "Review of the Sixties."
[46] "Master Plan Approval Headlines '61 in Ojai," *Ventura County Star*, December 30, 1961.
[47] John A. Jones, "Ojai Adopts Master Plan to Keep Groves, Spanish Color, Limit Tracts," *Ventura County Star*, October 18, 1963.
[48] "Ojai Drops Push for New City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, October 9, 1962.
[49] "Ojai Weighs Plan to Lease New City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, October 6, 1962.
[50] Jack Smalley, "Inside Our Cities: The Ojai Story," *Ventura County Star*, December 18, 1965.
[51] "Chalfant Head Named to Design New Ojai City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, November 9, 1965.
[52] "Ojai to Get Chance to Rent Building," *Ventura County Star*, October 11, 1965; "Voters Reject Ojai City Hall Measure," *Ventura County Star*, October 6, 1965.
[53] "Ojai Officials Moving Into 'Rejected' City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, March 10, 1966.
[54] "Incumbents Win, City Hall Site Upheld in Ojai," *Ventura County Star*, April 13, 1966.

entered into negotiations with Dodge on a five-to-eight-year lease of 107 N. Ventura Street.[55] In late 1969, the Ojai Police Department joined City Hall at the 107 N. Ventura Street property, which the City continued to lease until the 1970s.[56] City Hall relocated to the former Smith-Hobson Estate, donated by Ojai resident Fred Smith, in 1976. A 1975 *Ventura County Star* article noted that there was little discussion about City Hall remaining at 107 N. Ventura given the "great dissatisfaction with the facility."[57] The Ojai Police Department continued to share space at 107 N. Ventura until the department was disbanded in 1979 when the City entered into an agreement with the County Sheriff's department.[58]

3.3. Religion and Spirituality in Ojai

Early 20th Century Religious Institutions

As with many nascent communities, churches were some of the first institutions established in Ojai Valley during its early development. The town's first congregation was the Presbyterian Church, which organized in 1877 and built its first sanctuary in 1884.[59] In 1900, the Presbyterian Church moved to Ojai Avenue and Montgomery Street, where it joined with the Congregational Church (established 1888).[60] In 1930, the Ojai Presbyterian Church constructed a new sanctuary at the corner of Foothill Road and Aliso Street, designed by architect Carleton Monroe Winslow. The congregation continues to hold services at this location. The old Presbyterian Church building was occupied by the Nazarene Church for 50 years; it now houses a meditation center.[61] Ojai's Catholic congregation built St. Thomas Aquinas Church in 1905 at the corner of Ojai Avenue and Blanche Street. After the original building was destroyed by the June 1917 fire originating in Matilija Canyon, a new Catholic Church building was constructed on the same site. Designed by noted architects Frank Mead and Richard Requa, the Mission Revival style building was occupied by the congregation until it moved to its new location at 185 St. Thomas Drive in 1963. The old church building at 130 W. Ojai Avenue (Ojai Historic Landmark #7, listed in the National Register) has been occupied by the Ojai Valley Museum since 1996.[62] Other early religious congregations that established sanctuaries in Ojai included Holiness Church, Liberal Catholic Church, and Church of Christ.

First Baptist Church

In the 1890s, a plot of land at the southwest corner of Ventura and Matilija streets (subject property) was donated by early Ojai resident Philip K. Miller to the Christian Church, which subsequently constructed a sanctuary (not extant).[63] In 1909, the First Baptist Church purchased the Christian

[55] "Ojai Councilmen Cancel Plans for New City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, August 9, 1966.
[56] "Memo to the City Desk: Ojai," *Ventura County Star*, September 28, 1969.
[57] Don Whitehead, "Issue of New City Hall Again Before Ojai Council," *Ventura County Star*, March 24, 1975.
[58] Dennis Wagner, "Ojai Council Says Farewell to City Police Department," *Ventura County Star*, November 14, 1979.
[59] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 84.
[60] Ibid, 85.
[61] Ibid, 87-88.
[62] Ibid, 90.
[63] Ibid, 88-89.

Church building. After the sanctuary building was destroyed by the June 1917 fire, First Baptist constructed a new sanctuary at the northeast corner of Ventura and Matilija in 1918. Between 1949-1951, the congregation developed a one-story concrete block building to the south of its sanctuary for use as offices, classrooms, and a social hall (107 N. Ventura Street, subject building).[64] First Baptist continued to own and occupy the sanctuary and office/classroom building until around 1965 when it moved to its current church building at 930 Grand Avenue.[65]

Theosophy and the New Age Movement

Because of its relative isolation and proximity to nature, Ojai has attracted a variety of non-traditional religious and spiritual organizations since the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Beginning in the 1920s, members of the spiritual organization known as the Theosophical Society established themselves in the Ojai Valley. The Theosophical Society is the organizational body of Theosophy, an esoteric religious movement founded in 1875 in New York by Colonel Henry Olcott and Russian Émigré Helena Petrovna Blavatsky. The objectives of the Theosophical Society are "to form a nucleus of the universal brotherhood of humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste, or colour; to encourage the study of comparative religion, philosophy, and science; and to investigate unexplained laws of Nature and the powers latent in human beings."[66] The organization placed an emphasis on Eastern teachings and played a prominent role in the introduction of Buddhism and Hinduism to America.[67] Helena Blavatsky was integral to the dissemination of Theosophical ideas across the country and abroad through her writings, including *Isis Unveiled: A Master-Key to the Mysteries of Ancient and Modern Science and Theology* (1877) and *The Secrete Doctrine: The Synthesis of Science, Religion and Philosophy* (1888).[68] After Blavatsky's death in 1891, the Theosophical Society split into various sects, two of which were located in Southern California: one in Point Loma, initially led by Katherine Tingley, and the other in in the Beachwood Canyon area of Hollywood, which was led by the Theosophical Society's president, Annie Besant.[69]

The Krotona Institute of Theosophy (also known as the Krotona Institute or the Krotona Colony) was first conceived of by lawyer and Theosophist Albert Powell Warrington in 1906. With the encouragement of Annie Besant, Warrington acquired 11 acres in the Beachwood Canyon area of Hollywood in 1912 to establish the colony, which served as the Theosophical Society's national headquarters until 1920.[70] Named after "Crotona," the ancient Greek colony and home of ancient mathematician Pythagoras, Krotona was developed between 1912 and 1919 and included an administration building, science building, residential buildings, including the extant Krotona Court

[64] "Ojai First Baptist Church," *Ventura County Star*, August 17, 1946; Ventura County Assessor Portal.
[65] Ibid, 92.
[66] J. Gordon Melton, "Theosophy," Encyclopedia Britannica, January 8, 2025, accessed February 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/theosophy.
[67] Daniel D. Paul, "New City of Mentalphysics Historic District," National Register of Historic Places Registration Form, 2022, 8-53.
[68] Lindsay Mulcahy, Los Angeles Conservancy, "Krotona Court and the Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross Historic-Cultural Monument Application," adopted 2024, 16.
[69] Paul, 8-53; Melton, "Theosophy."
[70] Mulcahy, "Krotona Court and the Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross Historic-Cultural Monument Application," 14, 18.

multi-family residence, and an auditorium and ritual space (the extant Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross). By 1918, Krotona had "300 or so residents who grew their own food, [and] practiced vegetarianism, meditation, and intellectual inquiry."[71] Theosophists continued to reside at Krotona until 1924 when they relocated to Ojai.[72]

By the early 1920s, practitioners at Hollywood Krotona began to perceive the urban locale as too congested and increasingly under the influence of the movie industry. In response, in 1924, the Krotona Institute of Theosophy relocated to a 118-acre site in the Ojai Valley purchased with funds from Besant.[73] The new Ojai Krotona was developed in the mid-1920s with a Spanish Colonial Revival style administration building and library designed by architect Robert Stacey Judd, in addition to several cottages. Besant referred to Ojai Krotona as "the cradle of the New Civilization in America."[74] The Ojai colony was "intended to be the world center of the teachings of Jiddu Krishnamurti," a young Indian man who Besant met on a trip to India in 1909 and who she and other Theosophists proclaimed to be the "new vehicle for the World Teacher."[75] Though Krishnamurti broke from the Theosophical Society in 1930, he continued to reside in a cottage on the land that Besant had acquired until his death in 1986.[76] The Krotona Institute in Ojai continues to operate to this day.

In 1927, Besant acquired additional property adjacent to the newly established Krotona Institute. The nearly 500-acre site, which Besant named Happy Valley, initially served as the home of the Order of the Star, an organization founded by Besant to promote the teachings of Krishnamurti. The organization's encampment comprised a kitchen, bathhouses, showers, and toilets. The organization held its "international congress" here in 1928 and 1929, during which over 1,000 people came from all over the world to hear Krishnamurti speak.[77] After Krishnamurti dissolved the Order of the Star and broke from Theosophy, the Happy Valley land remained undeveloped for years. In the mid-1940s, the remaining Star camp buildings were incorporated into the Happy Valley School, which was founded in 1946 and continues to operate as the Besant Hill School of Happy Valley.[78]

Though it has had a relatively small membership since its founding, the Theosophical Society had an immense impact on the promotion of Eastern spirituality in the West and inspired the creation of dozens of other esoteric religious movements, including the New Age movement.[79] The New Age movement emerged in the 1970s as a "blend of cross-cultural spiritualism and a new awareness of Eastern philosophy and ascetic practices that sought to provide a mantle that emphasized progressive

[71] Paul, 8-57.
[72] On February 5, 2025, Los Angeles City Council designated the Hollywood Krotona property as a Historic-Cultural Monument. "Krotona Court & Grand Temple of the Rosy Cross," Los Angeles Conservancy, accessed February 2025, https://www.laconservancy.org/learn/historic-places/krotona-court-grand-temple-of-the-rosy-cross/.
[73] Josef Woodard, "Serene Precursor to Mayan Audacity of Robert Stacy-Judd," *Los Angeles Times*, January 13, 1994.
[74] Paul, "New City of Mentalphysics Historic District," 8-57.
[75] Paul, "New City of Mentalphysics Historic District," 8-57; Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 324.
[76] Paul, "New City of Mentalphysics Historic District," 8-57.
[77] "Order of the Star Meets in Ojai," *Ventura County Star*, April 6, 1928.
[78] Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 327-329; "About," Besant Hill School of Happy Valley, accessed February 2025, https://www.besanthill.org/about/history-heritage/timeline/.
[79] Melton, "Theosophy."

change and the possibility of deep personal transformation."[80] Traditional occult practices such as yoga, meditation, astrology, and tarot reading were integrated into the movement as a means of assisting with personal transformation. Followers of the movement looked forward to a "New Age of heightened spiritual consciousness and international peace [which] would arrive and bring an end to racism, poverty, sickness, hunger, and war."[81] While the movement had lost its momentum by the end of the 1980s, it is considered to be "one of the West's most significant religious phenomena of the 20th century," attracting "hundreds of thousands of new adherents to one branch or other of the Western esoteric-metaphysical tradition."[82]

Origins of the New Age movement can be traced back to earlier Western esoteric movements, including Theosophy.[83] Ojai's early 20th century reputation as a hub for the Theosophical Society and other spiritual organizations attracted various New Age groups in the postwar period. A 2003 Ojai Valley Museum exhibit showcased a number of spiritual organizations, "whose leaders helped shape Ojai's reputation as a New Age mecca and haven for free thinkers."[84] Among the organizations included in the exhibit were Meher Mount, a 170-acre hilltop center created by Agnes Baron in 1946 and focused on the teachings of noted Indian spiritual leader Avatar Meher Baba; Meditation Mount, a meditation center developed in 1968 by Florence Garrigue, whose mission was to impart the teachings given to prominent Theosophist Alice Evens; the Krishnamurti Foundation, an organization founded in 1969 by Jiddu Krishnamurti to pass on his teachings; and the Ojai Foundation, an educational retreat founded in 1979 by anthropologist Joan Halifax to promote land stewardship and environmental awareness.[85]

World University of America

In 1973, noted academic and Theosophist Benito Reyes assumed the position as director of studies at the Krotona Institute in Ojai. At this time, Reyes, Annie Besant, and other local spiritual leaders began to discuss the possibility of building a college campus centered around esoteric religious studies.[86] In 1974, Reyes and his wife, Dominga, opened the World Institute of Avasthology[87] in the east wing of the Happy Valley School. Class offerings included seminars in consciousness, yoga, tai chi, meditation, philosophy, ethics, and other areas of spirituality.[88] Three years later, Benito and Dominga Reyes and a group of local Theosophy benefactors and students garnered enough financial backing to purchase the subject property at 107 N. Ventura Street for $180,000 for use as the headquarters of the World

[80] Michael A. Peters, "New Age Spiritualism, Mysticism, and Far-right Conspiracy," *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 55, no. 14 (2023): 1608-1616.
[81] J. Gordon Melton, "New Age Movement," Encyclopedia Britannica, January 30, 2025, accessed February 2025, https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Age-movement.
[82] Ibid.
[83] Melton, "Theosophy;" Melton, "New Age Movement."
[84] Amy Bentley, "New-age Leaders Shaped Ojai," *Ventura County Star*, December 3, 2003.
[85] Ibid.
[86] "Krotona director to talk to grads at Happy Valley," *Ventura County Star*, June 7, 1973.
[87] According to the organization's website, "Avasthology" is the "study of states of consciousness." World Institute of Avasthology, accessed March 2025, https://www.avastha.org/.
[88] "Avasthology Institute to Reopen," *Ventura County Star*, September 1, 1974; "Ojai Consciousness Seminar," *Ventura County Star*, February 13, 1974.

Institute of Avasthology and its full-scale college campus, World University of America (also known as World University). The building complex was formerly the Ojai City Hall and Ojai Police Department headquarters from the mid and late 1960s until the 1970s.[89] Approximately $100,000 of the funding was donated by local Theosophist Ethel Stell to acquire the campus complex.[90] When asked why he chose Ojai to establish the university, Dr. Reyes explained that he believed Ojai "was destined to become 'the new Athens of the New Age,' referring to the Greek city where philosophy and wisdom flourished more than 2,500 years ago."[91] While other educational institutions with spiritual leanings, including Happy Valley School and Krishnamurti's Oak Grove School (established 1975), existed in Ojai at the time, World University appears to have been the first school of higher education.

As described in a 1989 *Los Angeles Times* article about the school, World University was a "degree-granting institute where students learn academic subjects alongside the [fundamentals of] New Age spirituality."[92] In alignment with New Age spiritual thought, the university applied an "East-West approach" to its curriculum, offering courses in science, philosophy, and religion in Eastern and Western cultures.[93] The objectives of the university were to "promote world peace and the well-being and understanding of all peoples," as well as to "promote spiritual growth and harmonious relations among individuals."[94] While rooted in New Age spiritual practices, "unlike some of Ojai's more experimental institutes, World University [was] not all crystals and channeling."[95] Classes in meditation and yoga were offered alongside more traditional university courses such as English composition and psychology.[96]

By 1981, the university had an enrollment of over 100 and a core staff of ten professors; it offered bachelor's, master's, and postdoctoral degrees[97] in various fields of the liberal arts, philosophy, psychology, and business, as well as vocational certificates in spiritual ministry, thanatology/astrology, and meditation/yoga. The school's Department of World Peace Studies, founded in 1980, quickly became the most popular curriculum track, drawing students from across California.[98] The addition of the Ecumenical Ministry of the Unity of All Religions Department, which examined the similarities between world religions, was also popular amongst the school's students.[99] By the early 1980s, plans

[89] City Hall relocated in 1976, and the Ojai Police Department continue to occupy a portion of 107 N. Ventura until 1979 when the department was disbanded.

[90] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application," prepared for the Ojai Historic Preservation Commission, 2015, 32; Ojai Councilmen Cancel Plans for New City Hall," *Ventura County Star*, August 9, 1966; "Students Find Knowledge in City Hall," *Los Angeles Times*, December 15, 1981; Pat Flynn, "Tiny University in Ojai Dedicated to World at Peace," *Ventura County Star*, August 29, 1982.

[91] Denise Hamilton, "Studying for Peace: World University Marks 15th Anniversary Amid Ojai's Spiritual Diversity," *Los Angeles Times*, February 23, 1989.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Flynn, "Tiny University in Ojai Dedicated to World at Peace," *Ventura County Star*, August 29, 1982.

[94] Flynn, "Tiny University in Ojai Dedicated to World at Peace;" Hamilton, "Studying for Peace."

[95] Hamilton, "Studying for Peace."

[96] Ibid.

[97] While World University was an authorized, degree-granting institution under the State Department of Education, it never received accreditation from the Western Association of Schools and Colleges.

[98] Ad, "World University in America," *Los Angeles Times*, December 13, 1980; "Spiritual Healing Topic," *Thousand Oaks Star*, March 11, 1980; "World U. President Plans Lecture Tour," *Los Angeles Times,* May 24, 1980.

[99] "University Adds New Department," *Los Angeles Times,* August 1, 1981.

were under way for several new World University campus expansions in Florida, the Bahamas, South Korea, Canada, and Israel. However, none of these campus expansions appear to have actualized. Instead, Dr. Reyes continued to grow the curriculum, promote the school, and recruit new students for its main campus in Ojai on his extensive travels to conferences and speaking arrangements around the world.[100]

In 1988, World University supporter and Ojai resident Mima Porter died, willing the university her 10-acre estate near Downtown Ojai. While Reyes and school administrators prepared plans to use the land for classrooms, a dormitory, and possibly a museum, the expansion does not appear to have occurred. Around this time, the school had begun offering classes in Ventura and created the Center for Compassion to help feed local people in need. It had also established an exchange program with other non-traditional institutes around the world, including Zoroastrian College in Bombay, India, the Association of Religious Psychology in Tokyo, and Koh-e-nor University in Santa Monica (now University of Santa Monica).[101]

On September 8, 1992, Benito Reyes died at the age of 78.[102] Following her husband's death, Dominga Reyes assumed the position of university president.[103] While the university continued to operate at its 107 N. Ventura Street campus, the number of course offerings appears to have begun declining by the mid-1990s, and in later years, the school mainly offered distance learning programs.[104] After Dominga Reyes's death in 1999, the couple's son Rev. Dr. Thor L. Reyes was president of the university until its closure in 2017 when the institution was issued a letter from the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education to cease operations of all its degree programs due to lack of accreditation.[105]

3.4. Benito F. Reyes

Born in Manila, Philippines in 1914, Benito Fernando Reyes became involved with the Philippine Theosophical Society as a teenager. At the age of 16 (ca. 1930), the young Theosophist was spiritually adopted by Theosophical followers John and Nell Regan, a childless couple from Ojai, California. The couple was called to the Philippines by a Theosophical Master who assured them that they would find a Filipino child to educate in the ways of Theosophy. There they met Reyes, who soon became recognized as an important member of the Theosophy Society for his involvement with the World Federation of Young Theosophers.[106] As such, the Regans financed Reyes's education at Far Eastern University in Manila, where he eventually obtained a Master of Arts and a Doctorate in Psychology by

[100] "World University Emphasizes Understanding Between People," *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1979.
[101] Hamilton, "Studying for Peace."
[102] "World University founder Reyes Dies at Ojai Home," *Oxnard Star Free Press*, September 11, 1992.
[103] "World University founder Reyes Dies at Ojai Home;" "Death To Be Topic of Seminar."
[104] Based on the reduced number of newspaper articles covering the university beginning in the mid-1990s, it is assumed that the university entered into a period of decline. Fry, *The Ojai Valley*, 81.
[105] "Dominga L. Reyes," *Ventura County Star*, February 19, 1999; "Order Suspending Approval to Operate Degree Granting Programs," Bureau for Private Postsecondary Education, State of California, July 29, 2017, accessed February 2025, https://www.bppe.ca.gov/enforcement/actions/worldu_suspended.pdf.
[106] The Theosophical Society, *The International Theosophical Year Book 1937* (India: Theosophical Publishing House, 1937), 172-73.

