



Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of January 23, 2023, Item 7b

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

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I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant: Art Hernandez
Central Coast Real Estate
4869 McGrath Street, Suite 100
Ventura, CA 93003

Property Owner: Bo Brucker
15321 Todd Lane
Santa Paula, CA 93060

II. REQUEST:

A request for a Certificate of Review (COR) (Cultural Heritage Ordinance (CHO) §1372) for a proposed 476 square foot addition, new 94 square foot breezeway, and associated improvements at the Agnes Graham Ranch residence located at 15321 Todd Lane near the City of Santa Paula. (Case No. CH22-0033).

III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

15321 Todd Lane, Santa Paula, CA 93060 (unincorporated Ventura County)
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 099-0-080-185
Historic Designation: Site of Merit
Historic Name: Agnes Graham Ranch

Zoning: AE-40 ac/MRP – Agricultural Exclusive 40 Acre Minimum Lot Size, Mineral Resource Protection Overlay Zone
General Plan Designation: Agricultural

The 3-acre Agnes Graham Ranch contains a 1,182 square foot residence built around 1900, a detached 400 square foot garage with an attached 168 square foot laundry room and 472 square foot recreation room, a 2,250 square foot barn, and a 3,200 square foot storage building. The buildings are surrounded by citrus and avocado orchards and row crops and the property is accessed by Todd Lane, a private road.

IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The applicant requests that the Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) provide a COR for a proposed 476 square foot addition, new 94 square foot breezeway, and associated improvements at the Agnes Graham Ranch residence located at 15321 Todd Lane near the City of Santa Paula. The proposed addition would be located off the residence's south elevation and the breezeway would connect the southwestern portion of the residence with the detached garage/laundry room. The proposed project is described across the site plans and elevations included in Exhibit 1. The proposed

new construction would match the existing residence's stucco cladding, roofing materials, and vinyl windows. A proposed exterior air conditioner condenser unit would be located off the west elevation. Refer to Exhibit 2 for Architectural Cut Sheets and Exhibit 3 for Existing Photos.

V. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

The Agnes Graham Ranch was evaluated in the 1996 *Phase V West Santa Clara Valley Cultural Heritage Survey* ("Historic Survey") prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates (Exhibit 4).¹ The Folk-Victorian, one-story residence has a square plan and a medium-pitched, gable-on-hip roof with boxed eaves covered with composition shingles. The front of the house has a centered, inset porch and windows are generally narrow, one-over-one, and double-hung. The residence has been substantially altered since the time of survey; horizontal shiplap siding has been replaced with stucco, windows and doors have been replaced with vinyl and aluminum, and the brick chimney previously located on the east side of the house has been removed.

The Historic Survey describes the background of the subject property as follows:

*"This three acre ranch was originally part of a 100 acre parcel owned by Agnes Graham, who acquired the property about 1892. Mrs. Graham was the sister of Bertha Geisler. Mrs. Geisler and her husband Richard and their two children were natives of Breslau, Germany and spent two years in Pennsylvania before coming to Venture County in 1892. The Grahams and Geislars apparently built three houses, several barns and apricot pitting sheds on the property between 1892 and 1900. The land was later divided into three parcels, when the Grahams and elder Geislars moved to the Los Angeles area. This parcel was owned by a Mary G. Theophilus in 1912 and has had several owners over the years including the Andrew Kirker family in the 1920s. It is significant because of the role the ranch played in the development of agriculture in the Santa Clara Valley. The surrounding ranches generally raised apricots through the 1920s, switched to walnuts and finally to citrus after the 1960s."*²

¹ San Buenaventura Research Associates, *Phase V West Santa Clara Valley Cultural Heritage Survey*, 1996.

² Ibid.

