



Staff Report and Recommendations

Agenda of June 12, 2023, Item 6c

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2478 • www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning

I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant/Property Owner: California Natural Resources Group (CalNRG)
Attn: Clif Simonson
1746 F South Victoria #245
Ventura, CA 93003

Historic Consultant: Shannon Davis
ASM Affiliates Inc.
20 N Raymond Ave #220
Pasadena, CA 91103

II. REQUEST:

A request for review and comment on the proposed interpretive display for the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery property, located at 3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033 (unincorporated Ventura County). This request is submitted in partial adherence to the recommendations previously approved by the CHB in order to authorize decommissioning and demolition activities at the subject property (Case No. CH21-0005).

III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033 (unincorporated Ventura County)
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 218-0-011-485

Historic Designation: Point of Interest (former refinery); Ventura County Landmark (Derrick)

Zoning: AE-40 ac – Agricultural Exclusive 40 Acre Minimum Lot Size
General Plan Designation: Agricultural

The subject property consists of a 40.14-acre parcel in the Agricultural General Plan land use designation and the Agricultural Exclusive Zone. The former refinery occupied approximately 12.22 acres of the subject property and consisted of buildings, equipment, and other accessory structures associated with oil and gas extraction and unpermitted former refinery operation activities. The CHB previously approved a Certificate of Appropriateness in order to authorize decommissioning and demolition activities at the subject property. Figure 1 depicts the location of the project site in the broader vicinity; Figure 2 provides a closer aerial view of the project site; and Figure 3 provides an image of the entrance to the site along East 5th Street prior to demolition activities.

Figure 1 – Regional Vicinity



Figure 2 – Aerial View of Site

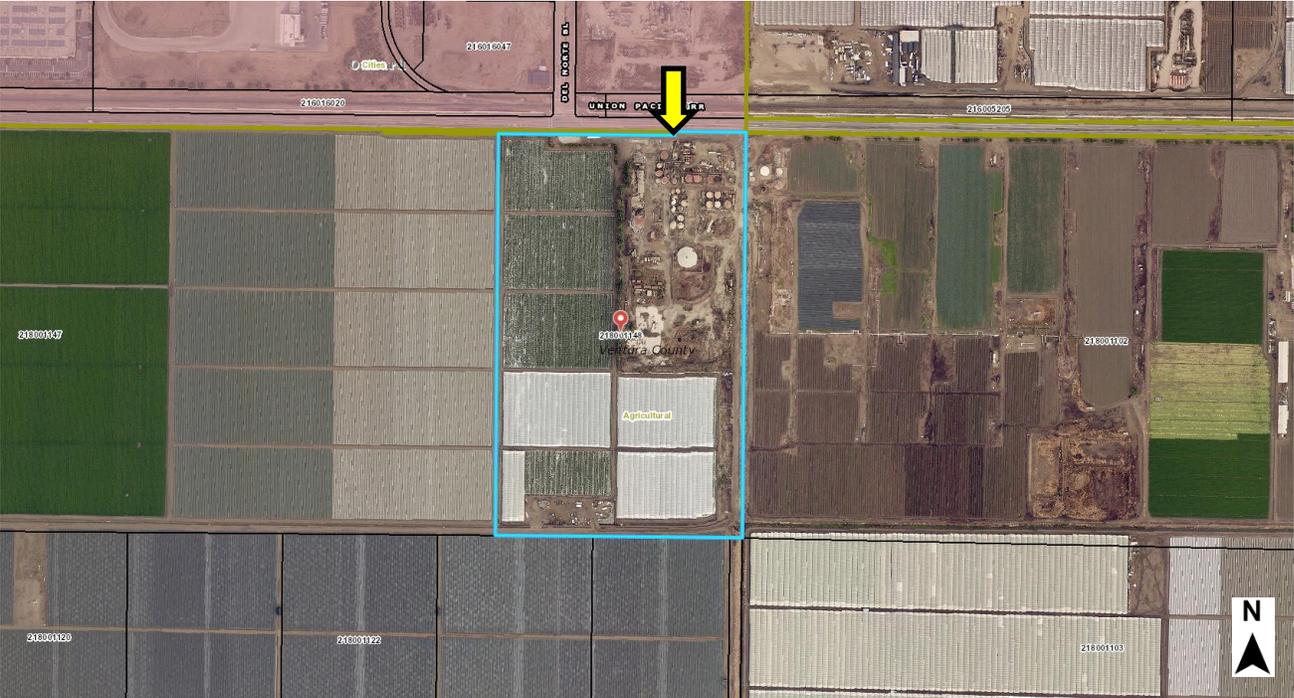


Figure 3 – View of Site from East 5th Street



Source: ASM Affiliates, Inc.

IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The applicant requests that the Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) review and comment on the proposed interpretive display for the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery property, located at 3450 East 5th St., Oxnard, CA 93033 (unincorporated Ventura County). This request is submitted in partial adherence to the recommendations previously approved by the CHB in order to authorize decommissioning and demolition activities at the subject property (Case No. CH21-0005).

As mentioned, at the May 23, 2022 hearing, the CHB approved the Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) to authorize decommissioning and demolition activities at the subject property with recommendations related to the scope of work (Exhibit 1). The current request is submitted in partial adherence to the following COA recommendations:

- **Recommendation #2: Point of Interest Designation.** Within 6 months, the project applicant should apply for designation of their property as a County of Ventura Point of Interest. A commemorative plaque is recommended to be placed at the site by the applicant describing the site's historic significance, with review and comment to be provided by the CHB at a future date.

- **Recommendation #4:** Create an interpretive program related to the historic significance of the site. As part of this program, the applicant should prepare aerial drone videography of the site prior to demolition of structures. Videography may be stored on the CHB website.

The applicant proposes to utilize materials from the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery to create a visual interpretive display located adjacent to East 5th Street comprised of three key parts, all of which repurpose some of the oldest parts of the refinery. These consist of a steel riveted vessel, a tube sheet, and a refractory fire brick used in a boiler. In addition, up to four interpretative panels will be mounted to the display comprised of black, powder-coated aluminum interpretative signs. Content for the interpretive signs will be developed at a future date. Refer to Exhibit 2 for an Interpretive Display Visual Representation and Exhibit 3 for a narrative regarding the proposed interpretive materials. In addition, Exhibit 4 provides a representative of the Proposed Interpretative Display Location.

V. PROPERTY BACKGROUND:

On August 7, 2019, the Ventura County Code Compliance Division issued a Notice of Violation to the property owner for multiple violations of the Ventura County Building Code and Zoning Ordinance at the subject property. Specifically, the following violations were confirmed:

- VIOLATION 1: The site owned by California Resources Production Corporation is now an oil production facility with bulk storage. The facility is being operated with no valid Conditional Use Permit (CUP) having been issued or permit applications on file. No Planning Division permits have been issued authorizing the use of the equipment, refinery vessels, machinery, and structures on the site. Expansion and repurposing of various refinery vessels and equipment has been conducted and was not authorized under CUP 186. In December of 1952, the refinery requested a special use permit from the Ventura County Planning Commission for the production of oil and gas, specifically listing “Drilling for and extraction of oil, gas and other hydrocarbon substances and installing and using buildings, equipments, and other appurtenances accessory thereto, including pipe lines, but specifically excluding processing, refining, packaging, bulk storage or any other use specified in Ordinance No. 412 as amended as requiring review and special use permit.”
- VIOLATION 2: The presence of dangerous buildings and dilapidated or deteriorated structures due to inadequate maintenance. The site has become (i) an attractive nuisance to children; (ii) a harbor for vagrants, criminals or immoral persons; and (iii) has enabled persons to resort thereto for the purpose of committing unlawful or immoral acts. Further, graffiti and dumping is occurring on the property.

- VIOLATION 3: Excessive open storage of abandoned equipment, machinery and buildings.

In order to abate these violations, the property owner must obtain required permits and authorizations from the Planning Division, Building and Safety Division, and Integrated Waste Management Division. Abatement could also require approval from other agencies such as the Fire Department, Environmental Health Division and Public Works Agency. If left unabated, daily civil administrative penalties range from \$50 to \$250 daily, per violation.

The applicant previously requested the CHB approve a COA to authorize decommissioning activities at the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery (Case No. ZC21-0385) in order to partially abate code violations identified in Notice of Violation CV19-0177. The request consisted of the following scope of activities:

- Removal of any remaining contents from the existing tanks and vessels onsite;
- Demolition and removal of tanks, vessels, mechanical and electrical equipment, surface piping, and utilities;
- Rehabilitation of existing facility structures; and
- Recycling/removal of scrap metals.

As mentioned, at the May 23, 2022 hearing, the CHB approved the COA to authorize decommissioning and demolition activities at the subject property with recommendations related to the scope of work (Exhibit 1). On October 11, 2022, the CHB designated the Edgington Oxnard Oil Derrick as Ventura County Landmark No. 183 and the remainder of the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery property as Point of Interest No. 12. In addition, the property owner has completed HABS photographic documentation and drone videography of the subject property.

