

Staff Report and Recommendations

Agenda of April 14, 2025, Item 6a

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

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I. REQUEST:

Adopt proposed resolutions to approve historic preservation awards recognizing the work of nine different individuals and organizations. The awards are to be presented at a public hearing in May to coincide with National Historic Preservation Month.

II. BACKGROUND:

The Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) identified the continuation of a Preservation Award Program as a priority for 2025. Beginning in 2024, the CHB has issued preservation awards to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of individuals, advocates, property owners, community organizations, and volunteers who are instrumental in the field of historic preservation. The awards, which are listed on the CHB website, are intended to promote quality historic preservation and programming work occurring in the community and to engage more widely with the stakeholders involved.

At their January 13, 2025 hearing, the CHB established an ad hoc committee to develop a Preservation Award Program for 2025. The ad hoc committee met across March and April of this year in order to define the program parameters, establish eligibility categories and criteria, and identify worthy 2025 award recipients for the full CHB's consideration. Consistent with past practice, the ad hoc committee envisioned a Preservation Award Program to involve the granting of an undetermined number of preservation awards each May during National Historic Preservation Month. As part of this process, the CHB would form an award jury ad hoc committee around January of each year in order to identify worthy award recipients to present to the full CHB for consideration in a public hearing. This year's ad hoc committee developed the following historic preservation award categories:

- Excellence in Rehabilitation
- Excellence in Restoration
- Excellence in Preservation
- Excellence in Reconstruction
- Excellence in Grassroots Organizing and Community Development
- Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation
- Excellence in Individuals Supporting Historic Preservation
- Excellence in the Promotion and Implementation of Historical Programming

III. PROPOSED HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD RECIPIENTS:

This year the Preservation Award Program ad hoc committee identified the following nine property owners, individuals, and organizations as worthy of special recognition in 2025. Each proposed recipient is noted below, along with the intended award

category and a description of the historic property and/or work they are associated with.

1. Japanese American Citizens League for Excellence in Restoration of Oxnard's historic Japanese Cemetery.
 - The historic Japanese Cemetery, located in the city of Oxnard, was designated Ventura County's eighteenth landmark in 1971. The 3.3-acre triangular plot was established in 1908 and designated for people of Asian, mostly Japanese, descent.
 - The cemetery has been vandalized numerous times over the years. In 2017, the cemetery suffered some of the worst vandalism it has faced since the 1980s. Around 15-20 posts that served as grave memorial markers were knocked over, with some permanently destroyed.
 - The Ventura County Japanese American Citizens League stepped up to preserve and maintain the site. The chapter is passionate about restoring the site and honoring traditions to respect the deceased Japanese pioneers of Ventura County. To this end, the group worked to replace damaged grave markers and improve the site, participate in annual clean-up days, and provide the driving force behind efforts to repair the cemetery after its vandalism. This work culminated in a graveside rededication ceremony on September 21, 2024, followed by a historical presentation and lunch catered by 5th-generation descendants of a local Japanese-American-owned business. Figure 1 shows JACL volunteers at an annual cleanup event.

Figure 1 – Japanese American Citizens League Volunteers at a Cleanup Event



Credit: Japanese American Citizens League

2. David Hertz & Laura Doss-Hertz and Frances Rehwald for Excellence in Preservation of the Tony Duquette Historic District, 9199 Cotharin Road and 11688 Cotharin Road, Malibu, CA 90265.
- The Tony Duquette Historic District, focused upon the creations of nationally significant artist and designer Anthony “Tony” Duquette, includes multiple resources across two parcels under separate ownership. The proposed district represents the former home and one of the last bodies of larger-scale work by Duquette (1914-1999).
 - The district retains its integrity of location, with key elements remaining within the original boundaries, even if relocated or repurposed after the fire. Its design is evident in the integration of salvaged materials, such as military surplus and Hollywood set pieces, which exemplify Duquette’s ability to fuse disparate elements into cohesive works of art.
 - The district remains a rare and significant representation of Duquette’s large-scale art environments. It reflects not only his artistic mastery but also his ability to adapt and respond to the destructive fires that shaped his later life, incorporating these experiences into his creative narrative. Figure 2 shows a collage of contributing resources to the historic district.