Figure 1 – View of Agnes Graham Ranch from State Route 126, Looking South



Credit: Google Maps, 2022

Figure 2 – Residence at Agnes Graham Ranch, Looking South



Credit: Google Maps, 2022

According to the Historic Survey, the property was assigned a Historical Resource Status Code of 3D as an identified contributor to an eligible overall historic district encompassing the entire western Santa Clara Valley.³ The district boundaries include the unincorporated areas whose historic landscape elements contain agricultural lands primarily devoted to citrus and dotted with ranch houses, barns, sheds and packing houses.⁴ The western Santa Clara Valley is significant under NRHP Criterion A (events) for its reflection of the growth and development of agriculture during its period of significance (1860-1946).⁵ The district illustrates the historical development of agricultural products and farming techniques, and documents the progression of this land use from the dry farming of grains and row crops, to irrigated tree crops and citrus ranching.⁶

VI. CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (CHO) §1372, requires that the CHB provide a COR in the case of a permit application to construct, change, alter, modify, or remodel in a manner a Site of Merit that affects the exterior character-defining features or integrity of the site.

CHO §1372-2 provides that the CHB uses the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (“Secretary’s Standards”) in its evaluation of the property and the proposed scope of work. The COR process consists of voluntary recommendations for the applicant’s consideration in order to better conform to the Secretary’s Standards. Additionally, the National Park Service’s *Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Building: Preservation Concerns*⁷ may be of use during the CHB’s review. CHB Staff determined the standards for rehabilitation are appropriate for this request and evaluated the proposed scope of work against the relevant standards below.

Standards	Staff Comments
#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 residence will continue to be used as a single-family residence following implementation of the proposed project in accordance with applicable zoning regulations.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ National Park Service, *Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Building: Preservation Concerns*, August 2010, <https://www.nps.gov/orgs/1739/upload/preservation-brief-14-exterior-additions.pdf>.

Standards	Staff Comments
	Staff determined that this Standard has been met.
<p>#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.</p>	<p>The Secretary’s Standards⁸ encourage the retention of historic features that contribute to the interpretation of the significance of a historic property and, when appropriate, repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts rather than full replacement.</p> <p>The proposed addition would be located off the residence’s south elevation and would not involve the removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize the property.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p>#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.</p>	<p>It does not appear that conjectural design features from other historic properties or inappropriate time periods are proposed to be added to the property with the intent of creating a false sense of historical development.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p>#4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.</p>	<p>There do not appear to be changes to the property that have acquired historic significance in their own right.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p>#5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.</p>	<p>The main residence would retain a majority of its remaining character-defining features. The addition is proposed to be located at the rear and the primary façade is not proposed to be modified. A portion of the existing residence at the rear, including windows, would be removed to accommodate the addition. However, this is limited in scope and the main residence would appear to generally retain its historic character and materials.</p> <p>Staff determined this Standard has been met.</p>

⁸ Weeks, Kay D., *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, revised 2017, pg. 140.

Standards	Staff Comments
<p>#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.</p>	<p>The applicant proposes the use of vinyl casement and single-hung windows in the proposed new construction. Generally, original windows would consist of narrow, one-over-one, and double-hung windows with plain wood casings. The appearance of the new or replacement windows should be consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period, but need not replicate a missing historic window.⁹ In many cases, this may be accomplished using substitute materials.¹⁰ Replacement of missing or non-historic windows must, however, always fill the original window openings and must be compatible with the overall historic character of the building.¹¹</p> <p>Based on the above considerations, Staff determined the scope of work is partially inconsistent with this Standard.</p>
<p>#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.</p>	<p>New construction is most appropriately located where its visibility from the primary views of the historic building is minimized.¹² This is often a rear or obscure elevation. Inherent in all of the guidance is the concept that new construction needs to be subordinate to the historic building. The size, scale, and massing of a new addition all pertain to the addition’s overall volume and three-dimensional qualities.¹³ Taken together, size, scale and massing are critical elements for ensuring that a new addition is subordinate to the historic building, thus preserving the historic character of a historic property.¹⁴</p> <p>The addition would be located off the residence’s south elevation and extend the roofline and length of both east and west elevations. The proposed addition will have some visibility from the east</p>