VI. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The property was surveyed in 2014 as part of the Historic Context Statement and Reconnaissance Survey for the Eastern Oxnard Plain. It was identified as potentially significant for its association with the “Extractive Industry” historical context theme in Ventura County with a period of significance between 1945 and 1965. The eligibility of the property as a historic resource was not assessed due to the reconnaissance-level nature of the survey. In December 2020, the property owner’s consultant, ASM Affiliates, Inc, completed a Phase I Historic Resources Report for the subject property.¹

¹ Kung, Laura Taylor, M.A. and Shannon Davis, M.A., RPH, ASM Affiliates, Inc, *Phase I Historic Resources Report for the Edgington Oxnard Refinery, Oxnard, Ventura County, California*, December 2020.

The history of the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery begins with the Chase family, specifically with the “Chase Brothers,” Glywn Sunley and James Warren Chase.² Glywn was born in Riverside in 1900 and James in 1903; the Chase Brothers were first raised on their family’s farm in Riverside before the family moved to the San Fernando Valley in 1917 and operated a dairy farm. In 1927, around the same time the brothers were starting their own families, they purchased 320 undeveloped acres along East 5th Street in an unincorporated area of Ventura County, three miles east of Oxnard.³ The brothers followed in their father’s footsteps and started a dairy on a portion of the land near what is now Wolff Road. The dairy quickly became a center of activity in the community, serving as a meeting place for beet sugar farmers and donating milk for children attending Christmas events. The dairy opened a store on the property during the 1950s and continued to operate for several decades.⁴

The Chase Brothers, like many landowners on the Oxnard Plain, would go on to lease portions of their property to oil companies as sources of income.⁵ Oil exploration at the property began in 1935, when the first well was drilled in the area on land leased by the Vaca Oil Exploration Company. In 1937, the brothers leased 200 acres of their land to the Canadian El Rio Oil Company who successfully broke through the layer and triggered an oil boom in the area. Vaca Oil Exploration soon drilled its well 100 feet east of the El Rio No. 1 well. With multiple producing wells in the area, the Chase Brothers began building the first refinery facilities between 1937 and 1938.⁶ The first name for the refinery was Pacific Asphalt Company. By 1949, Ralph Edgington, a lawyer turned oilman, had become part owner of the company. Ralph Edgington was born in Delaware, Ohio, in 1905 and later moved to California to begin his career in law. In 1941, he acquired property in Long Beach which turned out to be an old refinery.⁷ He was soon dragged into producing asphalt when World War II began and there were no west coast shippers of asphalt. His company ultimately supplied 78 percent of all asphalt used in the Pacific.⁸

In December of 1952, the Edgington Oxnard Refinery was granted a special use permit from the Ventura County Planning Commission for the drilling of oil and gas. Immediately after the permit was granted, drilling for a new well, El Rio No. 3 was started by the Edgington Refinery of Long Beach and soon after the name of the refinery was changed to Edgington Oxnard Refinery.⁹

2 Ibid.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid.
5 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid.

By 1953, the oldest son of Glywn Chase, Herbert Morley Chase, was general manager of the refinery.¹⁰ Born in 1928, Morley Chase returned to the area following military service in the 1950s and served as plant manager, continuing to work in the industry for the next 60 years. The Edgington Oxnard Refinery continued to provide asphalt products to Asia during the 1950s. Due to increased demand, the refinery began to expand during these years. In April 1954 they drilled a new well, Chase No. 2.¹¹ In 1955, construction began on the largest tank (30,000-barrel) that is still on the site today. A number of incidents and accidents were noted at the facility over the decades it was operational. During the 1960s, the refinery expanded by purchasing other leases and interests. The name Tenby Inc. first appears in 1962; at that time the name represented both Chase Production Company and Edgington Refinery, but it appears Edgington was less involved in operations after this time. The expansion of operations continued into the early 1970s with the purchase of properties and mineral rights in the area.¹²

The last well was drilled on the property in 1988 at the same time the Edgington Refinery in Long Beach was purchased by another company.¹³ By 1995, the Edgington Oxnard Refinery was the last operating refinery in the area (possibly the county).¹⁴ The refinery was closed in 2011 and sold; Morley Chase died in 2013.

Evaluation of Significance

The property was evaluated against the criteria for the National Register of Historic Places (National Register), California Register of Historical Resources (California Register), and as a County of Ventura Cultural Heritage Site.¹⁵ Further, the refinery was evaluated under the context themes¹⁶ of “Agriculture and Suburbs (1945-1965), subtheme 6E – Extractive Industry” established in the Historic Context Statement and Reconnaissance Survey for the Eastern Oxnard Plain.