Figure 2 – Collage of Contributing Resources to the Tony Duquette Historic District



Credit: Daniel D. Paul

3. Dr. José Alamillo and his team of student researchers for Excellence in Grassroots Organizing and Community Development related to their research into historical Bracero farmworker labor camps in Ventura County.
 - Dr. José M. Alamillo, professor of Chicana/o Studies at CSU Channel Islands, is a scholar of farmworker labor camps and farmworker moments in Ventura County.
 - The historical context theme of Agricultural Development, including Labor Housing, is important to the history of Ventura County, as it demonstrates the importance of labor to the agricultural development of the county and the relevancy and importance of labor housing to the county's agricultural development.
 - In 2025, Dr. Alamillo and his team of student researchers identified a total of 35 labor camps that employed and housed Braceros during the 1942-1964 period in Ventura County.
 - Dr. Alamillo presented to the CHB on this topic in 2024 (as shown in Figure 3). Through their research, Dr. Alamillo and his team have been a valuable community partner in helping to ensure that future generations can connect with the past, experience the value of these current and former historic sites, and receive a full and inclusive telling of local history.
 - As a result of their work, conversations surrounding the diverse stories of our local history have continued, and new and different ways to acknowledge our past are being explored in the community.

Figure 3 – Dr. José Alamillo Speaking on the History of Farmworker Labor Camps in Ventura County



4. Skateboarding Hall of Fame in Simi Valley for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation.
 - The Skateboarding Hall of Fame in Simi Valley is a living time capsule of skate culture, preserving over 1,000 boards from the 1950s and '60s to today—including some super-rare finds from the Soviet Union and underground skate clubs of the '80s and '90s. By showcasing how skateboarding evolved and recognizing the trailblazers who helped shape it, this museum protects a vital piece of our shared cultural history. It also keeps Ventura County's unique skate legacy in the spotlight, making sure future generations understand how our region influenced a global phenomenon.
 - Figure 4 shows a portion of the Skateboarding Hall of Fame's collection.

