



CITY of CALABASAS

HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT
AUGUST 2, 2023

TO: Members of the Historic Preservation Commission

FROM: Savina Johal, Assistant Planner

DATE: AUGUST 2, 2023

SUBJECT: Discussion of Potential Signage and Commemoration of Heritage Oak Tree in Old Town Calabasas

INTRODUCTION:

At the May 17, 2023 Commission meeting, members of the Historic Preservation Commission discussed the potential to commemorate the exceptionally large oak tree located in the center portion of a property at 23556 Calabasas Road (APN: 2068-004-004). Commissioners expressed interest in exploring the possibility of installing three (3) interpretive panels on the sidewalk in front of the tree.

This report provides updates about Staff's recent inquiries into potential signage for the heritage oak tree, as well as the results of staff's communication with the California State Office of Historic Preservation regarding formal recognition of the tree, as appropriate, to assist Commission members in continued discussion about options for recognizing the tree in some fashion.

REVIEW AUTHORITY:

Among the duties ascribed to the Calabasas Historic Preservation Commission is the Commission's role in conducting historic appropriateness reviews of development project proposals for properties located in Old Town Calabasas. Notwithstanding the fact that Old Town Calabasas is not a designated historic district (which otherwise would require official review by the HPC under State and City laws), development project reviews for Old Town Calabasas properties, and other matters concerning Old Town, are addressed by the Commission in its capacity as the "Old Town Coalition".

REPORT FROM STAFF:

Following the HPC's discussion on commemorating the Heritage oak tree on May 17, 2023, Planning staff inquired with various groups to gain clarity on what the process would be to recognize the tree and possibly install interpretive panels on the sidewalk in front of the tree. Additionally, Planning Commission member Dennis Washburn recommended that Staff contact the Leonis Adobe Foundation, who are the property owners of record where the oak tree sits, and Staff is prepared to do so upon direction to that effect by the HPC.

On July 17, 2023 staff met with Sasan Sheibani, the president of Malibu Creek Docents, on-site at Reagan Ranch within Malibu Creek State Park (MCSP). Mr. Sheibani showed staff one example of an interpretive panel installed at Reagan Ranch (see Exhibit A). The company that MCSP commissioned for the panel is called Pannier; please see the link below for their website:

<https://panniergraphics.com/>

Pannier offers a variety of panel designs and installation methods, and is able to customize panels to fit a particular site's needs; all panels are coated with a gel laminate for preservation and longevity (See Exhibit B). The panel that MCSP purchased is a 24"x48" panel with dark brown "T" style posts. Total cost for the one panel, purchased in 2021, was \$592.

Mr. Sheibani also provided information about possible design work. Brian Rooney is a docent at MCSP and did the design work for their panels; Mr. Sheibani provided his contact information and indicated he may be able to do design work for the City as well. Staff is prepared to reach out to Mr. Rooney to discuss potential designs for the panels if it is the Commission's direction to do so.

Mr. Sheibani communicated that MCSP is currently working on a Chumash interpretive panel, and they initially began the engagement process with the tribal elders six months ago. He noted that one thing they have learned through this engagement process is that use of the word "Chumash" may no longer be appropriate on an interpretive panel to represent the "first peoples" of what is now known as Calabasas. He recommended that the City develop a clearer "vision" for the panel prior to beginning the engagement process with the tribe, and to prepare for a significant amount of time to be invested in the engagement process. Additionally, he provided the contact information for Barbara Tejada, the Supervisor of the Cultural Resources Program of the Angeles District of the California State Parks. Ms. Tejada informed staff that the Calabasas area is actually located along a tribal boundary, and for the MCSP signage, they will be working with two tribes: the Fernandeano Tataviam Band of Mission Indians and the Barbareño/Ventureño Band of Mission Indians. They have discussed setting up a regular meeting schedule, perhaps quarterly, and Ms. Tejada indicated she could

provide tribal contacts to the City for both groups

Finally, staff reached out to the California State Office of Historic Preservation (SHiPO) to inquire about the possibility of formally recognizing the Oak Tree in some fashion. The response from their office was that generally “it depends.” Any nominated property for any state program must be of both sufficient age and have identifiable significance; for a tree it is usually identifiable as part of a landscape (i.e. a park, garden, cemetery, etc.) rather than just a single tree. If the tree was part of a cultural landscape with meaning to Indigenous peoples, it could potentially be eligible under that context. One possible option suggested was examining the potential for using the California Points of Historic Interest program. These are sites, buildings, features, or events that are of local significance and have anthropological, cultural, military, political, architectural, economic, scientific, religious, or other value. To be eligible for designation as a Point of Historical Interest, a resource must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The first, last, only, or most significant of its type with the local geographic region (City or County);
- Associated with an individual or group having a profound influence on the history of the local area;
- A prototype of, or an outstanding example of, a period, style, architectural movement or construction or is one of the more notable works or the best surviving work in the local region of a pioneer architect, designer, or master builder.

In summary, California SHiPO indicated that the tree would most likely need to have a historical significance other than its age in order to qualify for formal state designation, but is willing to discuss the topic further if the City so desires.

FUTURE ACTIONS:

This report serves primarily to update the members of the Commission about the potential for formally commemorating the tree in some fashion. Discussion among the Commission members and idea generation for next steps would be appropriate; as necessary, Planning Staff can assist by providing additional information. Ideas generated by the Commission for ways to recognize the old oak tree will be forwarded to the Department Director.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit A: Photographs of the Reagan Ranch Interpretive Panel
Exhibit B: Pannier Design Examples