

City of Calabasas Historic Preservation Commission

**Discussion Item:
Old Oak Tree in Old Town Calabasas**

Wednesday, May 17, 2023

Background

An unmistakable landmark in the middle of Old Town Calabasas is the exceptionally large oak tree occupying the center portion of a property at 23556 Calabasas Road.

Two commercial buildings are located on either side of the large tree.

Per Calabasas Municipal Code this magnificent old oak tree is a *Heritage Oak Tree*, which provides the greatest level of protection under the Code.

The Commission has communicated interest in recognizing the grandeur and historical significance of the tree in some fashion.



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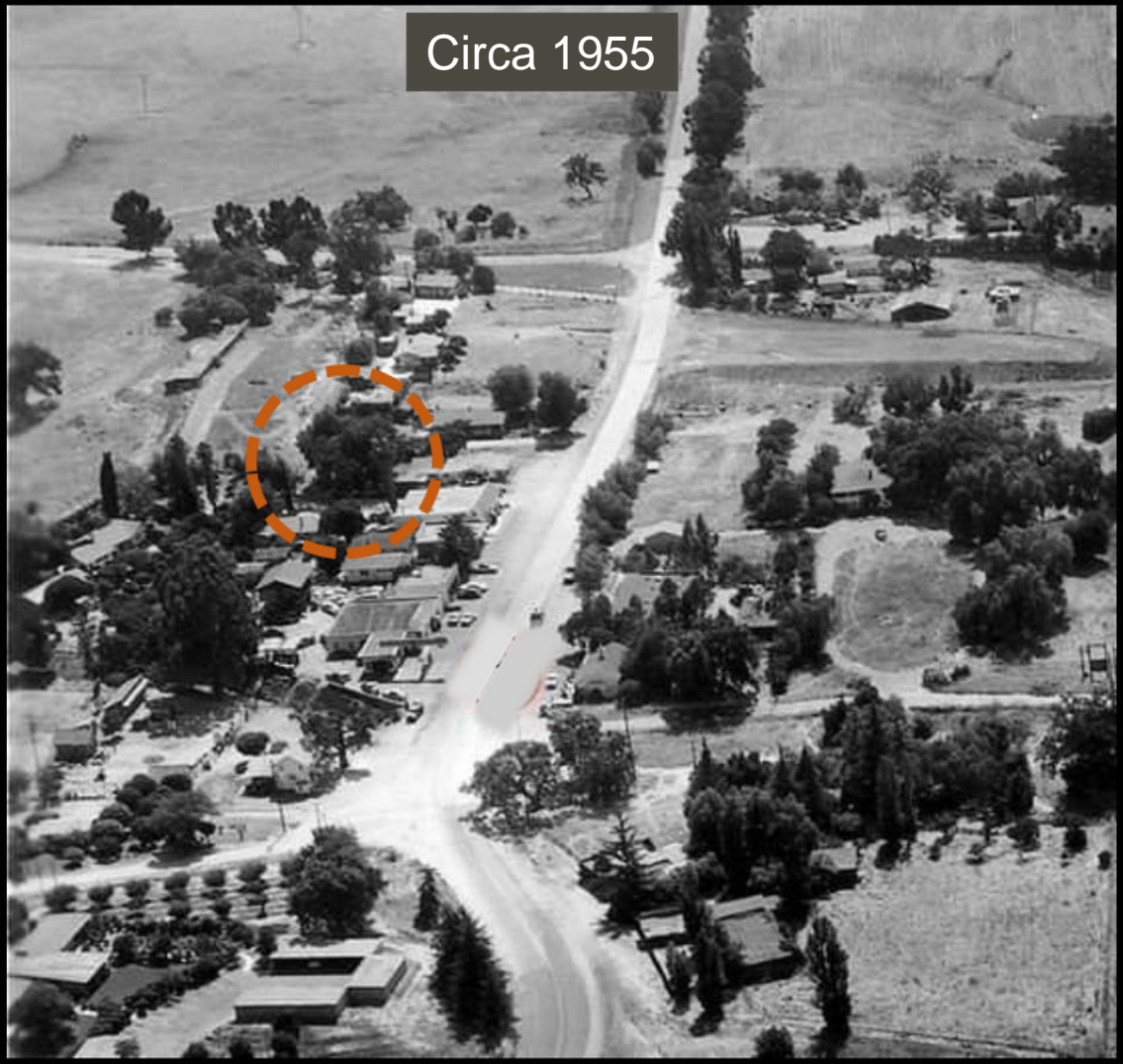
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Images of the Oak Tree from 1990s and 1950s

Circa 1990



Circa 1955



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Characteristics of The Old Oak Tree

- Valley Oaks (e.g., *Quercus lobata*) typically reach heights of 30 to 75 feet and trunk diameters ranging from 1.8 feet to 2.4 feet.
- However, on occasion, individual specimens may be much larger. The largest recorded Valley Oak tree had a trunk diameter of more than nine feet (in Gridley, CA), and the tallest recorded specimen (in the Carmel Valley) was measured at 138 feet tall.
- Our own beautiful tree is an estimated 60 (+) feet tall, has a trunk diameter of 66 inches, and the canopy covers roughly 6,000 square feet.



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Oak Tree Estimated to be 200 Years Old.

The oak tree is estimated to be approximately 200 years old (e.g., from about 1820).

- James Monroe was President of the United States
- Only 23 of our nation's 50 states had formerly been admitted into the Union
- Indigenous tribal populations still inhabited much of the western territories; and locally, the Chumash were the only permanent local inhabitants
- The Juan Bautista de Anza expedition had passed through the area only a few decades earlier
- Work had just concluded on the chain of Spanish missions along the California coast.
- The Leonis Adobe was constructed in 1844, 20 years or so after the tree was well established.
- The tree was a 'youthful' 80 years old when the historic Masson House was constructed.



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Next Steps

Depending on feedback and recommendations from the Commission, Staff is prepared to contact the property owner to discuss ideas for recognizing the tree and to inquire about the owner's level of support.

If the owner expresses interest and support, Staff will carry forward to the Community Development Department Director and the City Manager the information conveyed in the staff report, input and suggestions from the HPC, and any other pertinent information for further direction.



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