1948 with the publication of his 237-page thesis work titled "Scientific Proofs of the Existence of the Soul."[107]

After completing his education, Dr. Reyes immediately entered the field of academia where he became chairmen of the Department of Philosophy and Psychology at his alma mater Far Eastern University. He served in this role for approximately 21 years, during which time the Theosophist engaged in various guest lecturer opportunities and speaking engagements around the world, particularly on the American East Coast.[108] In 1951, Dr. Reyes was awarded a Fulbright-Smith-Mundt teaching position at Boston University's Philosophy Department for his 1948 thesis work. While on sabbatical in Boston, he also spoke at other notable institutions, including Harvard University, the Boston Theosophical Society, the Society for the Advancement of Science in Boston, and the Theosophical Society of Springfield.[109] In December of 1951, Dr. Reyes was awarded honorary degrees for his work as an author and lecturer in the field of Theosophy at the Besant Lodge of the Theosophical Society in Boston, which was named after his friend and contemporary Theosophist Annie Besant.[110] He completed his Fulbright position in Boston at the end of the 1952 academic year, after which he returned to his position in Manila.[111]

In June of 1952, Dr. Reyes made his first known visit to Ojai where he spoke on topics in his thesis at the Ojai Community Art Center. The event was sponsored by the Ojai Theosophical Society where John and Nell Regan were members. Around this time, he also received two honorary degrees from the University of Toronto for his academic achievements while serving as a visiting Fulbright lecturer at Boston University during the previous school year.[112] In 1965, Dr. Reyes was awarded his second Fulbright scholarship, this time as a Fulbright-Hays teaching scholar. The academic began a one-semester lecturing assignment in the fall at the State University of New York in Oswego where he became the first visiting Fulbright professor of philosophy. During his tenure at Oswego, Dr. Reyes also conducted public lectures on the cultures and religions of Asia across the state.[113] In 1967, Dr. Reyes submitted his 1948 thesis to Phoenix, Arizona Superior Judge Robert L. Myers who was conducting pre-trial hearings into the will of American miner James Kidd. Kidd was an eccentric Phoenix local who promised to bequeath his $200,000 estate to anyone who could prove the physical existence of the soul. He was one of 39 claimants who submitted their work for review, and was a finalist in the competition.[114] After gaining national notoriety in the academic branch of Theosophy as a result of the literary competition, Dr. Reyes published his first book in 1970, which expanded upon the

[107] Some sources refer to Reyes's thesis work as "Scientific Evidence of the Existence of the Soul." San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application," 32; "Ojai Valley Timeline," hosted on Squarespace, accessed February 2025, https://static1.squarespace.com/static/648e380bea69355090623aa9/t/6497edad1d655b245c136378/1687678381653/Ojai+Valley+Timeline.pdf; "Filipino Joins Soul Search," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, March 10, 1967.
[108] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application," 32.
[109] "Soul is Topic Friday Night," *Morning Union*, November 22, 1951; "Dr. Benito Reyes to Lecture Here," *Morning Union*, March 12, 1952; "All Religions Join in Search for God, Speaker Declares," *Morning Union*, March 31, 1952.
[110] "Benito F. Reyes," *Boston Globe*, December 3, 1951.
[111] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application," 32.
[112] "Philippine Educator Speaks Sunday in Ojai," *Ventura County Star*, June 14, 1952, 4.
[113] "Prof 'Visits' SUC Oswego," *Post-Standard*, October 1, 1965.
[114] "Filipino Joins Soul Search."

foundational work of his thesis. The book was also titled *Scientific Evidence of the Existence of the Soul*.[115]

By 1968, Dr. Reyes had left his position at Far Eastern University to become the first president of the University of the City of Manila (known locally as Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila or "PLM"), where he was a founding member of the board of regents. While president, Dr. Reyes helped expand the school's religion, philosophy, and psychology departments.[116] In the following years, he continued his involvement with the Philippine Theosophical Society and traveled extensively to lecture at institutions all over the world. His travels took the scholar back to California, where he consulted Pepperdine University's School of Business administrators about the role of sociology in the school's police management program in February 1970.[117] In 1972, Dr. Reyes left his position at PLM and permanently relocated to Santa Paula, California to work in nearby Ojai Valley, the longtime capital of the Theosophical Society in the United States.[118] One year later in 1973, Reyes took a position as the director of studies at the renowned Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai. There he met with local leaders to discuss the possibility of building a local college campus centered on spiritual studies.[119]

After operating the World Institute of Avasthology out of Happy Valley School for three years, Dr. Reyes, his wife Dominga, and a group of local Theosophy benefactors and students purchased 107 N. Ventura Street for use as the headquarters of the World Institute of Avasthology and its college campus, World University of America, in 1976. In the years after its founding, World University flourished under Dr. Reyes's leadership, with a student population of over 100 and advanced courses in science, philosophy, and religion in Eastern and Western cultures.[120]

Simultaneously, Dr. Reyes continued his involvement with the global Theosophy community throughout the 1980s and early 1990s. In 1984, he and Dominga attended the Triennial Conference of the International Association of University Presidents (IAUP) in Bangkok where they meet with the King and Queen of Thailand.[121] The scholar remained heavily involved in the international academic community in the later decades of his career as well, including memberships with the Institute de la vie of France, the International Institute of Environment in England, and the Institute of Religious Psychology in Japan.[122] By 1990, Dr. Reyes had become a prolific writer, having published over a dozen books on spirituality, philosophy, and psychology, including *On World Peace* (1977), *Meditation: Cybernetics of Consciousness* (1978), *The Essence of All Religions: In Search of Meaning* (1983), and

[115] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application," 32; Benito F. Reyes, *Scientific Evidence of the Existence of the Soul* (United States: Theosophical Publishing House, 1970).
[116] "Finding the Roots of the Origin of Our Alma Mater," Pamantasan ng Lungsod ng Maynila, accessed February 2025, https://web.archive.org/web/20091230022516/http:/www.plm.edu.ph/brief-history.html.
[117] "Tours Pepperdine," *Southwest Topics-Wave*, February 19, 1970.
[118] "Our Story of Avasthology;" Ventura County Directories, Ancestry.com, accessed February 2025, https://www.ancestry.com/search/?name=benito_reyes&event=_ojai-ventura-california-usa_69769&name_x=_1.
[119] "Krotona Director to Talk to Grads at Happy Valley," *Ventura County Star*, June 7, 1973; "A Series of Five Sunday Lectures," *Ventura County Star*, March 28, 1973.
[120] "World University Emphasizes Understanding Between People," *Los Angeles Times*, November 19, 1979.
[121] "Ojai Educator Attends Conference in Bangkok," *Thousand Oaks Star*, June 29, 1984.
[122] San Buenaventura Research Associates, "Taormina Historic District City Landmark Application," 32.

The Practice of Conscious Dying: Off-Ramp to Liberation and Freeway to Conscious Immortality (1990), among others.

In September of 1992, Dr. Benito Reyes died at the age of 78 at his home in Santa Paula. His obituary in the *Oxnard Free Press* described him as a "noted clinical physiologist from the Philippines and founder of the World University in Ojai."[123] Despite his myriad academic positions, publications, and speaking engagements throughout his decades-long career, the founding of World University at 107 N. Ventura Street in Ojai is arguably his most significant career achievement in terms of his contributions to the study of Theosophy and New Age spirituality. The campus provided Dr. Reyes the physical space where he was able to successfully centralize and expand his interdisciplinary Theosophical teachings to a new generation of spiritual leaders over the course of three decades in the later postwar years.

3.5. Mid-Century Modernism

The building at 107 N. Ventura Street is a very modest example of the Mid-Century Modern style. "Mid-Century Modern" is a broad term that is used to describe the various derivatives of Modern architecture that flourished in the post-World War II period. These include postwar adaptations of the chaste and machine-like International Style, the rational aesthetic associated with post-and-beam construction, and more organic and expressive interpretations of the Modern architectural movement. Mid-Century Modernism was popular between the mid-1940s and early 1970s.[124] It proved to be a remarkably versatile idiom that was expressed through a wide variety of property types ranging from single-family residences and commercial buildings to institutional properties and college campuses. Its aesthetic was deftly incorporated into both high-style buildings and the local vernacular, and was employed by architects, developer-builders, and lay contractors alike.

Different variants of the Mid-Century Modern style emerged as the movement gained traction and became more mainstream in the post-World War II period. The style was favored by large-scale institutional centers, as Mid-Century Modernism's emphasis on rational, economic buildings that could be produced en masse was well suited to institutions, which needed to expand quickly and within the confines of capital construction budgets. Industrial materials like cast concrete, steel structural frames, and laminated beams were used in lieu of extravagant materials from more ornate Period Revival styles, significantly reducing construction costs.[125]

Generally, the Mid-Century Modern style, expressed in the context of public institutional architecture, exhibits the following character-defining features:

- Simple, geometric building forms

[123] "World University Founder Reyes Dies at Ojai Home."
[124] City of Los Angeles, "SurveyLA Los Angeles Citywide Historic Context Statement, Context: Architecture and Engineering, Sub-Context, L.A. Modernism, 1919-1980," prepared by Architectural Resources Group for the City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning, Office of Historic Resources (2019).
[125] Ibid.

- Concrete, steel, and glass construction (larger buildings); wood construction (smaller buildings)
- Direct expression of the structural system
- Flat roofs, with or without eaves
- Flush-mounted metal frame windows (often expressed as curtain walls in larger buildings)
- Metal window screens (*brise soleil*), often comprising geometric patterns or motifs
- Minimal surface ornament and decorative details
- Integrated landscapes, often expressed as courtyards or plazas

4. Regulatory Framework

4.1 Definition of Historical Resources

Pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 14, Chapter 3, the following are considered historical resources for the purposes of CEQA:

1. A resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register).

2. A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Section 5020.1(k) of the California Public Resources Code (PRC), or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements in Section 5024.1(g) of the PRC, shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant.

3. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing in the California Register (PRC SS5024.1; Title 14 CCR, Section 4852).

4.2. Federal, State, and Local Evaluation Criteria

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places (National Register) is the nation's master inventory of known historic resources. Created under the auspices of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the National Register is administered by the National Park Service (NPS) and includes listings of buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts that possess historic, architectural, engineering, archaeological, or cultural significance at the national, state, or local level. As described in National Register Bulletin 15: *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, in order to be eligible for the National Register, a resource must both: (1) be *significant,* and (2) retain sufficient *integrity* to convey its significance.

Significance is assessed by evaluating a resource against established criteria for eligibility. A resource is considered significant if it satisfies any one of the following four National Register criteria: [126]

A. Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history;

[126] Some resources may meet multiple criteria, though only one needs to be satisfied for National Register eligibility.

B. Associated with the lives of significant persons in our past;

C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction;

D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Once significance has been established, it must then be demonstrated that a resource retains enough of its physical and associative qualities – or *integrity* – to convey the reason(s) for its significance. Integrity is best described as a resource's "authenticity" as expressed through its physical features and extant characteristics. Whether a resource retains sufficient integrity for listing is determined by evaluating the seven aspects of integrity defined by the NPS:

1. Location (the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred);
2. Setting (the physical environment of a historic property);
3. Design (the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property);
4. Materials (the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular manner or configuration to form a historic property);
5. Workmanship (the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory);
6. Feeling (a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time);
7. Association (the direct link between an important historic event/person and a historic property).

Integrity is evaluated by weighing all seven of these aspects together and is ultimately a "yes or no" determination – that is, a resource either retains sufficient integrity or it does not.[127] Some aspects of integrity may be weighed more heavily than others depending on the type of resource being evaluated and the reason(s) for its significance. Since integrity depends on a resource's placement within a historic context, integrity can be assessed only after it has been established that the resource is significant, and under which criteria.

Generally, a resource must be at least 50 years of age to be eligible for listing in the National Register. Exceptions are made if it can be demonstrated that a resource less than 50 years old is (1) of exceptional importance, or (2) is an integral component of a historic district that is eligible for the National Register.

[127] Derived from NRB 15, Section VIII: "How to Evaluate the Integrity of a Property."

Criteria Consideration G

National Register Bulletin 15 explains that "fifty years is a general estimate of the time needed to develop historical perspective and to evaluate significance. This consideration guards against the listing of properties of passing contemporary interest and ensures that the National Register is a list of truly historic places."[128]

However, the National Park Service acknowledges that on occasion, a resource less than 50 years of age (or a resource that has gained significance within the past 50 years) may merit consideration for listing in the National Register. Criteria Consideration G offers guidance related to the evaluation of properties that may have achieved significance within the past 50 years, setting forth the conditions under which these resources may be eligible for listing. It provides that exceptions to the age threshold may be granted if it can be demonstrated that the individual resource is: (1) of exceptional importance, or (2) an integral component of a National Register-eligible historic district whose other component parts are predominantly 50 years or older.[129]

In justifying exceptional importance for individual resources (*i.e.,* outside of the National Register-eligible historic district context), NRB 15 cites the necessity of comparative analysis. Specifically, it states that "it is necessary to identify other properties within the geographical area that reflect the same significance or historical associations and to determine which properties *best* represent the historic context in question." It continues, "Several properties in the area could become eligible with the passage of time, but few will qualify now as exceptionally important."[130]

California Register of Historical Resources

The California Register of Historical Resources (California Register) is the authoritative guide to the state's significant historical and archeological resources. In 1992, the California legislature established the California Register "to be used by state and local agencies, private groups, and citizens to identify the state's historical resources and to indicate what properties are to be protected, to the extent prudent and feasible, from substantial adverse change."[131] The California Register program encourages public recognition and protection of resources of architectural, historical, archaeological, and cultural significance; identifies historical resources for state and local planning purposes; determines eligibility for historic preservation grant funding; and affords certain protections under CEQA. All resources listed in or formally determined eligible for the National Register are automatically listed in the California Register. In addition, properties designated under municipal or county ordinances, or through local historic resources surveys, are eligible for listing in the California Register.

The structure of the California Register program is similar to that of the National Register, but places its emphasis on resources that have contributed specifically to the development of California. To be

[128] Derived from NRB 15, Section VII: "How to Apply the Criteria Considerations."
[129] The subject building is not an integral component of a National Register-eligible historic district whose other component parts are predominantly 50 years of age or older, therefore this report will not further evaluate the building under this consideration standard.
[130] NRB 15, Section VII: "How to Apply the Criteria Considerations."
[131] California Public Resource (CPR) Code, Section 5024.1 (a).

eligible for the California Register, a resource must first be deemed significant at the local, state, or national level under one of the following four criteria, which are modeled after the National Register criteria listed above:

1. It is associated with events or patterns of events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of local or regional history, or the cultural heritage of California or the United States; or
2. It is associated with the lives of persons important to local, California, or national history; or
3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values; or
4. It has yielded, or has the potential to yield, information important to the prehistory or history of the local area state or the nation.[132]

Like the National Register, the California Register also requires that resources retain sufficient integrity to be eligible for listing. A resource's integrity is assessed using the same seven aspects of integrity used for the National Register. However, since integrity thresholds associated with the California Register are generally less rigid than those associated with the National Register, it is possible that a resource may lack the integrity required for the National Register but still be eligible for listing in the California Register.

There is no prescribed age limit for listing in the California Register, although California Register guidelines state that "sufficient time must have passed to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource."[133]

Resources may be nominated directly to the California Register. They are also automatically listed in the California Register if they are listed in or have been officially determined eligible for the National Register. State Historic Landmarks #770 and forward are also automatically listed in the California Register.[134]

There is no prescribed age limit for listing in the California Register, although OHP technical assistance guidelines state that resources less than 50 years old may be considered for listing as long as sufficient

[132] California Public Resources Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4852.
[133] California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series #6: California Register and National Register: A Comparison* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001), 3. According to the *Instructions for Recording Historical Resources* (Office of Historic Preservation, March 1995), "Any physical evidence of human activities over 45 years old may be recorded for purposes of inclusion in the OHP's filing system. Documentation of resources less than 45 years old may also be filed if those resources have been formally evaluated, regardless of the outcome of the evaluation." This 45-year threshold is intended to guide the recordation of potential historical resources for local planning purposes, and is not directly related to an age threshold for eligibility against California Register criteria.
[134] California Department of Parks and Recreation, Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series #5: California Register of Historical Resources, The Listing Process* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, n.d.), 1.

time has passed "to obtain a scholarly perspective on the events or individuals associated with the resource."[135]

City of Ojai Historic Preservation Law

The City of Ojai's Historic Preservation Law (Chapter 8, Section 4 *et seq.* of the Ojai Municipal Code) was established in 2019. The Law defines any Landmark as a property, structure, or site that meets one or more of the following criteria:

a) Its character, interest, or value as part of the historic development, heritage, or cultural characterization of the community;

b) Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community;

c) Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials;

d) Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community;

e) Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant;

f) Its embodiment of design elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative;

g) Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature; and

h) Its suitability for preservation or restoration.

In addition to the above criteria, any structure, property, or site that meets one or more of the above criteria shall also have sufficient integrity of location, design, materials, and/or workmanship to make it worthy of preservation or restoration.[136]

There is no prescribed age limit for listing as a City of Ojai Landmark. Typically, in the absence of age threshold language in local ordinances, California Register guidelines for age are utilized as best professional practices.

[135] California Office of Historic Preservation, *Technical Assistance Series #6: California Register and National Register: A Comparison* (Sacramento, CA: California Department of Parks and Recreation, 2001), 3.
[136] City of Ojai Municipal Code, Chapter 8, Sec. 4-8.07.

5. Evaluation of Historical Significance

5.1. Previous Evaluations and Studies

The subject building at 107 N. Ventura Street is not currently listed in the National or California Registers, or as an Ojai Landmark. It was not identified in the County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Survey, Phase III – Ojai (San Buenaventura Research Associates, 1985) or the Ojai Historic Resources Reconnaissance Survey (San Buenaventura Research Associates, 2009). However, it was identified as potentially eligible as a contributor to the potential local Ojai Civic Center Historic District by the Ojai Historic Preservation Commission in 2019.[137]

5.2. Evaluation of Significance

The building at 107 N. Ventura Street appears individually eligible for listing in the California Register and as an Ojai Landmark for its association with World University and the development of Ojai as a hub for New Age spiritualism in the later postwar period. It also appears significant for its association with noted academic, philosopher, and Theosophist Dr. Benito Reyes. Its period of significance for these associations is 1976 to 1992, reflecting the period during which Dr. Reyes oversaw the foundation and development of the institution, prior to his death and the gradual decline of the university's influence beginning in the mid-1990s. Because the property achieved its significance less than 50 years ago, it does not appear to be eligible for individual listing in the National Register.