Figure 4 – Skateboarding Hall of Fame



Credit: Skateboarding Hall of Fame

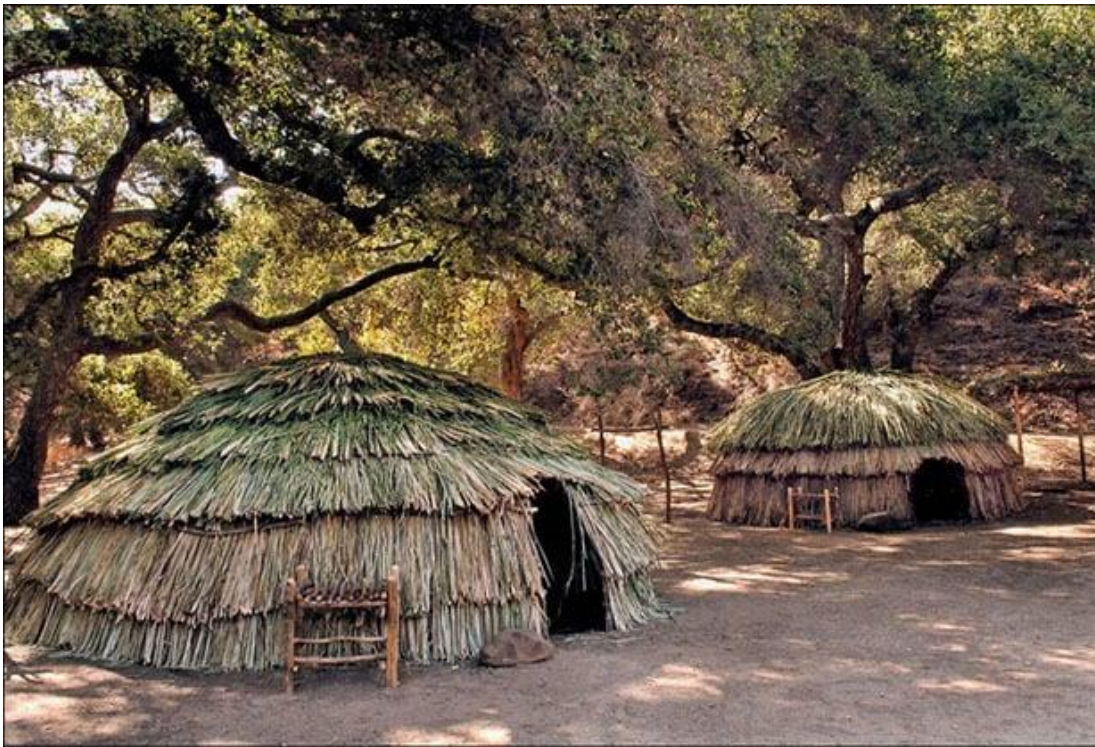
5. Fillmore Historical Museum for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation.
- The primary mission of the Fillmore Historical Museum is to preserve the history of the community of Fillmore and its surrounding areas and to make this history accessible and understandable to residents and visitors. To this end the museum has restored three local buildings – the 1887 Fillmore Depot, the 1905 Hinckley House and the 1919 Rancho Sespe Bunkhouse (Figure 5). The museum volunteers develop displays of photos and memorabilia from the Fillmore, Bardsdale, Sespe and Piru communities and provide tours of its historic buildings for local schoolchildren, residents and guests.
 - The Fillmore Historical Museum is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. It is overseen by an 11-person board of directors. Its president and executive director handle the day-to-day operations of the Museum.
 - With the help of docents and volunteers they are open 4 days a week to the general public.
 - The Fillmore Historical Museum and Park contains historical buildings with treasures from the early days in the Santa Clara Valley (as shown in Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Fillmore Historical Museum



6. Chumash Museum in Thousand Oaks for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation.
 - The Chumash Indian Museum is a historical site and living history center. This museum is dedicated to restoring and preserving an awareness of the Chumash people and their historical, cultural, material and present-day influence, as well as the natural environment and historical significance of this site. Through life-sized reproductions of Chumash life, exhibits, events, and educational programs, the Chumash Indian Museum serves as a gathering place for a partnership with the native and non-native communities connecting the past with the present to continue our shared future. Figure 6 shows some of the life-sized reproductions of Chumash life hosted at the museum.

Figure 6 – Chumash Museum, Thousand Oaks



Credit: Chumash Museum

7. Friends of Heritage Square in Oxnard for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation.
- Heritage Square in Oxnard, CA dates back to 1985 when the idea to preserve the city's historical and architectural heritage took root. The vision was to showcase the unique charm and character of turn-of-the-century Oxnard. After many years of dedication and hard work, the square officially opened its doors to the public in 1991.
 - Since its inception, Heritage Square has become much more than just a collection of beautifully restored buildings; it has grown into a vibrant community hub, event center, and cultural hotspot. Managed by the Friends of Heritage Square, the square hosts a wide range of events, celebrations, and educational programs, fostering a sense of pride and appreciation for Oxnard's heritage among locals and visitors alike.
 - Figure 7 shows a few of the restored buildings at Heritage Square.