⁹ National Park Service, “Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards,” <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/windows-replacement-meet-standards.htm>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, “New Additions to Historic Buildings,”

<https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/additions.htm>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Standards	Staff Comments
	<p>elevation along Todd Lane, a private street. The exterior of the addition would be in keeping with the architectural style of the main residence. The proposed roofline of the addition will be slightly lower than that of the maximum height of the main residence, thereby establishing a sense of subordination. However, the design of the proposed addition would follow and extend along the same eastern wall plane of the existing residence, risking unification of the two volumes into a single architectural whole.</p> <p>In some cases, separating the addition from the historic building by offsetting it or setting it back from the mass of the historic building can reduce the visual impact of an addition.¹⁵ It is important that the new structure is clearly differentiated and distinguishable as a new addition so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost altogether in a new and larger composition.¹⁶ The historic building must be clearly identifiable and its physical integrity must not be compromised by the new addition.</p> <p>Based on the above considerations, Staff determined the scope of work is partially inconsistent with this Standard.</p>
<p>#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.</p>	<p>The design of the proposed addition extends the wall plane of the existing building and risks unification of the two volumes into a single architectural whole. Such a design may preclude the ability to remove the addition in the future while maintaining the essential form of the residence as the identity of the historic structure may be lost in a new and larger composition.</p> <p>Based on the above considerations, Staff determined the scope of work is partially inconsistent with this Standard.</p>

VII. STAFF CONCLUSION:

¹⁵ Ibid.
¹⁶ Ibid.

Based on the above considerations, the proposed scope of work appears partially inconsistent with the Secretary’s Standards. Following implementation of the project, the residence would retain a majority of its remaining character-defining features. However, of notable exception, the proposed addition risks unification of the two volumes into a single architectural whole.

In some cases, separating the addition from the historic building with a simple, small-scale architectural hyphen or connector can reduce the visual impact of large addition to a historic building. Another way of minimizing the impact of a new addition to an historic building is to offset it or step it back from the mass of the historic building. It is important that the new structure is clearly differentiated and distinguishable as a new addition so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost altogether in a new and larger composition. The historic building must be clearly identifiable and its physical integrity must not be compromised by the new addition.

In addition, the applicant proposes the use of vinyl casement and single-hung windows in the proposed new construction. Generally, original windows would consist of narrow, one-over-one, and double-hung windows with plain wood casings. The appearance of the new or replacement windows should be consistent with the general characteristics of a historic window of the type and period, but need not replicate a missing historic window.¹⁷ In many cases, this may be accomplished using substitute materials.¹⁸ Replacement of missing or non-historic windows must, however, always fill the original window openings and must be compatible with the overall historic character of the building.¹⁹ For example, if double-hung windows are the primary type on the existing residence, double-hung windows should also be used in the addition.

Based on the above, Staff recommend the CHB adopt the following recommendations related to the scope of work in order to better conform to the Secretary’s Standards:

- **Recommendation #1: Rear Addition.** The proposed design should separate the addition from the historic building by offsetting the addition or stepping it back from the mass of the historic building, or minimizing visual impacts through other similar means. With implementation of this recommendation, the addition should be clearly differentiated and distinguishable as a new addition

¹⁷ National Park Service, “Replacement Windows that Meet the Standards,” <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/taxincentives/windows-replacement-meet-standards.htm>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost altogether in a new and larger composition.

- **Recommendation #2: Windows.** The applicant should match the proposed new windows to the historic windows to the extent feasible in terms of configuration, materials, details and finish in order to be more compatible with the overall historic character of the building.
- **Recommendation #3: A/C Unit.** The applicant should screen any exterior ground-mounted air conditioning (A/C) unit with landscaping or hardscaping to reduce visual impacts.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

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

IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Staff is recommending 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 project in accordance with CHO §1372 based on the preceding evidence and analysis.

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Reviewed by:



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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Proposed Plans and Elevations
- Exhibit 2: Architectural Cut Sheets
- Exhibit 3: Existing Photos
- Exhibit 4: Historic Survey Evaluation