Because the residential building (107 W. Matilija Street) on the subject property is ancillary in nature, and its use/function appears to be related to supporting 107 N. Ventura Street since at least the 1940s, it is not evaluated herein for individual eligibility. Thus, further evaluation of the residential building is not included in this report.

Following is an evaluation of the former World University building (107 N. Ventura Street) against federal, state, and local eligibility criteria as well as an assessment of its historic integrity.

National Register of Historic Places and California Register of Historical Resources

National and California Register Criteria A/1: associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history.

The subject property was evaluated under National/California Register Criterion A/1 for its association with World University and Ojai's New Age spiritual movement of the 1970s and '80s.

Ojai's early 20th century reputation as a spiritual hub attracted various New Age groups to the area in the later postwar period. Founded in 1976, World University represented Dr. Reyes's and other Ojai Theosophical leaders' vision to build a local college campus centered around spiritual studies. While

[137] City of Ojai Administrative Report, Proposed Ojai Civic Center Historic District (OCCHD) Ad Hoc Committee's Progress Report, September 12, 2024, on file at the City of Ojai Community Development Department.

other educational institutions with esoteric religious leanings existed in the area during the time, World University appears to have been the first to focus on higher education. By 1981, the university had an enrollment of over 100 and a core staff of ten professors; it offered bachelor's, master's, and postdoctoral degrees in various fields of the liberal arts, philosophy, psychology, and business, as well as vocational certificates in spiritual ministry, thanatology/astrology, and meditation/yoga. By the late 1980s, the school had begun offering extension classes in Ventura and created the Center for Compassion to help feed local people in need. It had also established an exchange program with other non-traditional institutes around the world. Following Benito Reyes's death in 1992, Dominga Reyes assumed the position of president of World University. While the institution continued to operate at its 107 N. Ventura Street campus, the number of course offerings appears to have begun to decline, and in later years, the school mainly offered distance learning programs. World University closed in 2017 when the institution was issued a letter from the Bureau of Private Postsecondary Education to cease operations of all its degree programs due to lack of accreditation.

Though the property is significant for its association with the abovementioned contexts, it does not appear to be eligible under National Register Criterion A at this time. The property's period of significance begins in 1976, the date World University was founded, and ends in 1992, the year of Dr. Reyes's death, after which the university entered into a period of decline. National Register Bulletin 15 states that properties with a period of significance that extends into a period less than 50 years ago must meet Criteria Consideration G. The period of significance for the subject building falls outside the 50-year age threshold. While the university made important contributions to the proliferation of New Age spiritual thought and practice in an educational setting, it does not rise to the level of exceptional importance as defined by Criteria Consideration G. It was part of a trend of New Age spiritual establishments in Ojai in the late 1960s and '70s, but there is insufficient evidence supporting the conclusion that it was exceptionally significant within that context. It thus does not meet Criteria Consideration G.

However, the California Register does not have a strict 50-year age requirement as does the National Register. The subject property appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 1 for its association with World University and the development of New Age institutions in Ojai in the later postwar era.

National California Register Criteria B/2: associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

The subject property was evaluated under National/California Register Criterion B/2 for its association with noted academic and Theosophist Benito Reyes, who founded World University at the property with his wife Dominga Reyes in 1976.

Born in Manila, Philippines in 1914, Benito Reyes became involved with the Philippine Theosophical Society through his work with the World Federation of Young Theosophers. In 1948, he graduated from Far Eastern University in Manila with a Master of Arts and a Doctorate in Psychology and was subsequently made chairmen of the school's Department of Philosophy and Psychology. He served in this role for approximately 21 years, during which time he engaged in various guest lecturer opportunities and speaking engagements around the world. During the 1950s and '60s, Dr. Reyes was awarded two Fulbright teaching positions—one from Boston University's Philosophy Department

(1951) and the other from State University of New York in Oswego (1965)—while he continued to guest lecture at other notable institutions. By 1968, Dr. Reyes had left his position at Far Eastern University to become the first president of the University of the City of Manila and helped to expand the school's religion, philosophy, and psychology departments. In the early 1970s, he relocated to Santa Paula to work as the director of studies at the Krotona Institute of Theosophy in Ojai, where he later founded World University in 1976. World University flourished under Dr. Reyes's leadership, with a student population of over 100 and advanced courses in science, philosophy, and religion in Eastern and Western cultures. Throughout the 1980s and until his death in 1992, Dr. Reyes continued to grow the curriculum, promote the school, and recruit new students on his extensive travels to conferences and speaking arrangements around the world.

Despite Dr. Benito Reyes's myriad academic positions, speaking engagements, publications, and leadership roles throughout his decades-long career, the founding of World University at 107 N. Ventura Street in Ojai is arguably his most significant career achievement in terms of his contributions to the study of Theosophy and New Age spirituality. The campus provided him the physical space where he was able to successfully centralize and expand his interdisciplinary Theosophical teachings to a new generation of spiritual leaders over the course of three decades.

Though the property is significant for its association with Dr. Reyes, as described in its evaluation under Criterion A/1, it does not appear to be eligible under National Register Criterion B because its period of significance (1976-1992) falls outside the National Register's 50-year age threshold. While Dr. Reyes appears to have been a significant academic and Theosophist who made important contributions to the advancement of New Age thought and learning, best conveyed through his founding and promotion of World University, the property's association with Reyes does not rise to the level of exceptional importance as defined by Criteria Consideration G.

However, as described under its Criterion A/1 evaluation, the California Register does not have a strict 50-year age requirement as does the National Register. The subject property appears to be eligible for listing in the California Register under Criterion 2 for its association with Dr. Benito Reyes as related to his founding and promotion of World University.

National and California Register Criteria C/3: embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represents the work of a master, or that possesses high artistic values, or that represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

Completed in 1951, the subject building was constructed for Ojai's First Baptist Church for use as classrooms, offices, and a social hall. Though it retains some characteristics of the Mid-Century Modern style (horizontal rectangular massing, flat roof with wide eaves, lack of applied ornamentation), it is a very modest interpretation of the architectural idiom and does not possess high artistic values. It was built using typical construction methods and materials from the period, including concrete block and wood windows and doors. It does not embody the distinctive characteristics of Mid-Century Modernism seen in more highly articulated institutional examples of the style, such as an expression of its structural system and flush-mounted windows, extensive use of glazing (i.e. curtain walls), and geometric patterned screens (*brise soleil*). Furthermore, its central landscaped courtyard,

which is a characteristic of Mid-Century Modern institutional properties, was heavily altered with new landscaping, planter beds, and concrete paths in 2017-2018. Though the original architect is unknown, given its modest design and construction, it is unlikely that the building represents the work of a master. For these reasons, the building does not appear to be eligible under National/California Register Criterion C/3.

National and California Register Criteria D/4: has yielded or may likely yield information important in prehistory or history.

ARG did not observe any features on the property that appear likely to yield information important in prehistory or history. In addition, the property has been graded and developed, and its shallow subsurface is unlikely to yield such information. Therefore, based on what can be observed on the site, the property does not appear to be eligible under Criterion D or 4 of the National or California Registers.

City of Ojai Landmark

Local Criterion A: Its character, interest, or value as part of the historic development, heritage, or cultural characterization of the community.

As described in its evaluation against National/California Register Criterion A/1, the subject property appears eligible for its association with World University and the New Age spiritual movement of the 1970s and '80s. Ojai's early 20th century reputation as a spiritual hub attracted various New Age groups to the area in the later postwar period. Founded in 1976, World University represented Dr. Reyes's and other Ojai Theosophical leaders' vision to build a local college campus centered around spiritual studies. While other educational institutions with spiritual leanings existed in the area during the time, World University appears to have been the first to focus on higher education. By 1981, the university had an enrollment of over 100 and offered advanced degrees in a variety of liberal arts and esoteric studies. By the late 1980s, the school had expanded its class offerings to Ventura and established an exchange program with other non-traditional institutes around the world. Following Benito Reyes's death in 1992, the university appears to have entered a state of decline, eventually closing its doors in 2017.

For the above reasons, the subject building appears eligible under Local Criterion A.

Local Criterion B: Its identification with a person or persons who significantly contributed to the development of the community.

As described in its evaluation against National/California Register Criterion B/2, the subject building appears eligible for its association with noted academic and Theosophist Dr. Benito Reyes. Born in Manila in 1914, Dr. Reyes became involved with the Theosophical Society at a young age. He was a recognized as an academic in the fields of religion, philosophy, and psychology; he served as chairman of Far Eastern University's Department of Philosophy and Psychology and president of University of the City of Manila. He held Fulbright teaching positions in philosophy at Boston University and State University of New York in Oswego. After taking a position as director of studies at the Krotona Institute

of Theosophy in Ojai in the early 1970s, Dr. Reyes and his wife Dominga founded World University. Despite his various achievements throughout his decades-long career, the founding of World University at 107 N. Ventura Street in Ojai is arguably his most significant career achievement in terms of his contributions to the study of Theosophy and New Age spirituality in Ojai Valley.

For the abovementioned reasons, the subject property appears eligible under Local Criterion B.

Local Criterion C: Its embodiment of distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style valuable for the study of a period, type, method of construction, or use of indigenous materials.

As described in its evaluation against National/California Register Criterion C/3, the building represents a very modest interpretation of the Mid-Century Modern style. While it possesses some features of the style (horizontal rectangular massing, flat roof with wide eaves, lack of applied ornamentation), it does not embody the distinguishing characteristics of the architectural idiom (structural expression, flush-mounted windows, extensive use of glazing, *brise soleil*). Additionally, its central landscaped courtyard, which is a characteristic of Mid-Century Modern institutional properties, was heavily altered with new landscaping and hardscaping in 2017-2018. Lastly, it was built with undistinguished, typical construction methods and materials of the period (concrete block, wood windows and doors). For these reasons, 107 N. Ventura Street does not appear eligible under Local Criterion C.

Local Criterion D: Its identification as the work of a master builder, designer, architect, or landscape architect whose individual work has influenced the development of the community.

As described in its evaluation against National/California Register Criterion C/3, the building's original architect and builder are unknown. However, given its modest design and construction, it is unlikely that it represents the work of a master builder, designer, or architect. Thus, it does not appear eligible under Local Criterion D.

Local Criterion E: Its embodiment of elements of design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that render it architecturally significant.

As stated in its above evaluation against National/California Register Criterion C/3 and Local Criterion C, the building is a very modest example of the Mid-Century Modern style constructed with typical materials of the postwar period (concrete block, wood windows/doors). It does not embody the more distinctive elements of Mid-Century Modern design, detailing, materials, or craftsmanship that would render it architecturally significant. It thus does not appear eligible under Local Criterion E.

Local Criterion F: Its embodiment of design elements that make it structurally or architecturally innovative.

As described in its above evaluation against National/California Register Criterion C/3 and Local Criteria C and E, the building was constructed with typical postwar materials (concrete block, wood windows/doors) and Mid-Century Modern design elements (horizontal rectangular massing, flat roof with wide eaves, lack of applied ornamentation). It does not embody elements of Mid-Century Modern design that are structurally or architecturally innovative. Therefore, it does not appear eligible under Local Criterion F.

Local Criterion G: Its unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature.

The subject property is located at the corner of two smaller streets (Ventura and Matilija), off Ojai Avenue, the city's main commercial thoroughfare, and just outside of Ojai's downtown civic and commercial center. Furthermore, as described above, the building is very modest in terms of its design and visual appearance and lacks street presence. For these reasons, the property does not have a unique location or singular physical characteristics that make it an established or familiar visual feature. It does not appear eligible under Local Criterion G.

Local Criterion H: Its suitability for preservation or restoration.

The subject building has undergone relatively few alterations since its original construction (1949-1951) and its historic period (1976-1992). Though the property received all new landscaping and new concrete paths and planters/planter beds between 2017-2018, alterations to the building itself have been relatively minor and cosmetic, including replacement of some doors and windows, installation of a new mechanical screen at the rooftop, and removal of interior finishes. Thus, it is suitable for preservation and meets Local Criterion H.

5.3. Evaluation of Integrity

In order for a property to be eligible for listing as a City of Ojai Landmark, it must retain sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance. Set forth below is an evaluation of 107 N. Ventura Street under the seven aspects of integrity established as part of the National Register process.

Location

The building has not been moved from its original location, and therefore retains this aspect of integrity.

Design

Completed in 1951, the building largely reflects is original modest design from when it was constructed. Changes to the building are relatively minor and cosmetic, including the construction of a rear (west) addition, replacement of a few doors and secondary windows, the addition of a mechanical screen at the rooftop, removal of interior finishes, and new landscaping and hardscaping. The building retains the majority of its original design features, including its horizontal, rectangular massing, one-story height, U-shaped plan, flat roof with wide eaves, exposed concrete block exterior walls, and multi-paned wood windows and doors. Thus, it retains this aspect of integrity.

Setting

The building is located in Downtown Ojai, just north of Ojai Avenue, the city's main thoroughfare. The property's immediate setting was historically and is currently composed of low-scale commercial and

institutional properties dating from the 1910s to the post-World War II period. Postwar residential neighborhoods comprise the area further north of the property. The property retains this aspect of integrity.

Materials

While some of the building's materials have been replaced (some windows and doors) and new materials added (faux wood mechanical screen at the rooftop, new concrete paving and plants), the vast majority of the building's historic materials, including its painted CMU walls and most wood windows and doors, remain. Thus, it retains this aspect of integrity.

Workmanship

The building retains its physical features from its historic period, including its original design and most of its historic materials. Thus, the property retains integrity of workmanship.

Feeling

The property retains its character-defining features from its historic period and is recognizable as a postwar institutional/non-residential building. It therefore retains integrity of feeling.

Association

Because the building retains its historic character through its original location, design, most materials, workmanship, and feeling, it maintains its association with Dr. Benito Reyes, World University, and the continued development of Ojai as spiritual hub in the postwar period.

5.4. Character-Defining Features

Following is a list of character-defining features of 107 N. Ventura Street relating to its significance for its association with Dr. Reyes and World University:

- Central open courtyard (landscaping/hardscaping within the courtyard replaced)
- One-story height (double-height volume at the central wing)
- Horizontal, rectangular massing
- U-shaped plan
- Flat roof (including wide eaves at the north and south wings)
- Painted concrete block walls
- Paired and grouped multi-light double-hung wood windows
- Multi-light wood doors

6. Impacts Analysis

6.1. Summary of Historical Resource Findings

Pursuant to Section 15064.5(a)(2) of the State CEQA Guidelines (CEQA Guidelines), the term "historical resource" includes a resource listed in, or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (California Register). 107 N. Ventura Street is eligible for listing in the California Register and as an Ojai Landmark, which satisfies the definition of a historical resource as enumerated by the CEQA Guidelines. There are no other historical resources on the Project Site.

6.2. Significance Thresholds

According to California CEQA Guidelines, a project has the potential to impact a historical resource when the project involves a "substantial adverse change" in the resource's significance. Substantial adverse change is defined as "physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired."[138]

The significance of an historical resource is materially impaired when a project:

a) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, the California Register of Historical Resources; or

b) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics that account for its inclusion in a local register of historical resources pursuant to Section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant; or

c) Demolishes or materially alters in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its eligibility for inclusion in the California Register of Historical Resources as determined by a lead agency for the purposes of CEQA.[139]

A project that has been determined to conform with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings* (the Standards) shall generally be considered to be a project that will not cause a significant impact on a historical resource (Title 14 CCR, Section 15064.5(b)(3).

[138] *CEQA Guidelines,* Section 15064.5.
[139] Ibid.

The Standards are a useful analytic tool for understanding and describing the potential impacts of substantial changes to historical resources. However, under California environmental law, compliance with the Standards does not necessarily determine whether a project would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource. Rather, projects that comply with the Standards benefit from a regulatory presumption that they would have a less than significant adverse impact on a historical resource.[140] As stated above, CEQA thresholds for material impairment to the significance of a historical resource is the alteration of the resource "in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in, or eligibility for, the California Register of Historical Resources" or in a local register.[141]

6.3. Project Description

The Project proposes the rehabilitation of the former World University building (107 N. Ventura Street) for use as a hotel spa. Proposed site work includes replacement of an asphalt paved parking area at the west end of the property (behind the subject building) with a landscaped courtyard. The Project would include interior remodeling of the building to accommodate dressing rooms, treatment rooms, a gym, steam/sauna rooms, and back of house/service areas. Rooms would receive compatible, contemporary fixtures and finishes, and the subject building's existing floor plan would generally remain the same. Exterior changes to the building would be limited to re-roofing and the removal of the non-original, faux wood mechanical screens on the lower roof wings; replacement of non-original metal light fixtures with new metal fixtures; the addition of a new fence enclosing the central courtyard; and repainting. During the roof replacement, rooftop mechanical equipment will either be relocated off the roof or consolidated and enclosed with a new mechanical screen. The Project does not propose any changes to the residence (107 W. Matilija Street) on the Site.

6.4. Analysis of Project Impacts

As noted above, a project has the potential to impact a historical resource if the project would result in a "substantial adverse change" to its significance. Generally speaking, substantial adverse change is defined as demolition or material alteration in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of a historical resource that convey its historical significance and that justify its inclusion in a federal, state, and/or local register of historical resources.

As discussed above, the building at 107 N. Ventura Street appears eligible for listing in the California Register and designation as an Ojai Landmark. It therefore meets the definition of a historical resource under CEQA.

The Project would not result in the demolition of the subject building. The Project proposes certain changes to the exterior of the building, including re-roofing, removal of non-historic mechanical screens, replacement of non-historic light fixtures, and repainting. The building would continue to retain all of its character-defining features, as follows:

[140] *CEQA Guidelines*, section 15064.5(b)(3).
[141] *CEQA Guidelines*, Section 15064.5.

- Central open courtyard (landscaping/hardscaping within the courtyard replaced)
- One-story height (double-height volume at the central wing)
- Horizontal, rectangular massing
- U-shaped plan
- Flat roof (including wide eaves at the north and south wings)
- Painted concrete block walls
- Paired and grouped multi-light double-hung wood windows
- Multi-light wood doors

The Project would also retain the building's street frontage on Ventura and Matilija streets. Site improvements, including a new landscaped courtyard behind (to the west of) the building and new fencing/gates, would block any significant views of the property.

Because the Project would preserve the building's extant historic features, the building would retain the physical characteristics that account for its eligibility for listing under state and local registration programs.

Compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards

Following is an analysis of all Project components against the Standards for Rehabilitation.

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 Project complies with Standard No. 1. The former World University building at 107 N. Ventura Street would be given a new use as a spa, which would require no change to any of its distinctive materials, features, spaces, or 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.*

The Project complies with Standard No. 2. All of the building's distinctive materials and features, enumerated in the above list of character-defining features (*Section 5.4*), would be retained under the Project. The building would also retain its existing spatial relationships with the residence (107 W. Matilija Street) on the Site as well as its relationship with Ventura and Matilija streets. Thus, the historic character of the property would be retained and preserved.

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 Project complies with Standard No. 3. No changes that create a false sense of historical development would be undertaken as part of the Project.