National Register/State Register

According to the Historic Resources Report prepared for the property, as the site of one of the first wells on the Oxnard Plain and the last existing refinery in the Oxnard area, the property has the potential to be eligible for its association with the oil industry

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Historic contexts are those patterns, themes, or trends in history by which a specific occurrence, property, or site is understood and its meaning (or significance) within history is made clear. (Office of Cultural Development, State of Louisiana, available at: <https://www.crt.state.la.us/cultural-development/historic-preservation/national-register/historic-contexts/index>)

in California as well as expressing the importance of the industry to the development of Ventura County.¹⁷ The period of significance for the refinery begins in 1952 with the drilling of El Rio No. 3 which prompted the involvement of Ralph Edgington and the expansion of the property. It ends in 1968, after the partnership with Edgington ended and after which no new tank series were added. During the refinery’s period of significance, Ventura County’s petroleum and associated industries were one of the primary sources of employment in the county.¹⁸ Only agriculture was as important to the economic development of Oxnard during this time. By 1995, the facility was the last of its kind in the area. Given its association with the significant role oil played in the local economy, and the rarity of refinery sites, the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery was determined to meet National Register Criterion A and California Register Criterion 1.¹⁹ However, while the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery was found to retain integrity of location and setting, the loss of materials had impacted the integrity of design, materials, workmanship feeling and association to the point where the district no longer retained integrity to convey its significance for eligibility for listing on the National or State Registers.²⁰

County of Ventura Landmark

The facility’s status as one of the first oil and gas refineries in the area was found to reflect special elements of the County’s engineering and social history (County Landmark Criterion 1) as it represents a major economic contribution to the region that is now scarce.²¹ The facility is closely associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County and Oxnard history under the context theme of “Agriculture and Suburbs (1945-1965), subtheme 6E – Extractive Industry.” Therefore, it appears to satisfy County Landmark Criterion 2.²² The refinery has lost its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and therefore does not satisfy Criterion 6. However, since it is not required to meet an integrity threshold in order to be eligible as a Ventura County Landmark, the facility appears to be eligible as it satisfies Criteria 1 and 2.²³

Additionally, the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery was determined eligible as a Ventura County Historic District because it has a significant concentration, linkage, and continuity of buildings and structures which are united historically by physical development. Boundaries for the potential historic district are represented by the

¹⁷ Kung, Laura Taylor, M.A. and Shannon Davis, M.A., RPH, ASM Affiliates, Inc, *Phase I Historic Resources Report for the Edgington Oxnard Refinery, Oxnard, Ventura County, California*, December 2020.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

survey area.²⁴ The survey of the Former Edgington Oxnard Refinery included the identification of 40 buildings and structures; in total, 34 of the identified resources, as well as the associated equipment, would be considered contributors to the district as they were built during the period of significance and retain sufficient integrity to convey the themes associated with the refinery.²⁵ The two non-contributors were the Fire Station which was built in 1983 and after the period of significance, tanks 701, 702, 1501 and 1502, which were built outside the period of significance, and the Shed, which did not retain sufficient integrity to convey its original use and association with the themes the district conveys.²⁶

VII. STAFF CONCLUSION:

Based on a review of the applicant's proposed interpretive plan, the plan appears consistent with the CHB's previously approved COA and recommendations related to the scope of work outlined in Case No. CH21-0005.

CHB staff recommends the CHB adopt the following recommendation related to the scope of work:

- **Recommendation #1: Maintenance Plan.** The property owner should develop a maintenance plan for the interpretive display to ensure timely and adequate treatment of any deterioration, weathering, graffiti, or the like that may occur to the display.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No public comment regarding this item has been received to date.

IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

CHB staff recommends the CHB take the following actions regarding the request:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division Staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto; and
2. **REVIEW** and **COMMENT** on the proposed interpretive display based on the preceding evidence and analysis.

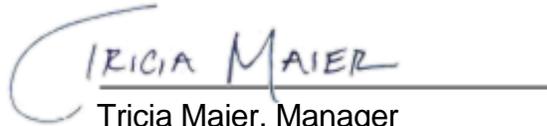
²⁴ Ibid.
²⁵ Ibid.
²⁶ Ibid.

Prepared by:



Dillan Murray, Associate Planner
Ventura County Planning Division
(805) 654-5042

Reviewed by:



Tricia Maier, Manager
Planning Programs Section
(805) 654-2464

Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Certificate of Appropriateness Approval Letter (Case No. CH21-0005)
- Exhibit 2: Interpretive Display Visual Representation
- Exhibit 3: Interpretative Materials Narrative
- Exhibit 4: Proposed Interpretative Display Location