Figure 7 – Heritage Square, Oxnard



Credit: Heritage Square

8. Beverlee McGrath for Excellence in Individuals Supporting Preservation.

- Ms. Grath is the owner of the Scarlett/McGrath Ranch, a historic property consisting of a centrally sited Queen Anne Style farmhouse surrounded with mature landscaping and a variety of outbuildings and other structures that vary in their dates of construction. Other structures on the property include utilitarian buildings for storage and support of land cultivation, residential buildings, and a variety of semi-permanent structures developed in recent decades to support agriculture and farm animal related educational tours of the property.
- Ventura County Superior Court Judge Charles McGrath, grandson of Robert McGrath, and his wife Beverlee McGrath moved to the Scarlett/McGrath Ranch property in 1970. In addition to raising four children on the property, Beverlee was an actress, singer, and a lobbyist and activist for animal rights. She continues to reside on the property, which is still farmed by the McGrath family. Beverlee recently sponsored exhaustive research into the property as part of its successful nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. Beverlee held a luncheon to celebrate this milestone in December 2024 (as shown in Figure 8) and regularly hosts events and tours at the property.

Figure 8 – Scarlett/McGrath Ranch luncheon, December 2024



9. Adam's Forge in Simi Valley for Excellence in the Promotion and Implementation of Historical Programming.
- Adam's Forge is a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation that seeks to provide a safe, inclusive, diverse and thriving community where people of all ages and backgrounds can share in the traditions, knowledge, artistry and skills of metalsmithing and other hand-crafted arts.
 - Adam's Forge is creating a thriving blacksmithing community through classes and events that inspire and support aspiring artists, tradespeople, and community.
 - Blacksmith shops are one type of building or structure characteristic of the Pioneering Settlement (1864–1898) historical context theme of Ventura County's history, often associated with agriculture.
 - Adam's Forge promotes this historical context by preserving the skill of blacksmithing through lessons, presentations, and living history.
 - Figure 9 shows an example of metalworking lessons provided by Adam's Forge.

Figure 9 – Blacksmith Class at Adam's Forge



Credit: Adam's Forge

IV. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

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

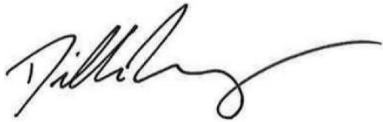
V. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

CHB staff recommends the CHB take the following actions:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-2 (Exhibit 1) approving an award for the Japanese American Citizens League for Excellence in Restoration of Oxnard's historic Japanese Cemetery;
3. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-3 (Exhibit 2) approving an award for David Hertz & Laura Doss-Hertz and Frances Rehwald for Excellence in Preservation of the Tony Duquette Historic District (9199 Cotharin Road and 11688 Cotharin Road, Malibu, CA 90265);
4. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-4 (Exhibit 3) approving an award for Dr. José Alamillo and his team of student researchers for Excellence in Grassroots Organizing and Community Development related to their research into historical Bracero farmworker labor camps in Ventura County;
5. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-5 (Exhibit 4) approving an award for the Skateboarding Hall of Fame in Simi Valley for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation;
6. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-6 (Exhibit 5) approving an award for the Fillmore Historical Museum for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation;
7. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-7 (Exhibit 6) approving an award for the Chumash Museum in Thousand Oaks for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation;
8. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-8 (Exhibit 7) approving an award for the Friends of Heritage Square in Oxnard for Excellence in Organizations Supporting History or Historic Preservation;
9. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-9 (Exhibit 8) approving an award for Beverlee McGrath for Excellence in Individuals Supporting Preservation; and

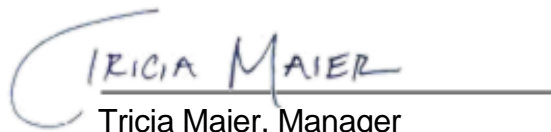
10. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2025-10 (Exhibit 9) approving an award for Adam's Forge in Simi Valley for Excellence in the Promotion and Implementation of Historical Programming.

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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-2
- Exhibit 2: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-3
- Exhibit 3: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-4
- Exhibit 4: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-5
- Exhibit 5: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-6
- Exhibit 6: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-7
- Exhibit 7: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-8
- Exhibit 8: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-9
- Exhibit 9: Proposed CHB Resolution No. 2025-10