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

Standard No. 4 does not apply to the Project's impact on the subject building. The Project would remove non-historic mechanical screens and light fixtures, which were added in the last five to ten years and have not acquired significance in their own right.

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

The Project meets Standard No. 5. As described in its evaluation under Standard No. 2, the Project would preserve all of the building's distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques/examples of craftsmanship listed in *Section 5.4*.

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.*

The Project complies with Standard No. 6. Any deteriorated historic features or materials (roof eaves, wood windows/doors, concrete block exterior walls) identified during the building's rehabilitation would be repaired rather than replaced to the extent feasible. If deteriorated beyond repair, features/materials would be replaced in kind under the guidance of a historic architect meeting the Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification 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.*

The Project meets Standard No. 7. Chemical and physical treatments will not likely be needed under the Project. However, should any such treatments be required during the building's rehabilitation, they would be undertaken using the gentlest means possible so as to minimize damage to historic fabric.

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

Standard No. 8 does not apply with regard to the Project's treatment of the subject building.

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.*

The Project meets Standard No. 9. Proposed site improvements include the addition of a new fence in front of the subject building's central courtyard off Ventura Street and replacement of a non-historic paved parking area to the west of the building with a new landscaped courtyard. The new fence and west landscaped courtyard would be compatible with the historic character of the property. The new landscaped courtyard would be minimally visible from the street so as to protect the integrity of the

property and its environment. Exterior alterations to the subject building are minimal, including re-roofing, removal of a non-historic mechanical screen, replacement of non-historic light fixtures, and repainting. All of the property's historic materials, features, and spatial relationships would be retained under the Project.

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 Project meets Standard No. 10. If the new landscaped courtyard to the west/rear of 107 N. Ventura Street were removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the property and its environment would be unimpaired.

6.5. Summary of Continued Eligibility

The Project would not impair the significance of the former World University building at 107 N. Ventura Street. The subject building would retain all of its character-defining features under the Project that account for its eligibility for listing under state and local registration programs. Furthermore, the Project complies with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation* with regard to its treatment of the subject building. For these reasons, the building would continue to be eligible for listing in the California Register and as an Ojai Landmark after the Project is completed.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the Project would not have a significant impact on the former World University building at 107 N. Ventura Street, a historical resource for the purposes of CEQA. The Project includes the rehabilitation of the subject building, which is eligible for listing in the California Register and as an Ojai Landmark. No other historical resources are located on the Project Site.

The Project would not materially impair the significance of the subject building; proposed work would retain all character-defining features of the building. Because the Project would not result in the addition of square footage to the building, and site improvements are largely limited to areas with minimal to no visibility from the public right-of-way, the Project would not result in any indirect impacts to historical resources in the vicinity of the Site. Therefore, the Project would not result in any impacts to historical resources under CEQA.

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Hotel El Roblar

April 23rd, 2026

Mr. Lucas Seibert
Community Development Manager
City of Ojai
401 South Ventura Street
Ojai, CA 93023

RE: Hotel El Roblar Health Spa and Wellness Center
107 Ventura Street and 103 W. Matilija Street
APNs 021-0-106-030 and -040

Mr. Seibert,

Thank you for your Determination of Incomplete Status for DRP 25-011, ZC 25-002, and GPA 25-001, dated January 9, 2026, (Incomplete Letter").

With this letter, we are submitting a number of items in response to the letter including minor revisions to the project description. The project remains unchanged from the original project description, and in its benefits to the City of Ojai.

Incomplete Items and Response

Traffic, Parking, and VMT Analysis

- Enclosed herewith please find the updated report from ATE responding to the comments provided.

Design Review Permit Application Requirements

1. Updated plans accompany this submittal. Plans include:

- North arrow on applicable sheets (i.e. site and roof plans)
- Color and material board is included as sheet A-202
- Parking dimensions are shown on sheet A-100. Spaces are existing.
- Path of travel is indicated with dashed lines from the van accessible space to the front and side entrances on sheet A-100

- Landscape is shown on sheet A-100, inclusive of the concept plant palette, imagery, and square footage of building, landscape, and hardscape.
- Will serve letters are included
    - Letter from Water dated December 16, 2025
    - Letter from sewer dated November 18, 2025
- A new set of noticing labels was obtained from Ventura County and is supplied herewith.
- Location map and vicinity maps are provided on sheet G-000
- Exterior lighting is shown on A-202 as a dark sky friendly sconce.
- Existing and proposed surface types and percentages are found on A-100
- Square footage and use type listed on sheet G-000
- Elevations with callouts for color and material can be found A-202. this sheet within the set can be provided to PC for review.

Solid Waste

- We have provided an exhibit with this submittal which shows the solid waste collection will be handled along with the hotel by hotel and spa staff.

Precise Plans

- The project is a remodel and change of use to an existing building. Exterior mechanical equipment is comprised of HVAC equipment on the roof of the building which is screened as noted on sheet A-202.
- Project address has been updated.
- ADA access is shown on sheet A-100
- Existing elevation sheet has been updated
- Existing site plan is A-100D, also serves as the demo site plan.
- The demo site plan is the same as above. See A-100D
-

Conditional Use Permit

- We understand a CUP is required and will pay the fee with this resubmittal.

Public Art

- Thank you for this advisory. No public art is proposed.

Lot Merger

- We understand the City is requesting a Lot Merger. Enclosed is the LLA application as requested. Note that while an LLA application form is being used, the project does not propose an LLA. A lot merger is regulated differently in the Subdivision Map Act. An exhibit of the Lot Merger is enclosed.

Fire Department

- Thank you for providing the Fire Departments conditions. Our architect met with Fire and it is our understanding that they have approved the proposed site plan.

Engineering

- We met with Engineering to discuss the comments and made revisions accordingly. The proposed easement for pedestrian purposes is shown with callout 9 on sheet A-100. Please note they agreed to defer to Fire Department thus a new hydrant is not required nor proposed.

Enclosures

Please find the following items on our Sharefile, with the exception of the labels and fees which will be hand delivered, and the material board which was previously provided. Note this link is available for 30 days: https://bhfs.sharefile.com/d-sff2ffa97825444298387fbce4a2d85ba

1) Revised Plans
2) Updated Traffic Study by ATE dated April 21, 2026
3) Will serve letters referenced herein
4) Updated Preliminary Title Report
5) Property owner labels
6) Trash Exhibit
7) Separate Color & Material Board (previously delivered).
8) Lot Merger Application, Exhibits, and Supporting Documentation
9) Fees as requested in the Incomplete Letter
    a. LLA Deposit $14,508
    b. Lot Merger $450 deposit
    c. CUP deposit $450.00 deposit

Sincerely,

jeremy mcbride

107 Ventura LLC

August 12, 2024

Mr. Lucas Seibert
Community Development Manager
City of Ojai
401 South Ventura Street
Ojai, CA 93023

RE: Hotel El Roblar Health Spa and Wellness Center
107 Ventura Street and 103 W. Matilija Street
APNs 021-0-106-030 and -040

Dear Lucas,

We are thrilled to submit the accompanying application for concept review of the proposed Hotel El Roblar Health Spa and Wellness Center ("spa" or "project") on approximately 0.6 acres in the heart of downtown Ojai. The project is proposed on two assessor parcels APNs 021-0-106-030 and 021-0-106-040 addressed 103 W Matilija Street and 107 N. Ventura Street ("property").

I. Project Vision & Site History

The Hotel El Roblar, slated for opening in 2024 has a rich history. For decades, it was the home of a health retreat operated by the community-beloved Sheila Cluff and her family as the Oaks at Ojai. In its prime, the Oaks had numerous treatment rooms, dining, and lodging opportunities, and was a destination spa for those seeking health and wellness in the Ojai Valley.

The revival of the Hotel El Roblar provides handsome lodging, dining, and gathering spaces. It's owners now seek to pay homage to Ms. Cluff and her passion for fitness with a separate but complimentary project in the 107 N. Ventura building.

We are honored to have Cathy Cluff's support of the project; she will be intimately involved in her role as its Director. Her contributions will be paramount to ensuring that her mother's vision for wellness, and the spirit of Ojai is carried forward. We look forward to working with her and her wealth of knowledge and enthusiasm.

II. Hotel El Roblar Spa and Health Club Facility

The project is a proposed General Plan Amendment and Rezone from Public (PL) to Village Mixed Use (VMU), and a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) to allow a change of use of an existing approximately 8,449 SF structure for use as a spa operated in conjunction with the Hotel El Roblar.

The property has been utilized for a variety of purposes over time including the City's courtrooms, Police Department, and office space for the Ojai Chamber of Commerce. The property was also occupied by World University for some time, and has since been shuttered. Presently, the residence on the northwest portion of the property remains occupied, while the office building eagerly awaits this next opportunity to serve the community.

To be clear, the existing residence with two parking spaces will remain; no change of use or modification to this residential use is proposed by this application.

The spa will be a stand-alone business, which will provide services to registered overnight guests of the Hotel El Roblar. The spa will have offerings including treatment rooms, gym, steam room, sauna, lobby and ancillary boutique. Exterior changes would include elimination of a paved parking area in the southwest portion of the property and redevelopment of that space with landscaped meditation and relaxation areas. The courtyard facing N. Ventura Street would also be reimagined and landscaped. See enclosed concept site/floor plan.

Spa operations are proposed to fall into two general categories based on demonstrated and typical use patterns. These use patterns consist of "peak" demand or use and "off-peak" demand or use. Generally, peak use occurs on Fridays and Saturdays, and ends Sundays around check-out time. Off-peak use occurs between Sunday afternoon and close of business Thursday.

Off-Peak Demand

During off-peak times, reservations for up to 4 of the 8 treatment rooms will be available for booking by local residents. Hours of operation for the facility will be between 6am to 9pm, with spa hours ranging from 8 am to 6pm.

Peak Demand

During peak times, the spa will be open for use by registered overnight guests of the Hotel El Roblar. The facility will be open between 6am to 10pm, with spa hours from 8 am to 8pm.

Parking, Access, and Circulation

Although not needed[1], Eight (8) existing parking spaces on site are proposed to remain for use by the spa. The project would retain access from the existing improved public rights of way of N. Ventura Avenue and W. Matilija streets. Presently, entrance to the parking lot occurs from N. Ventura, and exit onto W. Matilija.

III. Project Benefits

In addition to the health and wellness benefits to clients of the Spa and Health Club Facility, the project will have numerous benefits to the City of Ojai including:

- Retention/protection of existing for-rent residential use on site
- Reuse of an existing, developed, but underutilized site
- Provision of community art
- Increase in landscaping coverage
- Reduction in impervious surfaces
- Increase vitality and vibrancy of the downtown
- Increased economic viability of the Spa and Health Club in addition to the Hotel El Roblar
- Payment of permit and inspection fees/revenue to the City
- Increase in TOT
- Additional sales tax revenue
- Increase in property tax revenue
- Increased utility efficiency via new construction (e.g. fixtures, glazing, etc.)
- Increase in local job resilience with a less cyclical employment pattern. This will have an incremental benefit for certain employees by allowing retention year-over-year. In turn, this will have a small but important benefit to school enrollment, reduction in traffic, and potentially allow workers to live in town vs. commuting.
- Rezone of the property to a more versatile zone type consistent with the downtown surroundings and long-term vitality of the property
- No increase in traffic via offerings to existing residents and guests

[1] See ATE report dated July 26, 2024

IV. Findings for Approval of Zone Changes and General Plan Amendments

The City of Ojai's Municipal Code requires the applicant establish evidence in support of the required findings for approval. These findings are reproduced below in *italics*, with a general discussion and analysis of how the project complies following each item.

(1) The proposed amendment ensures and maintains internal consistency with the actions, goals, objectives, and policies of the General Plan, and would not create any inconsistencies with these Zoning Regulations, in the case of an amendment of these Zoning Regulations;

The project proposes to rezone the property from PL to VMU, and seeks a CUP as required for this type of project in the VMU zone district. The benefits of the VMU zone district, particularly with regard to allowing commercial and residential uses on the same property, have been considered in the establishment of the zone, which is currently contemplated for assignment to additional properties in the downtown area.

(2) The proposed amendment would not be detrimental to the public convenience, health, interest, safety, or welfare of the City; and

The project would retain existing residential uses on site, and establish a new health spa and wellness facility within an existing commercial building on site. The project has adequate parking on site and would not introduce any traffic or circulation hazards. The project is within the service area of police and fire services. The project does not propose any uses that result in excessive noise, dust, odors, or other potentially detrimental outcomes.

(3) The proposed project has been reviewed in compliance with the provisions of CEQA and/or the City's environmental review procedures.

The project is proposed on an existing developed property in the City which is, and has been used for residential and commercial uses. The project would occur in an existing structure on site, and is therefore anticipated to qualify for a Categorical Exemption from CEQA under Class 1 Existing Facilities for projects which involve negligible or no expansion of use. The City could also consider application of Categorical Exemption 15332 in-fill development projects. The City has previously considered the property for redevelopment and found none of the Exceptions (per 15300.2) to the use of a Categorical Exemption apply to the site.[2]

(b) Additional finding for Zoning Map amendments. The site(s) is/are physically suitable (including access, provision of utilities, compatibility with adjoining land uses, and absence of physical constraints) for the requested zoning designation(s) and anticipated land use development(s).

The property is an existing, flat, developed site in the City and is currently served with existing sewer and water connections. The project proposes to retain the existing residential use on site. The health spa and wellness facility is proposed within an existing building on site. The proposed use is compatible with neighboring residential, visitor- and resident-serving uses. It would also be consistent with other contemplated rezones and applications of the VMU zone. The rezone would allow for the continued residential uses.

(c) Additional finding for amendments of these Zoning Regulations. The proposed amendment is internally consistent with other applicable provisions of these Zoning Regulations.

The proposed project would be consistent with the proposed VMU land use designation and zoning which allows health and wellness facilities as well as residential uses. The VMU zone has been found desirable for other properties within the downtown area, and would be in this case as well.

[2] See City Council Administrative Report for the October 25, 2022 Hearing, Item 4, Attachment A, p. 4, Attachment D, pp. 37-49, available at https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TnZcmpfwnkm0XbMhGhGDRp617DXxm_Lv/view.

V. Concept Review Materials

As required in the City's Concept Review application, please find the following materials accompanying this letter:

- Completed application form signed by the property owner
- Filing fee
- Concept Site and Floor Plan
- Property owner listing (300-foot radius) by Ventura County GIS formatted for printing on mailing labels
- Traffic, Parking, and VMT analysis for the 107 N. Ventura Street Project dated July 26, 2024 by ATE

VI. Conclusion

We are excited to team with the Cluff family to reintroduce a bit of Ojai history. We appreciate your assistance getting this project to the Planning Commission for what is sure to be a productive discussion and step forward for this important project.

Best regards,

Warner Ebbink
Eric Goode
Jeremy McBride
Ramin Shamshiri

30600098.1

El Roblar Hotel

Health Spa & Wellness Center

STAMPS

SCOPE OF WORK

THE SCOPE OF WORK INCLUDES:

REMODEL OF EXISTING 7,633 SF COMMERCIAL BUILDING INTO A HEALTH SPA & WELLNESS CENTER TO BE OPERATED IN COORDINATION WITH THE HOTEL EL ROBLAR. EXISTING RESIDENCE AND PARKING FOR RESIDENCE SHALL REMAIN.

REZONE AND GPA FROM PL TO VMU

CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT FOR THE USE OF A HEALTH SPA ASSOCIATED WITH THE HOTEL EL ROBLAR

INTERIOR REMODEL AND EXTERIOR CHANGES TO EXISTING BUILDING TO A HEALTH SPA AND WELLNESS CENTER

REVISION TO EXISTING PARKING TO ELIMINATE THREE PARKING SPACES FOR CONVERSION TO A RETREAT GARDEN

LOT MERGER OF EXISTING LOTS, DEDICATION OF EASEMENT FOR RIGHT OF WAY FOR SIDEWALK PURPOSES ALONG THE PROPERTY'S EASTERN EDGE

CODE ANALYSIS

APPLICABLE CODES:	Intent to comply with 2022 CBC, 2022 CPC, 2022 CMC 2022 CEC, TITLE 24 CAC, 2022 CFC, ADA TITLE III,and current engineering and architectural practices
MIXED OCCUPANCY?	NO
SPRINKLERED REQUIRED?	TBD
OCCUPANCY GROUP:	A-3
TYPE CONSTRUCTION:	V-B
PROPOSED USE:	HEALTH SPA
EXISTING USE:	OFFICE
NEW SF:	0 SF
ALTERATION SF:	7,633 SF
EXISTING SF:	7,633 SF
NUMBER OF STORIES:	1

TABULATIONS

OWNER:		107 VENTURA LLC 107 N VENTURA STREET OJAI, CA 93023	
PROJECT ADDRESS:		107 N VENTURA STREET & 103 W MATILIJA STREET OJAI, CA 93023	
A.P.N.:		021-0-106-040 / 021-0-106-030	
HIGH FIRE ZONE?		YES	
FLOOD ZONE?		NO	
COASTAL ZONE?		NO	
LAND USE ZONE:		P-L	
SETBACKS:			
FRONT:		0 FT	
REAR:		0 FT	
INTERIOR:		0 FT	
LOT AREA:	GROSS:	26,250 SF 0.60 ACRES	
	NET:	26,250 SF 0.60 ACRES	

FLOOR AREA	**NET SF**	**GROSS SF**
COMMERCIAL BUILDING	7,633	8,093
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING	934	1,007
TOTAL EXISTING FLOOR AREA	**8,567**	**9,100**

PARKING

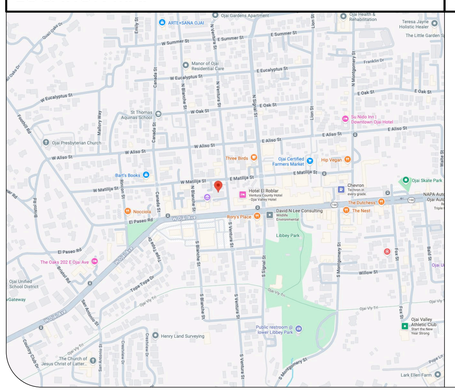
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PROPOSED	10
REQUIRED	**14**

DRAWING INDEX

GENERAL
G-000 TITLE SHEET
G-001 SITE PHOTOS
G-002 SITE PHOTOS

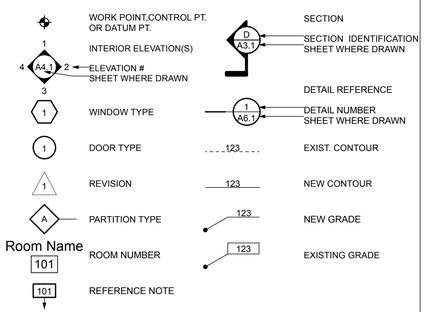
ARCHITECTURAL
A-100A SITE PLAN
A-100D DEMO SITE PLAN
A-100 SITE / LANDSCAPE PLAN
D-101 DEMO PLAN
A-101 FLOOR PLAN
A-103 ROOF PLAN
A-201 EXISTING EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS
A-202 PROPOSED EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

LOCATION MAP



FIRE DEPT NOTES

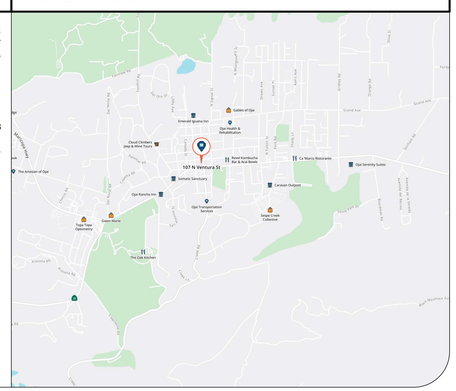
SYMBOLS



PROFESSIONALS

OWNER	107 VENTURA LLC 107 N VENTURA STREET OJAI, CA 93023
ARCHITECT	ANDRULAITIS+MIXON ARCHITECTS, INC. 2040 ALAMEDA PADRE SERRA, SUITE 107 SANTA BARBARA, CA 93103 805.899.2528
INTERIOR DESIGNER	MAHTE ARCHITECTURE & INTERIORS 737 N WESTERN AVE., SUITE C LOS ANGELES, CA 90029

VICINITY MAP



andrulaitis+mixon
2040 ALAMEDA PADRE SERRA SUITE 107
SANTA BARBARA CALIFORNIA 805 899 2528

mahte
ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS

Proposed project/remodel for:
El Roblar Hotel
Health Spa & Wellness Center
107 N Ventura Street
Ojai, CA 93023

LICENSE

JOB NUMBER
25.021

CONTENTS
TITLE SHEET

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SUBMITTALS

DATE	TYPE
12.08.25	DRP#1
04.08.26	DRP#2

ISSUE DATE
04.08.26

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

G-000




















andrulaitis+mixon
2040 ALAMEDA PADRE SERRA SUITE 107
SANTA BARBARA CALIFORNIA 805 899 2528

mahte
ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS

Proposed project/remodel for:

El Roblar Hotel
Health Spa & Wellness Center

107 N Ventura Street
Ojai, CA 93023

LICENSE

JOB NUMBER

25.021

CONTENTS

SITE
PHOTOS

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SUBMITTALS

DATE	TYPE
12.08.25	DRP#1
04.08.26	DRP#2

ISSUE DATE

04.08.26

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

G-001


























andrulaitis+mixon

2040 ALAMEDA PADRE SERRA SUITE 107
SANTA BARBARA CALIFORNIA 805 899 2528

mahte
ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS

Proposed project/remodel for:

El Roblar Hotel
Health Spa & Wellness Center

107 N Ventura Street
Ojai, CA 93023

LICENSE

JOB NUMBER

25.021

CONTENTS

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SUBMITTALS

DATE	TYPE
12.08.25	DRP#1
04.08.26	DRP#2

ISSUE DATE

04.08.26

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

G-002

MATILIJA STREET

103 W MATILIJA STREET
APN: 21-0-106-030

107 N VENTURA STREET
APN: 21-0-106-040

VENTURA STREET

122 E OJAI AVE
APN: 21-0-106-040

SIGNAL STREET

OJAI AVENUE







EXAMPLES OF WAYFINDING SIGNAGE

1 Site Plan
Scale: 1" = 20'-0"

PATH OF TRAVEL

andrulaitis+mixon
2040 ALAMEDA PADRE SERRA
SANTA BARBARA SUITE 107
CALIFORNIA 805 899 2528

mahte
ARCHITECTURE AND INTERIORS

Proposed project/remodel for:
El Roblar Hotel
Health Spa & Wellness Center
107 N Ventura Street
Ojai, CA 93023

LICENSE

JOB NUMBER
25.021

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SITE PLAN

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SUBMITTALS

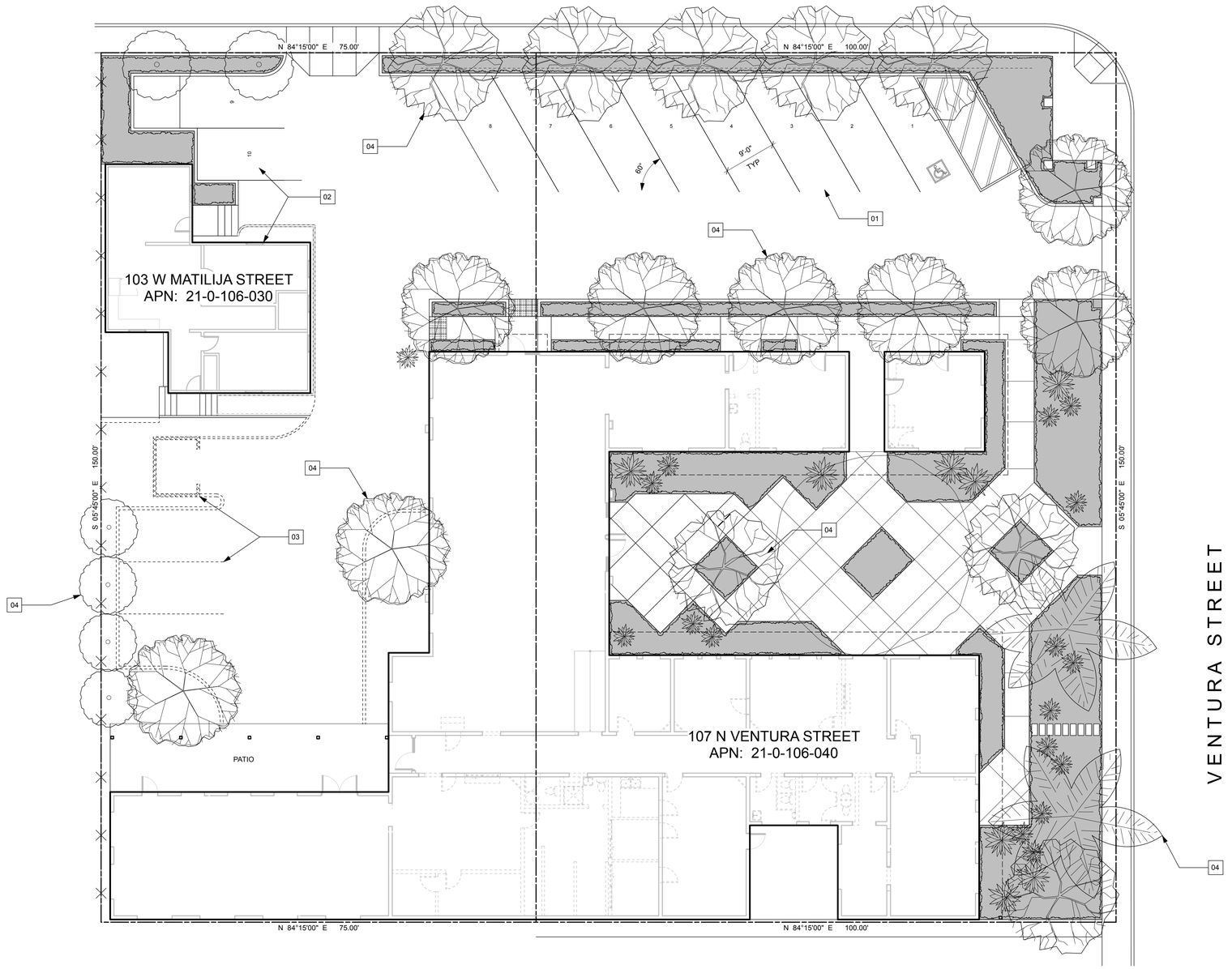
DATE	TYPE
12.08.25	DRP#1
04.08.26	DRP#2

ISSUE DATE
04.08.26

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

A-100A



1 Demo Site Plan
Scale: 1" = 10'-0"

PLAN NOTES

01 EXISTING PARKING TO REMAIN
02 EXISTING RESIDENCE & PARKING TO REMAIN
03 ELIMINATE PAVING, FOUR PARKING SPACES & TRASH ENCLOSURE
04 (E) LANDSCAPING TO REMAIN

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DEMO SITE PLAN

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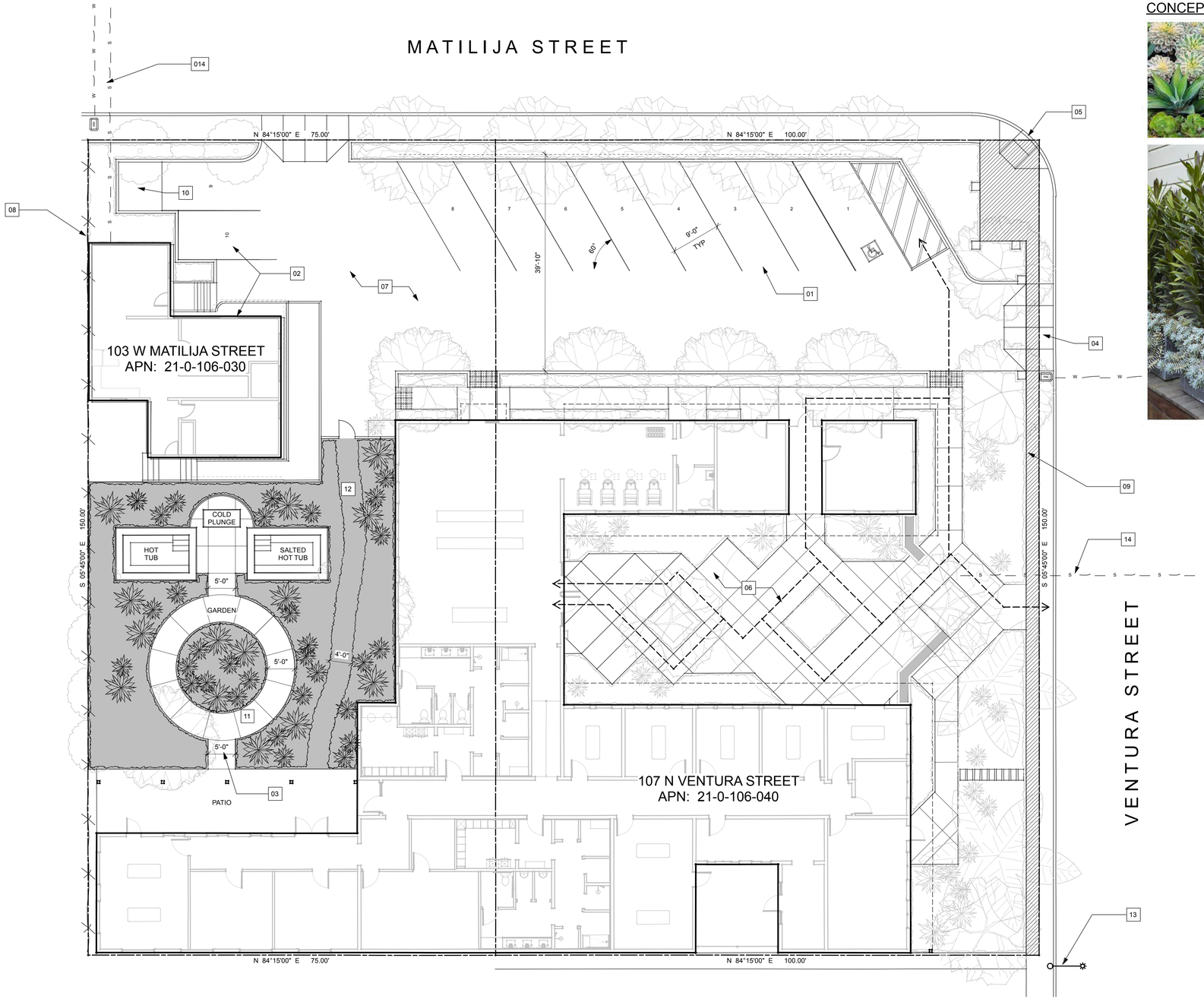
DATE	TYPE
12.08.25	DRP#1
04.08.26	DRP#2

ISSUE DATE
04.08.26

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

A-100D



1 Site Plan
Scale: 1" = 10'-0"

ADA PATH OF TRAVEL

SITE STATISTICS

LOT COVER	AREA	%
BUILDING	9,100 SF	34.7%
HARDSCAPE	11,215 SF	42.7%
LANDSCAPE	5,935 SF	22.6%
TOTAL	26,250 SF	100.0%

CONCEPTUAL PLANT IMAGERY



CONCEPTUAL PLANT PALETTE

TREES:
CERCIS CANADENSID CAR. MEXICANA - MEXICAN REDBUD
CERCIDIUM X "DESERT MUSEUM" - PALO VERDE
OLEA EUOPEA "MONHER" - FRUITLESS OLIVE
QUERCUS CHRYSOLEPIS - CANYON OAK
OJAI PIXIE TREE

SHRUBS:
ACACIA COGNATA (ACCOGO1) - COUSIN ITT ROVER WATTLE
ELAEOCARPUS DECIPIENS (MONPROUD) - LITTLE EMEROR JAPANESE BLUEBERRRY
FOUQUIERIA SPLEDENS - OCOTILLO
GREVILLEA "SCARLET SPRITE" - GREVILLEA
LEUCADENDRON SPP. - CONEBUSH
PITTOSPORUM TENUIFOLIUM - HOHUHU
DRYOPTEMS ARGUTA - COASTAL WOOD FERN
PELLAEA MUCRONATA - BIRD'S FOOT CLIFFBRAKE

GRASSES:
CAREX DIVULSA - EUROPEAN GRAY SEDGE
CORDYLINE SPP. - CORDYLINE
LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA "LM300" P.P. #15420 - BREEZE DRARF MAT RUSH
MISCANTHUS SINENSIS "ADAGIO" - ADAGIO MAIDEN GRASS

PERENNIALS:
ASPARAGUS DENSIFLORA "SPREGERI COMPACTA" -
DALEA GREGGII - TRAILING INDIGO BUSH
PHORMIUM SPP. - NEW ZEALAND FLAX
SALVIA SPP. - SAGE

SUCCULENTS:
AEONIUM SPP. - TREE HOUSELEEK
AGAVE SPP. - AGAVE
ALOE SPP. - ALOE
ECHEVERIA SPP. - ECHEVERIA
HESPERALOE SPP. - YUCCA
SEDUM SPP. - STONECROP
SENECIO REPENS - BLUE CHALKSTICKS

VINES:
BAUHINIA GALPINI - RED ORCHID BUSH
DISTICTIS BUCCINATORIA - RED TRUMPET VINE
LONICERA HILDEBRANDIANA - GIANT BURMESE HONEYSUCKLE
BOUGANVILLEA

ALL LANDSCAPING TO MEET LOW WATER WELO REQUIREMENTS

PLAN NOTES

01	EXISTING PARKING TO REMAIN
02	EXISTING RESIDENCE & PARKING TO REMAIN
03	NEW OUTDOOR GARDEN & SPA W/ NEW LANDSCAPING
04	(N) ADA COMPATIBLE DRIVEWAY APRON
05	(E) ADA CURB RAMP @ CORNER
06	(E) CONCRETE PAVING TO REMAIN
07	(E) AC PAVING TO REMAIN
08	(E) 6 FT TALL WOOD CEDAR FENCE ALONG WEST PROPERTY LINE
09	DEDICATION OF EASEMENT FOR RIGHT OF WAY PER CIVIL PLANS
10	RESIDENTIAL TRASH AREA
11	(N) CONCRETE WALK
12	(N) DECOMPOSED GRANITE PATH
13	(E) POWER POLE W/ STREET LIGHT
14	(E) SEWER LATERAL

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SITE PLAN

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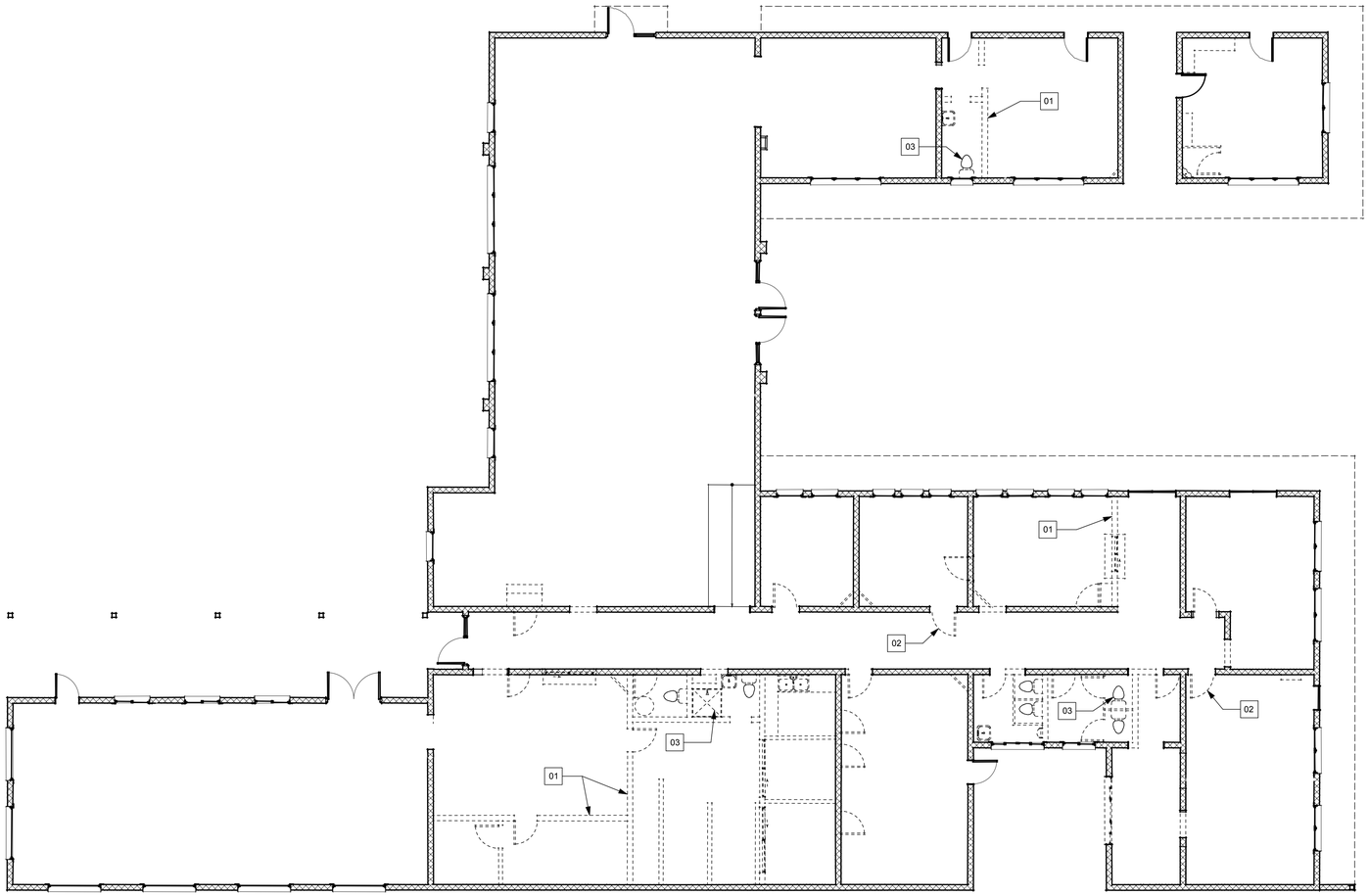
DATE	TYPE
12.08.25	DRP#1
04.08.26	DRP#2

ISSUE DATE
04.08.26

REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

A-100



1 Demo Plan
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

DEMO NOTES

01 REMOVE (E) NON-BEARING WALLS
02 REMOVE (E) INTERIOR DOORS
03 REMOVE (E) PLUMBING FIXTURES

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REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

D-101



1 **Floor Plan**
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

BOH — ROOM NAME
345 SF — ROOM AREA
OL=3 — OCCUPANT LOAD

EXIT PATH OF TRAVEL

ENTRY/RETAIL

DRESSING ROOMS

TREATMENT ROOMS

WET AREAS

GYM

BACK OF HOUSE

SERVICE AREAS

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CONTENTS
FLOOR PLAN

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A-101

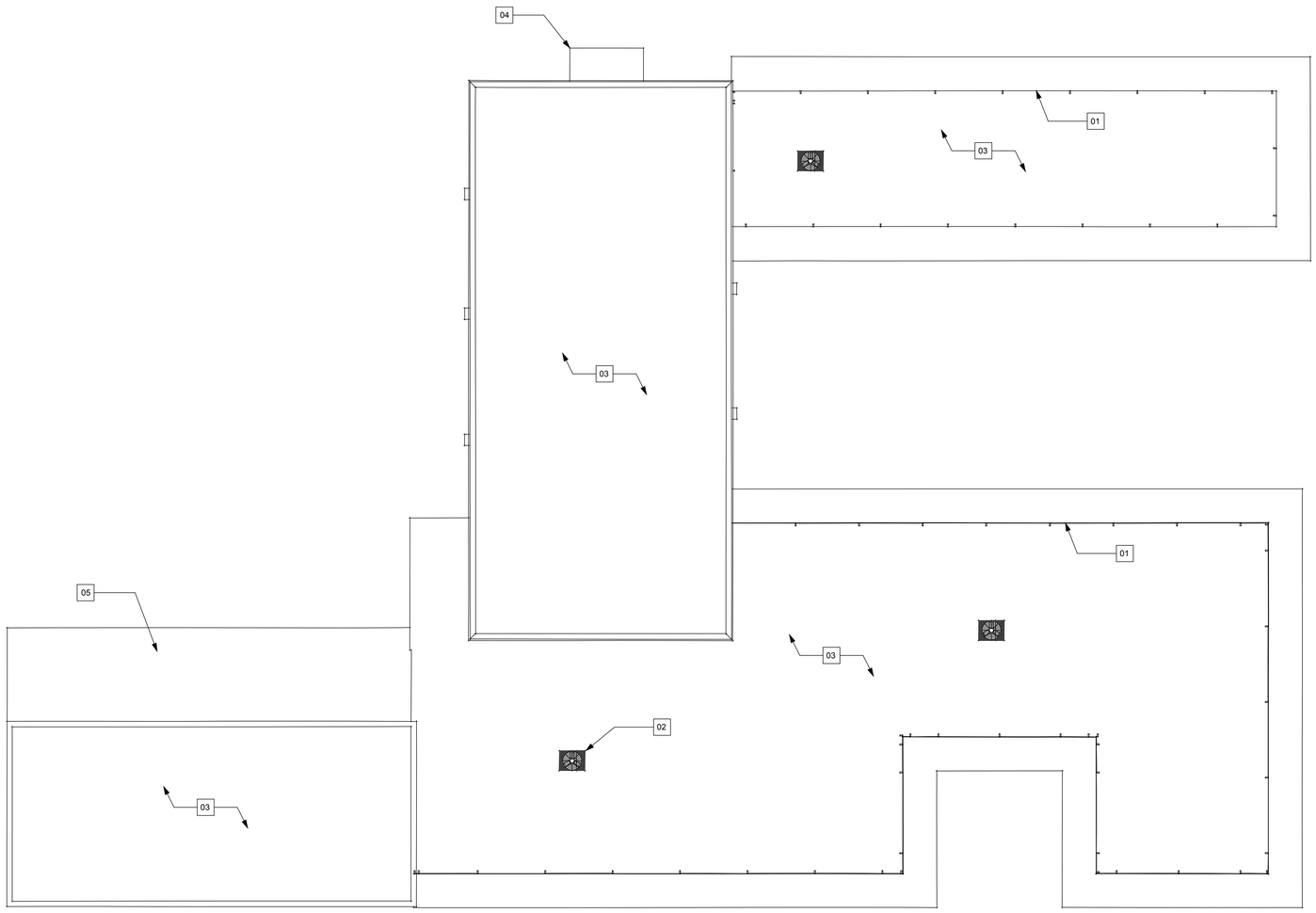
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1 Roof Plan
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

ROOF NOTES

01	(E) 3 FT TALL WOOD SLAT EQUIPMENT SCREEN
02	(E) HVAC EQUIPMENT
03	(E) ROOF TO REMAIN
04	(N) CLAY TILE WOOD AWNING
05	(E) CONCRETE ROOF TILE TO REMAIN

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CONTENTS
ROOF PLAN

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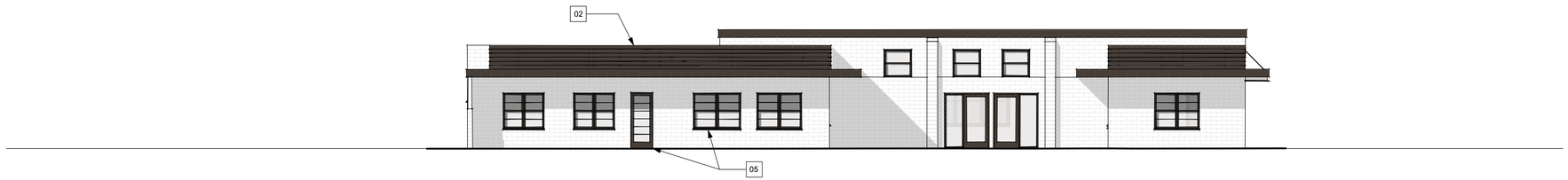
REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

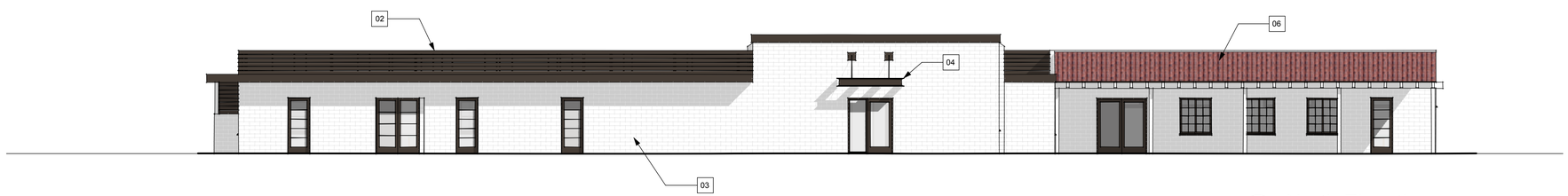
A-103

ELEVATION NOTES

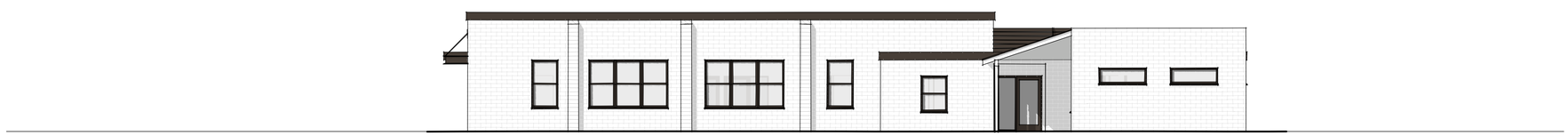
01	7 FT TALL WOOD PRIVACY FENCE
02	(E) 3 FT TALL WOOD SLAT EQUIPMENT SCREEN
03	(E) PAINTED BLOCK WALL
04	(E) STEEL AWNING TO BE REMOVED
05	(E) WINDOWS & DOOR TO REMAIN
06	(E) CONCRETE ROOF TILE TO REMAIN



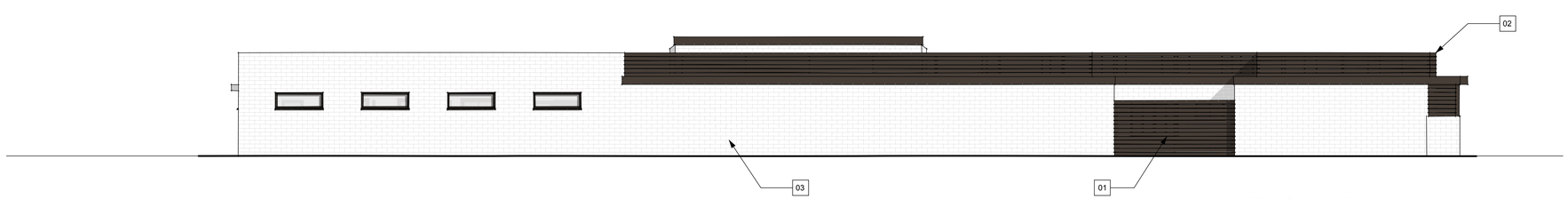
1 East Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



2 North Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



3 West Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



4 South Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

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EXISTING EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

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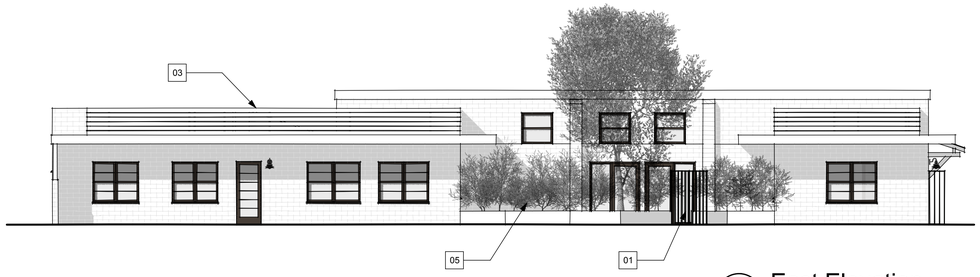
REVISIONS

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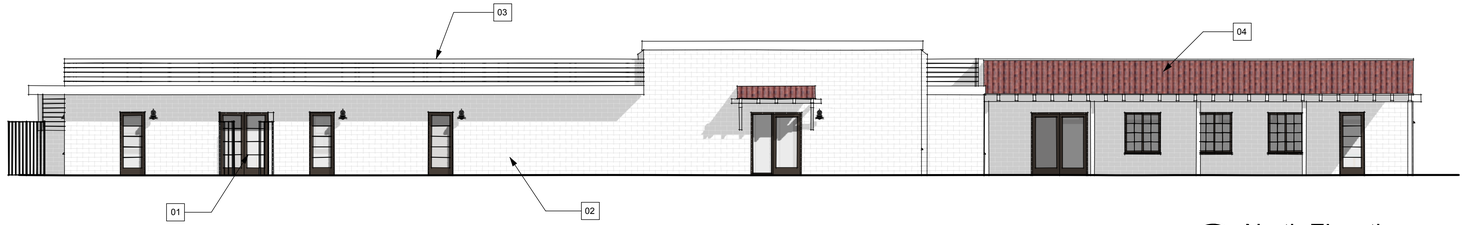
A-201

ELEVATION NOTES

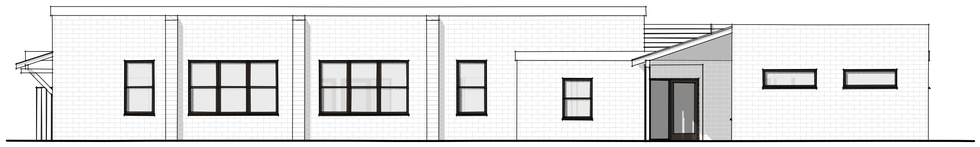
01	6 FT TALL METAL FENCE AND/OR GATE
02	36" HIGH PAINTED WAINSCOT
03	(E) 3 FT TALL WOOD SLAT EQUIPMENT SCREEN TO BE PAINTED WHITE
04	(E) CONCRETE ROOF TILE TO REMAIN
05	PRIVACY LANDSCAPE BUFFER IN RAISED CONCRETE PLANTER
06	7 FT TALL WOOD PRIVACY FENCE



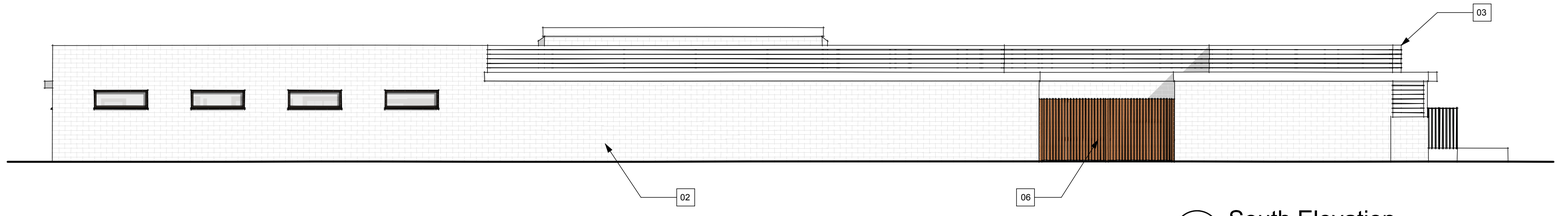
1 East Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



2 North Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



3 West Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"



4 South Elevation
Scale: 1/8" = 1'-0"

EXTERIOR FINISHES



WALL SCONCE
HUBBARDTON FORGE
HENRY SMALL DARK SKY
FRIENDLY OUTDOOR SCONCE

BUILDING & TRIM
SHERWIN WILLIAMS
"SHELL WHITE"

WINDOWS & DOORS
SHERWIN WILLIAMS
"ROCKWOOD DARK BROWN"



FENCING
THERMORY
BENCHMARK CLEAR PINE



ROOFING
MCA 2-PIECE ROOF TILE
"CORONA TAPERED MISSION"

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PROPOSED EXTERIOR ELEVATIONS

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REVISIONS

NO.	DATE	TYPE

A-202

Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Annual 2026 Historic Preservation Award

Recommendation(s)

1. Review and discuss biographies of nominees for 2026 Annual Historic Preservation Awards;
2. Select nominees to receive awards; and
3. Request staff to draft a resolution for the Commission to adopt, making a recommendation to the City Council to ratify the Commission's decision.

Discussion

At the July 9, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commission discussed potential nominees and selected candidates to consider as recipients of the *Annual Historic Preservation Award* or *Lifetime Achievement Award* based on specific criteria.

Criteria and Procedure

The City of Ojai Historic Preservation Award is presented annually by Ojai City Council upon recommendation by the Historic Preservation Commission. The award recognizes outstanding individuals, organizations and projects contributing to the preservation or restoration of Ojai's unique historical and cultural heritage.

The award may be granted in a broad range of heritage preservation activities including but not limited to:

1. Preservation of historic resources through conservation and/or restoration of a historic building or site
2. Protection of historic or prehistoric archaeological sites
3. Interpretation of historic properties
4. Historical research (including oral history supporting historic preservation)
5. Design and planning efforts to preserve historic properties
6. Grassroots organizational efforts in historic preservation
7. Construction of new buildings in historic districts that contribute to the character and design of their surroundings

The award may be upgraded to Lifetime Achievement status in the case of an individual who has made outstanding long-term contributions toward furthering the protection of the cultural history of the Ojai Valley. The Lifetime Achievement Award will be granted only in extraordinary circumstances.

The selected nominees to consider as recipients are as follows:

Commissioner or Person Recommending Nominee	Nominee	Commissioner or Citizen to provide brief bio	Criteria for nomination	Award - Preservation or Lifetime Achievement
Aikens	Wendy Barker	Aikens	1, 3, 4, 5	Annual Award
Bisaccia	Drew	Bisaccia	4	Annual Award
Walker	Brady Hahn	Walker	4	Annual Award
Walker	Jim & Robs	McHatton	4	Annual Award
Walker	Bret Bradigan	Aikens	4	Lifetime

Staff recommends that the Commission verify the criteria under which the nomination was made and nominate the recipient(s) for the Annual Historic Preservation Award for 2026, and if desired, nominate the recipient(s) for the 2026 Lifetime Achievement Award, and direct staff to draft a resolution for the Commission to adopt, making a recommendation to the City Council to ratify the HPC's decision.

Prepared by: Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner
Submitted for forwarding by: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director

Attachments:
A – Biographies

Wendy Barker has a BA in American Studies and a Masters Degree in History, with an emphasis on Public History. Both degrees are from California State University, Fullerton.

She's worked in museums highlighting local history since 1995. She has been the Executive Director of the Ojai Valley Museum for eleven years and was ED of the Escondido History Center for seventeen years before that.

Wendy often assists researchers, journalists, homeowners, and others interested in historic preservation, helping them learn about the history of their homes, businesses, and their community in general.

At the Ojai Valley Museum, Wendy has curated a number of history exhibitions. When not the primary curator, she remains an important part of the curatorial team for the Museum's large rotating exhibitions. She is the curator for all of the mini-exhibits in the Wilson Gallery, each one highlighting a different historical subject.

Wendy oversees all aspects of the Museum. That includes directly working with, and preserving, with their large collection of photographs, artifacts, and documents. Under her direction, the Museum's website has vastly expanded its Ojai Valley history content over the past several years.

Through regular ongoing events and programs, the Museum highlights Ojai's history. These include their ongoing series of Town Talks on a wide range of subjects, and Walking Tours of Historic Ojai taking place weekly for 8 months of the year.

Drew Mashburn

Drew Mashburn grew up in Ojai, and has lived in the valley his entire, long life, living through the history of his time. He has been a keen observer and participant in happenings that took place growing up and into adulthood. After his career as a sworn Ventura County Park Ranger, Drew began in retirement to write articles for the Ojai Valley Museum, Ojai Magazine, and Vortex chronicling what happened during his lifetime, and tied to local history. In this way Drew brought the reader into the living life of the town with articles such as, smudging as a teenager in the orange groves; stories of flooding during his time as a ranger, and looking back in Ojai to the year 1969 when the Pergola was damaged by a bomb. Mr. Mashburn is a worthy story teller, and bringing Ojai to life from his experiences from the 1950's through to today has enriched all who have read his articles.

Nomination by Commissioner Rick Bisaccia, HPC

Brady Hahn Bio

Brady Hahn is the founder of The Noodle Collective. She is an award-winning consultant, producer, and certified researcher. She draws from over 15 years of experience advising organizations and individuals at the intersection of humanities, social justice, and global culture. Her client work in experiential marketing and storytelling has been recognized by The Communicator Awards, PRWeek Awards, MarCom Awards, and Iris Awards for multicultural marketing and community engagement.

Brady was selected to guest curate “Women of the Valley: 100 Years of Ojai History” at the Ojai Valley Museum (winter, 2026). Her forthcoming book, *Women of the Valley: A Biographical History of Ojai, California*, will be published along with a digital public archive in the fall of 2026. This project is the largest and most comprehensive endeavor capturing the history of women in the Ojai Valley.

She has contributed to over 25 books, publications, and articles as researcher, writer, and editorial curator. Projects include special reports for AARP, “The Report on the Status of Women and Girls in California” by Mount Saint Mary’s University (MSMU), and co-authoring “The Women's Professional Conference Experience & Impact Study” with Dr. Emerald Archer, Director of The Center for the Advancement of Women, and books like Secrets of the Great Pyramid and the Dawn of Civilization (R.M. Schoch & R.A. McNally). Her research and advocacy work has ensured 1,200 women have spoken at professional conferences and provided over 1,000 event organizers with equity tools.

Brady has been featured in over a dozen outlets, including Inc.com and Convene Magazine, and the book Your Network Is Your Net Worth (P. Gale). Brady is a trusted thought leader who has delivered keynotes and panels at The Female Quotient, Create & Cultivate, Social Media Week, Brown University, Boston University, and the University of Southern California. Brady is an NIH certified researcher and holds a Bachelor of Arts in Philosophy and History of Science from Boston University. She currently serves as Vice President of the board for the Ojai Film Society.

Brady Hahn Nomination Statement

July 14, 2026

I am so proud that over 2,500 visitors came through “Women of the Valley: 100 Years of Ojai History” at the Museum and another 3,000 engaged online from across the globe. Place-based research enhances our understanding of ourselves, our community, and our place in history. As a certified researcher, I wanted to apply a methodology that would incorporate both a gender lens and a quantitative/qualitative analysis to the history of women in the Valley. This means looking at each person's story individually, then examining their place in the collective history of the town, the county, the state, the country, and in many cases, the globe.

This project called for a variety of stories, beyond the infamous women of the Valley, and there was a groundswell of support from the community. Over 50 individuals, organizations, and businesses contributed materials, time, and talents to the research portion of “Women of the Valley.” Including members of all of the major clubs and even local high school students. I was also able to bring together local researchers such as Summer van Houten and award-winning artists such as Johanna Bjork, Brittany Sanders, Weshoyot Alvitre, Carly Blumberg, Fran Gealer, Vickie Peters, and Christina Wheeler. The Exhibition also inspired action throughout the community. From a local artist who named her works after women in the exhibition, to new conversations that brought forward more stories and ideas.

This collective work will live on in the form of a book and an online public database developed in partnership with the Center for Intersectional Media and Entertainment (CIME) co-founded by Dr. Nicole Haggard (also from Ojai!).

Personally, I have spent 16 years in the Ojai Valley, first as a regular visitor and then as a resident. I have always been struck by the incredible number of accomplished women who chose Ojai as their home. I have shared their stories through my work and over coffees and dinners with friends for many years. “Women of the Valley” is a love letter to this place and the many women who helped shape it.

Bio Rob Tucker of Jim & Robs

Rob Tucker is a third generation Ojai native with deep roots in our community. Tucker is the founder of Ojai favorite, Jim & Rob's Fresh Grill. He opened Jim & Rob's in 1995 with his former high school employer, Jim Gresham.

Over the next two and a half decades he's gone on to educate the community of Ojai, young and old, on the history of Ojai in a most valuable and clever way - by portraying historical images and information on the walls of his restaurant.

Rob Tucker has taken pride in his collection and values these images and understands what they contribute to our city. It really is a remarkable collection filled with fascinating nuggets of history. One of the jobs we have as the Historic Preservation Commission is to reach out and educate the public. We have done many successful community events, like our contributions on Ojai Day, but to have this daily place that captures a wide demographic of Ojai patrons is a pretty amazing feat. Whether you're looking up from your table, in line to order, or waiting for your meal, citizens of Ojai have an unconventional learning opportunity that provides valuable information on the history of the people and places of Ojai. He has accomplished this without an official forum, just a place to get a bite and learn a little something.

The HPC is grateful to Rob Tucker for providing this learning opportunity that helps provide a sense of place, history, and a story to tell all on the walls of Jim & Robs.

Rob Tucker founder and long time proprietor of Jim & Rob's Fresh Grill

Criterion No 6. Grassroots organizational efforts in historic preservation.

Bret Bradigan

Bret Bradigan has been telling Ojai's stories for more than a quarter century. Since moving to the valley in 2000 as editor and publisher of the Ojai Valley News, he has served as editor and publisher of the Ojai Quarterly, Ojai Monthly, the Ojai Visitor Guide, and other community publications, while also hosting the Ojai: Talk of the Town podcast. Through thousands of articles, interviews, and photographs, he has chronicled the people, places, institutions, and defining moments that have shaped the Ojai Valley.

His work has helped preserve local history while making it accessible and engaging for residents and visitors alike. Bradigan received the Historic Preservation Commission's Annual Award in 2013 and continues to devote much of his editorial work to documenting Ojai's unique cultural and historical legacy.

———————— (if you need more context) ----------

His first writing job was as a reporter for the Kern Valley Sun, in the southern Sierras, where he worked 10 years, the last 7 as editor and publisher.

He’s also been reporter, editor and publisher of the Eastern Arizona Courier, Copper Era, Douglas Daily Dispatch, Sierra Vista Herald and the Ojai Valley News. As a journalist, Bradigan has won 11 national awards and 30-plus statewide awards for features, columns, investigative journalism, general excellence and sports writing.

As publisher of the Ojai Quarterly, Bret has encouraged his team of writers and photographers to explore every aspect of Ojai culture and its connections to the world, from the Blacklist era, Ojai in the 1960s, the Ojai railroad, Wheeler Hot Springs, the founding of AARP, our architectural masterpieces and many more. Bradigan is a lifelong outdoor enthusiast — hiking and fishing foremost among those pursuits.

Born and raised in Chautauqua County in western New York, Bradigan served six years in the Air Force, stationed at RAF Mildenhall, England. He is the past president of the Rotary Club of Ojai, past president of the Ojai Valley Chamber of Commerce, former secretary and trustee of the Ojai Valley Museum, Ojai Music Festival board, and currently on the board on the Ojai Valley Land Conservancy and the Rotary Club of Ojai Educational Foundation.

He is the father of Andrew (Andy) and Elizabeth (Betsy) Bradigan.

Why Ojai's History Matters

A community without memory gradually loses its identity. Ojai's history is not simply a collection of dates and old photographs — it's the story of the people, ideas, architecture, landscapes, and shared experiences that continue to shape who we are today.

Through the Ojai Quarterly, I've tried to go beyond nostalgia by uncovering overlooked stories, interviewing longtime residents, researching original sources, and connecting the past to the present. My hope is that each issue leaves readers with a deeper appreciation for this remarkable valley and a stronger commitment to preserving the character, beauty, and spirit that make Ojai unlike anywhere else.

Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Ventura & Ojai Valley Railroad Heritage Trail

Recommendation(s)
Receive Ad Hoc Committee's report (Walker & Bisaccia)

Discussion
July 9, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner committee meets at the museum and has been working on design of the first sign. Commissioner Walker presented a design for the Nordhoff and Ojai Train Depot sign. The signs following will be easier as they will resemble the first. The Commission discussed funding the signs and sponsorships.

June 11, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Wallker presented updates on the meetings he has had regarding working out details of design for the four interpretive signs that he stated will hopefully be completed by Ojai Day. The four locations include:

Location 1: Site of the Ojai depot on Fox street, within Southern Pacific Railroad yard. The sign will have a picture of the old depot and various facts about its history.
Location 2: Down behind Libbey park along the trail near the historic Ojai Jail.
Location 3: To left of the pathway that goes into Libbey park- will talk about Mr. Libbey, the tennis courts, and the music festival.
Location 4: Within Rotary Park at the historic Matilija Station platform.
Commissioner Walker stated that the price will be $3,764 including shipping for the four signs.

May 14, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Bisaccia presented updates on the timeline, artists preparing signs, articles in the Ojai Valley News, and funding.

April 9, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker proposed the name of this project be modified to include Ventura and suggested "**Ventura & Ojai Valley Railroad Heritage Trail**." All Commissioners agreed.

March 12, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker reported on items related to:

1. Sponsorship and donations: He has two sponsors so far and is working on the others.
2. Layout and design: He will strategize with Wendy Barker from the Museum to create the layout of the signage.
3. Encroachment permit: He walked the trail with the Public Works Director to identify the four locations in the city where an encroachment permit will be needed.

Planner Macaluso summarized next steps and processing:

1. Prepare the layouts and bring back to the HPC for review.
2. Commissioner Walker to provide quotes from the sign manufacturers.
3. Provide names of the sponsors so staff can create an agreement/contract.
4. Staff will be collecting the funds from the sponsors.
5. Staff will order and pay for the signs.
6. Public Works will install the signs.

December 11, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker explained he made a presentation to the Ojai Valley Woman's Club. He was also invited to present a slide show of the sign project at the Ventura County Heritage Board Meeting. He will try to contact other groups such as Ventura Land Trust and Ventura County and the Ventura County Parks and Recreation to provide presentations.

September 11, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker of the ad hoc committee gave an update. Planner Macaluso reported the item will be added to a future City Council meeting.

August 14, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner of the ad hoc committee gave an update detailing local support, who would be writing the text, and comments about placement, and he would like to add the Ojai Museum as contributors. The subject of Trail Plaques is currently tentatively scheduled for the City Council meeting on September 28, 2025.

July 10, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker reported that Mark Lewis from the Ojai Valley Museum will help him with the information to be placed on the plaque. He conferred with the commission related to sponsorship to help pay for each plaque which he approximated to be $2,500 each. Staff reported this item is scheduled for September 23, 2025, City Council meeting for their consideration.

June 12, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker reported and after commission discussion the following vote was taken and passed:
"Motion: Chair McHatton moved and Commissioner Aikens seconded the motion to move the trail plaques forward to the City Council for consideration." Staff discussed the item with the Chair for the July, 2025 HPC agenda preparation and the Chair asked for this item to be added to this agenda

for Ad Hoc Committee's report.

May 22, 2025, Special Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker updated the Commission regarding his conversation with Lindy Palmer, Director of Ojai Public Works, and her support of the idea of trail plaques. Walker reported that Palmer would be contacting Ventura County Parks Department and getting back to him. Walker contacted the president of the Rotary Club regarding a trail plaque in Rotary Park. The Rotary Club President was supportive and indicated she would speak with her club on June 10, 2025, and get back to Walker regarding the outcome. Walker also spoke with Dylan Murray from Ventura County and felt the trail plaques may be a joint venture and would get back to Walker after hearing back from the Parks Department. Lastly, Walker stated that Palmer suggested the Commission stake the locations for Public Works staff to view. The initial tentative trail plaque locations are at Rotary Park, Tennis Courts, and Old Depot.

April 10, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioner Walker reported and agreed to get in touch with the City of Ojai Public Works Department, as an ad-hoc member, to discuss the potential of installing informational plaques along the bike path.

March 13, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commission confirmed with Staff that Commissioner Bisaccia is also on the ad hoc with Commissioner Walker, and they were looking further into the idea of placing plaques on the Ojai Valley Trail.

February 13, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting the Commission received a report from Commissioner Walker. The Commission discussion resulted in direction for the ad hoc to continue conducting research and report back to the commission at next month's, March, meeting.

December 12, 2024, Historic Preservation Commission meeting the Commission requested this item be placed on a future HPC agenda for discussion to review the potential of creating and placing plaques along the Ojai Trail to identify historic sites.

After the meeting staff notified the Commission that the Trail is within Ventura County's jurisdiction and that they would need to contact the County regarding signage.

Prepared by: Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner
Submitted for forwarding by: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director

Attachment(s): None

Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Historic Resource Inventory Survey Update

Recommendation(s)
Receive and file report from Ad-hoc members.

History
July 9, 2026, Commissioner Walker reported that HRG conducted research at the Ojai Valley Museum researching archives. Then reviewed historic building permits at City, identifying additional themes in historic context. Identifying WPA and PWA era construction and a couple examples were given. Commissioner Walker reported they are on track to deliver a Preliminary draft of context statement by the end of July.

June 11, 2026, Commissioner Walker updated the Commission that HRG has been utilizing the IC located at Cal State Fullerton and archival research to inform the report sections regarding history in the Ojai Valley. Commissioner Walker explained the CEQA review process and stated that the purpose of the report and survey is to identify potentially historic resources to ensure due diligence is done for future projects. Properties do not need to be studied further if owner does not want to do so. Additionally, the survey will not affect things such as fire hardening and necessary upgrades and protection.

May 14, 2026, Chair McHatton read Commissioner Walker's comments summary of the update.

April 29, 2026, the City received the working outline for the Historic Context Statement from HRG. The consultant reported they are still working out how best to incorporate updates to the existing themes, and they will update us as that work progresses.

April 2, 2026, Chair McHatton and Commissioner Walker participated in a kick-off meeting with Historic Resources Group (HRG).

March 17, 2026, the contract with HRG was fully executed and provided to HRG on the same day.

December 2, 2025, an item was on the City Council agenda with the recommendation to accept the proposal from Historic Resources Group (HRG) to update the Historic Resources Inventory Survey and direct staff to prepare a contract for the City of Ojai to enter into a professional services agreement with HRG for City Council consideration, and return to the HPC with an introduction and tentative schedule.

Prepared by: Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner
Submitted for forwarding by: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director

Attachments: None

Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: City Beautiful Award Discussion

Recommendation(s)

1. Receive City Beautiful Award liaison's report; and
2. Discuss and formulate next steps.

Discussion

At its March 12, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting decided to create a three minute presentation to take to the City Council recommending they approve a new HPC award named "*City Beautiful Award – Edward Drummond Libbey*".

At its December 11, 2025, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Commissioners requested this item be placed on a future HPC agenda to discuss the potential of creating a new award to be presented by the Historic Preservation Commission to a deserving candidate based on specific criteria. The potential name of the award as discussed is the *Edward Drummond Libbey Ojai City Beautiful Award.*

After thoughtful review of the materials provided by commissioners in support of the proposed award (see attached) the Commission may decide to discuss the path forward toward initiating the inclusion of this new opportunity.

Prepared and Submitted by Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

Attachments:
A - Items provided by Commissioners

Current Draft August 2, 2026,
Original Draft January20, 2026

Edward Drummond Libbey City Beautiful Award Purpose:
To recognize an individual, organization, or project that embodies the ideals of the City Beautiful Movement by improving the community through beauty, culture, and civic responsibility.

Core Qualifications

1. Commitment to Civic Beauty
The nominee must have made a visible contribution to enhancing the **aesthetic quality** (as defined as "a perceivable property of an object, place, or work that triggers a sensory or emotional reaction, focusing specifically on how it looks, feels, sounds regarding beauty, balance, and appeal)" of the nominee within the city, neighborhood or defined boundary as called out in this document.
Examples:
- Beautification of public spaces (parks, streetscapes, plazas)
- Architectural or design excellence in public or community-serving buildings
- Public art installations, such as Public plaques that educate us and remind us of peoples important to the lands upon which they lived, worshipped, raised families, influenced those that continued their ideals. *This directly reflects Libbey's belief that beauty improves civic life.*

2. Public Benefit & Accessibility
The work must be **accessible to the public** and serve the broader community, not just a private interest.
Examples:
- Free or low-cost access to art, culture, or green space
- Projects that invite community participation
- Improvements that benefit diverse populations

Libbey believed art and beauty should be for **everyone**, not only the elite.

3. Cultural, Educational, or Artistic Impact
The nominee should support **culture, education, or the arts** in a meaningful way.
Examples:
- Support of museums, libraries, schools, or cultural institutions
- Educational programming tied to art, design, or heritage.
- Preservation or celebration of local heritage

4. Long-Term Community Impact
The contribution should demonstrate **lasting value**, not just a temporary improvement.
Examples:
- Sustainable design
- Ongoing maintenance or stewardship

- Institutions or programs designed to serve future generations. Libbey invested in institutions meant to outlive him — that's key.

5. Leadership & Civic Responsibility
The nominee should show leadership that reflects **civic pride and responsibility**.
Examples:
- Philanthropy tied to community improvement
- Advocacy for thoughtful urban planning
- Collaboration with public institutions or community groups, this can apply to:
- Individuals
- Businesses
- Nonprofits
- Schools
- Public-private partnerships



Sustainability & Environmental Stewardship
To be defined at a later date.



Community Engagement
- Green spaces, environmental restoration, or eco-conscious design

(A modern extension of City Beautiful ideals)
- Restoration, protection, expansion of City Ojai significant buildings or sites
- Strong involvement of residents, students, or volunteers in the project

Sample Qualification Language (Ready-to-Use)
Nominees for the Edward Drummond Libbey City Beautiful Award must demonstrate a commitment to enhancing civic beauty, promoting cultural or educational enrichment, and creating lasting, publicly accessible improvements that strengthen community pride and quality of life.

Award Categories (Optional) If you want to expand later:
- Individual Leadership Award
- Business or Industry Award
- Youth or Student Award
- Public Art & Culture Award

Initially prepared for HPC Commissioner Aikens by Rachel Aikens Burke using Chat GPT.
Revised, as suggested by Historic Preservation Commission suggestions.

The City Beautiful Movement, 1890–1920

- John D. Fairfield

- https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190228637.013.760
- **Published online:** 26 April 2018

Summary

The City Beautiful movement arose in the 1890s in response to the accumulating dirt and disorder in industrial cities, which threatened economic efficiency and social peace. City Beautiful advocates believed that better sanitation, improved circulation of traffic, monumental civic centers, parks, parkways, public spaces, civic art, and the reduction of outdoor advertising would make cities throughout the United States more profitable and harmonious. Engaging architects and planners, businessmen and professionals, and social reformers and journalists, the City Beautiful movement expressed a boosterish desire for landscape beauty and civic grandeur, but also raised aspirations for a more humane and functional city. "Mean streets make mean people," wrote the movement's publicist and leading theorist, Charles Mulford Robinson, encapsulating the belief in positive environmentalism that drove the movement. Combining the parks and boulevards of landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted with the neoclassical architecture of Daniel H. Burnham's White City at the Chicago's World Columbian Exposition in 1893, the City Beautiful movement also encouraged a view of the metropolis as a delicate organism that could be improved by bold, comprehensive planning. Two organizations, the American Park and Outdoor Art Association (founded in 1897) and the American League for Civic Improvements (founded in 1900), provided the movement with a national presence. But the movement also depended on the work of civic-minded women and men in nearly 2,500 municipal improvement associations scattered across the nation. Reaching its zenith in Burnham's remaking of Washington, D.C., and his coauthored *Plan of Chicago* (1909), the movement slowly declined in favor of the "City Efficient" and a more technocratic city-planning profession. Aside from a legacy of still-treasured urban spaces and structures, the City Beautiful movement contributed to a range of urban reforms, from civic education and municipal housekeeping to city planning and regionalism.

Edward Drummond Libbey's Speech on Ojai Day, April 7, 1917

We are celebrating here today the fulfillment of a conception.

Our praise to, and recognition of, should be given to the doctrine of idealism, one of the greatest causes in the development of mankind. The results of this specific idealism, which we are here today celebrating, is but the fulfillment of an idea, the thought, the incentive, the action. The result is but a response to the most powerful spirit which is to be found in a more or less degree in every race, nation, community, and individual. Its preceptive influence is found in all important human activities. No progress has ever been, or will be made in Art, Religion, or Science without the spirit of idealism. It is the life blood of our existence, the stability of nations, the happiness of her peoples, and the refinement of communities and homes.

Science in its most wonderful evolution could never have reached to the present state of its existence without the spirit of idealism.

Religion in all ages of civilization has based its faith and followed its tenets from the impulse of an ideal.

Art is but visualized idealism, and is expressed in all surroundings and conditions of society. From the earliest age, to the present time, art has been to the races of men one of the greatest incentives towards progress, refinement, and the aesthetic missionary to the peoples of the world. From the earliest ages, from the Greek and Roman Empires to the present time the influence of art has been felt. In our own country, alas, too little attention has been paid to the development of this element. Commercialism, and the necessities of our formative development have pushed aside the aesthetic sense, which has been slumbering in the minds of the people, and which only at the present time has come forth.

There has been too little attention paid to things aesthetic in our communities and in our homes. The time has come when we should encourage in ourselves thoughts of things beautiful... The higher ideals which art encourages and promotes must awaken in the people the fostering of the love of that which is beautiful and inspiring. We must today decry with contempt and aversion all that is cheap, vulgar, and degrading. This must be a humanitarian effort upon the part of all American communities, and I believe when the spirit of idealism is more strongly felt by our citizens, the communities that listen to the call of the artistic in idealism must be the better.

Thus, we are today celebrating in the expression of this little example of Spanish architecture in Ojai Park, a culmination of an idea and the response to that spark of idealism, which demands from us a resolution to cultivate, encourage, and promote those things which go to make the beautiful in life, and bring to all happiness and pleasure.

Edward Drummond Libbey City Beautiful Award

The City Beautiful Movement was a progressive social reform movement that began in the 1890s. Its proponents believed that making places more beautiful through unified architecture, street improvements, public parks, and art would make people happier and as a byproduct, better citizens.

Edward Libbey's glass company participated in the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, where he was exposed to the City Beautiful Movement daily for six months. Unlike previous World's Fairs, Chicago unified the look of their Fair by painting the buildings white. The "White City" was extremely popular and helped spread the movement.

When Edward Libbey moved to Ojai in 1908, Nordhoff was a small dusty town. He could envision that with a relatively small number of new buildings, including an arcade to unify the shops, and a downtown park, the town would be transformed.

The Mission Revival style was applied to the Arcade, the new Post Office, the Hotel El Roblar, and soon thereafter, the St. Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church, thus unifying the look and feel of the newly renamed town of Ojai.

Article provided by Ojai Valley Museum, Executive Director Wendy Barker

February 27, 2026

Edward Drummond Libbey Ojai City Beautiful Award Suggested Questions and Answers

City of Ojai Historic Preservation Commission

June 26, 2026

1. Area of eligibility? Within City of Ojai Boundaries? Within City of Ojai Influence, as defined as the area in which non-resident Commissioners must reside?

I recommend we confine the area of eligibility, if a physical presence, to the Ojai City boundaries, emphasizing, but not necessarily limiting it to the Downtown area itself.

2. Who can put forward the nomination? City Resident? City of Ojai Influence Resident?

I recommend that nominations be open to other Commissions, to Commissioners, Councilmembers, City Staff who may submit on behalf of those they represent.

3. Which City of Ojai Commission will deliberate, come to a consensus, and make a recommendation to Council?

I recommend this be the Historic Preservation Commission who makes the submittal, always in consideration of other nominating Commissions, if applicable.

4. Will the Ojai City Council be the presiding authority?

Yes, as understood, the City Council is always the ultimate authority.

5. What potential themes for areas of recognition are suggested? And what advisors might we use with each theme?

Architecture – Fred Fisher, recognized architect and historic restoration specialist, **City of Ojai Historic Archives -** Wendy Barker, Ojai Valley Museum Executor Director, **Chumash Peoples and Lands -** Julie Tumamait Stenslie **- Heritage of early Ranchers, Trail breakers -** Mark Tovar, **Education –** HPC Chair Gina McHatton, **Ojai Community History –** HPC Commissioner - Craig Walker. This is open to other Themes and Advisors.

5. What are the qualifiers for the City Beautiful Award?

Many are listed in the Document dated January 20, 2026, titled Edward Drummond Libbey Ojai City Beautiful Award, attached. Additional thoughts are Artistic, Parks, Schools, City Landmarks, National Landmarks, Churches, Libraries, Fires, Floods, Key Modes of Transportation (Train?), Service groups in severe times of need, Influential Buildings, City Hall, Museums, Beautiful locations within the Valley, viewable from City.

6. Awards

Bronze plaques, see attached example, Certificates, Others, Presented by City Council and HPC Representative.

7. Calendar

I suggest, if a timeframe is applicable, to begin early in the Year so as not to conflict with the HPC Historic Awards. There are certainly many other answers to each of these Questions. We are open to Suggestions.



EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

OJAI CITY BEAUTIFUL AWARD

LITTLE BRICK SCHOOLHOUSE

EDUCATION

The Little Brick Schoolhouse is recognized as the earliest permanent school building established to serve the Ojai community. Constructed in the mid-1870s as the original Nordhoff School, the one-room brick structure featured a single classroom with two anterooms, high ceilings, and large windows that provided natural light for learning. Students of multiple ages and grade levels were taught together in the same room, a common practice in rural California schools of the era. As enrollment increased, the school educated dozens of children from the growing Ojai Valley community.

Beyond its educational purpose, the Little Brick Schoolhouse served as an essential gathering place for the community. Before dedicated public buildings and churches were established, residents met here for religious services, civic discussions, public meetings, social events, and community celebrations. For nearly two decades, the schoolhouse functioned as both the center of education and the social and cultural heart of the village, helping shape the identity and development of early Ojai.

Its enduring legacy as both a school and community center makes the Little Brick Schoolhouse a significant historic resource and a worthy recipient of the Libbey Ojai City Beautiful Award.



EDWARD DRUMMOND LIBBEY

OJAI CITY BEAUTIFUL AWARD

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Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Historic Preservation Commission Functions and Powers

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Recommendation(s)

1. Receive Commission liaison's report; and
2. Discuss and formulate next steps.

Discussion

Chair McHatton, as liaison to the adhoc committee reviewing the functions and powers of the Historic Preservation Commission pursuant to Section 4-8.05 of the City of Ojai Municipal Code, has provided the attached draft for review and discussion.

Prepared by: Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner
Submitted for forwarding by: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director

Attachments: Draft changes to Section 4-8.05 (Functions and Powers) of the Ojai Municipal Code_August 3, 2026

DRAFT 8/3/26

FUNCTIONS AND POWERS OF THE HPC

The consensus of the ad hoc committee is that the City Municipal Ordinance expressly delegates the following 17 enumerated functions and powers to the Commission, along with the responsibility to interpret them and to develop supporting rules and regulations under provision (p) (unless expressly limited by the ordinance or amended by the Council). These functions and powers are delegated to the HPC because they are best handled by an appointed commission with their particular expertise, training, and connections to the community and its history.

4-8.05 Historic Preservation Commission—Functions and Powers.
The functions and powers of the Historic Preservation Commission shall be:
(a) *Evaluation.* The Historic Preservation Commission or Community Development Director *may investigate* ***any structure*** *in the City which the Council or Planning Commission or Historic Preservation Commission has reason to believe should be declared an historical landmark, historic district, structure of merit, or point of historical interest*;

- The consensus of the ad hoc committee for (a) is that it is only fair to the people of Ojai, the city government, and the property owners to identify our historic and potentially historic resources, as required under state law and the Ojai General Plan, This is best done proactively and involve the HPC as early as possible in the process. Before any project is approved, it is important for everyone to know if the project will demolish or adversely impact a historic or potentially historic resource–which needs to be determined by the City. The findings of the HPC are meant to inform the overall review process just like other possible impacts, such as traffic, noise, zoning, pollution, etc. Also, a historic resource may be eligible for tax benefits or grants that would help an interested owner to rehabilitate or restore the property.
- Evidence ("a reason to believe") that a property is a historic or potentially historic resource.
    - Listed on a Federal, State, or Local Register of historical resources.
    - A #1 or #3 on a city survey, and/or,
    - "Fair argument" evidence that a property meets one or more of the State of California or City of Ojai criteria for historical significance. This includes public input at a public hearing.
- An initial assessment should be made whenever any demolition or alteration is proposed on a historic or potential historic resource, its property, or immediate vicinity. Ordinary repair and maintenance with minor "like-for-like" replacement is exempted by city ordinance.
- Prior permission from Staff or Council is not required for HPC to investigate any given property or District.
- The CDD or HPC may require a Historic Resources Report from a consultant selected by the City of Ojai and working under the Commission to assist in its review, though determination lies with the HPC under (d).
- For every project, a determination must be made, supported by evidence, as to whether the project will or will not impact a historic or potentially historic resource. Function (a) gives the HPC the function and power to investigate potentially historic properties for historical significance and, if they are found to be historic under (d), to investigate whether their significance could be impacted by a proposed project. The HPC review should come as early as possible in the process to allow owners and decision-makers to assess and resolve historic issues before significant work is done.
- This review will also help the HPC determine whether the property should be recommended under (d) for city designation.

(b) *Inventory.* To maintain a current list of all historical, cultural, and natural landmarks, historic districts, structures of merit, and points of historical interest which have been declared as such by the Council. This information shall be made available to the public;

- The consensus on (b) is that our survey is currently being updated with full council support with the intent of City adoption.
- Inventory should include all city-designated historical resources as well as those listed on a County, State, or National register.

(c) *Public hearings.* To hold public hearings for the purpose of identifying historical landmarks, historic districts, or points of historical interest, with such hearings held 10 days or more after the property owner has been notified by registered mail;

- The consensus on (c) is that after the preliminary investigation under (a) above, the public will be invited to a timely Historic Preservation Commission meeting to share their input on whether the property does or does not meet the criteria and whether a project will significantly impact the historic character of the property.

(d) *Recommendations.* If the conclusion of the Historic Preservation Commission is that an historical landmark, historic district, structure of merit, or point of historical interest does exist which meets the criteria established in this chapter and should be declared as such, the Historic Preservation Commission shall make its recommendation to the Council for timely deliberation within 90 days and send a copy of such recommendation to the property owner;

- The ad hoc understands that on (d) the HPC shall forward its recommendations to the council, and where appropriate, the CDD and/or Planning Commission with the following information:
    - Designation eligibility
    - Level of significance
    - Integrity
    - Possible Mitigations
    - Recommendation: If determined “not historic” or “no designation at this time,” the HPC will simply notify the CDD and Council of its determination. If “designation” the HPC shall prepare a recommendation for designation as required by the ordinance.
    - Recommendations by the Commission shall be based only on whether a property meets the criteria under the ordinance and the feasibility of designation, not political motivations or personal aesthetic preferences. The Commission recommends based on factual evidence; the Planning Commission or Council approves based on the HPC’s recommendation and any overriding considerations.

      Note: An HPC recommendation is not a nomination, which follows a different protocol. A "nomination" is submitted by an owner, an individual, or a community organization.

(e) *State registration.* The Historic Preservation Commission may recommend to the Council that the City apply to the California Office of Historic Preservation for State registration of landmarks, historic districts, or sites which have historical significance, which meet State registration criteria, and where the registration would assist in preservation. The Historic Preservation Commission may find that a landmark site of historic significance is significant for declaration as a State "point of historical interest" but does not warrant registration as a State "historical landmark." The Historic Preservation Commission shall investigate and recommend to Council the appropriate State registration;

- The consensus has no additional comments on (e) although it notes that the City of Ojai is encouraged to notify the State Office of Historical Resources of all surveys or designations of properties to be included in the State database.

(f) *Advise and assist property owners.* To advise and assist owners of landmarks and property or structures within historic districts on physical and financial aspects of preservation, renovation, rehabilitation, and reuse, and on procedures for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places;

- The consensus understands (f) to mean that property owners can ask the HPC and its members for information or advice, and the HPC can notify owners of resources available to them. Should be routine and doesn’t require staff of Council approval.

(g) *Amendments.* To identify issues with this chapter and recommend to the Council consideration of amendments to this chapter when circumstances indicate; and

- The consensus has no additional comments to (g)
  Note: Amendments might be given to Council for consideration due to the work of this ad hoc.

(h) *Develop guidelines.* To develop and recommend for Council adoption of specific design guidelines for the alteration, construction, or removal of landmarks or property and structures within historic districts;

- The consensus understands (h) updates to the design guidelines and plaza guidelines for the City of Ojai should be reviewed by the HPC for possible historical impacts. The ad hoc agrees with the necessity of working with the Planning Commission on any update to the guidelines that include the Downtown Ojai Historic District. Alternatively the HPC could present suggested updates to the Planning Commission with the goal of simplifying design guidelines in the district if the Planning Commission doesn't form a committee for joint discussion.
- Design guidelines for specific designated historical resources are under the purview of the HPC and relate to the design guidelines needed to maintain the historic character of the property..

(i) *Inform citizens.* To inform and educate the citizens of Ojai concerning the historic and architectural heritage of the City by publishing appropriate maps, newsletters, brochures, pamphlets, websites, and social media information, and by holding programs and seminars according to a workplan and budget authority approved by Council;

- The consensus understands (I) to be a very valuable function of the HPC and has no further comments.
- Includes any interpretive materials, signage, etc. that educates the public on Ojai's history, which provides the context for its historic buildings and properties.

(j) *Markers.* To determine which designated landmarks, historic districts and points of historical interest shall be marked with uniform and distinctive markers;

- The consensus understands (j) to mean a plaque acknowledging designation as well as listings in City websites and City brochures marking designation.
- Some of these markers are already covered in the historic ordinance.

(k) *Nominate landmarks.* To nominate landmarks and historic districts to the National Register of Historic Places as approved by Council, and to review and comment on any National Register nominations submitted to the Historic Preservation Commission upon request of the Mayor or Council;

- The consensus on (k) is that after the preliminary investigation under (a) above, the public will be invited to a timely Historic Preservation Commission meeting to share their input on whether the property does or does not meet the criteria.

(l) *Preservation of landmarks and points of historical interest.* To take the steps necessary to preserve such landmarks and points of historical interest not in conflict with the public health and safety consistent with City policies and protocols. Such steps may include the creation of civic and citizens' committees; the establishment of a private fund for the acquisition or restoration of declared landmarks and points of historical interest; and the recommendation that such declared landmarks and points of historical interest be acquired by a governmental agency where private acquisition is not feasible;

- The consensus agrees that (l) a fund should be established that can be funded by mitigations for unavoidable alterations to historic properties.
- The HPC can recommend mitigation funding when projects unavoidably impact a historic structure.

(m) *Review Mills Act agreements.* To review proposed initial and renewed Mills Act agreements and provide a recommendation to the Council regarding acceptance of Mills Act agreements, under Title **4**, Chapter **9** of the Ojai Municipal Code;

- The consensus is that this should be routine. The HPC should also review proposed updates to Mill's Act contracts to make sure the Standards are being followed. Also, to encourage the City to routinely reach out to Mills Act participants to make sure agreements are being followed.

Note: The HPC should periodically be able to correspond with Mill's Act participants if there are educational advantages that are being underutilized like the California State Historic Building Code.

(n) *Review Conservation Element of the General Plan.* To periodically review the Conservation Element of the General Plan and to recommend to the Planning Commission and the Council any amendments appropriate for the protection and continued use of landmarks or property and structures within historic districts;

- The consensus agrees that for (n) it would be helpful for the HPC to have a yearly reminder in future agenda items to review the Conservation Element of the General Plan

(o) *Review proposed amendments, etc.* At the request of the Council or Planning Commission, review proposed zoning amendments, applications for permits, or applications for zoning variances that affect proposed or designated landmarks and historic districts. Review and comment within 30 days of submission for the public record of any and all historic resources reports prepared for any other development project requiring a design review permit, conditional use permit, development agreement, or other zoning code permit;

- The ad hoc strongly agrees any of the above (o) should be reviewed by the HPC. The law requires that any new zoning, etc. that may impact historic structures or property must be reviewed for historic impacts.

(p) *Rules and regulations.* To adopt such rules and regulations as are necessary to carry out the purpose and intent of this chapter;

- The consensus for (p) is that it is vital to have a mutual understanding of the rules and regulations with City staff and City Council so the functions and powers operations can flow. All such rules and regulations, or any interpretation of these rules and regulations or "Functions and Powers" shall be determined by the HPC, with appeal to the city council. This will streamline the work of the city, reducing bureaucratic complexities and delays.

(q) *Surveys.* To conduct surveys of potentially significant properties, structures, or sites according to the workplan and budget approved by Council.

- According to CEQA, a historic survey should be updated every 5 years or so.

(§ 2, Ord. 893, eff. April 11, 2019)

Administrative Report

DISCUSSION ITEM

TO: HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

FROM: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director
Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner

MEETING DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Maintenance and Protections of City owned Landmarks

Recommendation(s)
Each Commissioner may report monthly on the condition of the selected landmark.

Discussion
At the July 9, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, the Commissioners chose to monitor specific landmarks and report back to the full Commission on a monthly basis. Commissioners Bisaccia and Walker chose the Arcade and the Sespe Stone Wall, Commissioner Aikens chose the Ojai Museum and the Ojai Jail, Commissioner Niessen and Chair McHatton chose the Libbey Courts, and Commissioner Moore chose the Smith Hobbson.

At the June 11, 2026, Historic Preservation Commission meeting, Chair McHatton stated that a discussion of Commissioner monitoring of city and public agency owned landmarked buildings should be on future agendas with Commissioners reporting on specific buildings.

Prepared by: Maura Macaluso, Principal Planner
Submitted for forwarding by: Lucas Seibert, Community Development Director

Attachments: None

Informational Item

Item 9

Education Update
by
Education Liaison, Chair McHatton

CITY OF OJAI
HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION

Future Agenda Items - ***Tentative***

September 10, 2026 Thursday	October 8, 2026 Thursday	October 17, 2026 Saturday	November 12, 2026 Thursday
Fire Department Rep presentation to Commission regarding Arcade & historic building fire safety			
Historic Preservation Awards		OJAI DAY	
Ojai Day	Ojai Day		
718 Foothill Road Repair & Replace Decking			

Pending Projects
List of Ad-hoc / Sub Committees / Liaison(s)

Member(s)	**Name of Group**	**Duration**
Liaisons		
Walker	City Historic Resources Inventory Survey Update (HRG)	In process
McHatton	Education	On going
Aikens	Green Coalition – City Hall Master Plan	Active
Active Ad-Hocs		
Walker, Bisaccia	Ventura & Ojai Valley Railroad Heritage Trail (official name as of April 9, 2026)	Active
McHatton, Walker	Joint Ad-hoc with City Council (2 HPC, 2 CC, 1 Staff) to discuss role of HPC	June 30, 2026

Definitions

Ad Hoc
* A temporary group to work on a specific topic (limited purpose and limited time).
* Does not make decisions, only advisory.
* Not staffed
* Caution having 3 vs 2 members due to potential of a commissioner(s) being absent at meeting then item may not be able to be discussed because the ad hoc could be a majority in meeting.

Committee
* Continuing purpose
* Staffed
* Noticed meetings
* Council's interest

Liaison
* Commission approved issues