

## Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of July 13, 2026, Item 12b

### County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2478 • [rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/planning/](http://rma.venturacounty.gov/divisions/planning/)

#### I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

**Applicant:** County of Ventura  
Resource Management Agency, Planning Division  
800 S. Victoria Avenue, L #1740  
Ventura, CA 93009

**Property Owner:** County of Ventura  
Parks Department  
11201 Riverbank Drive, Suite A1  
Ventura, CA 93004

#### II. REQUEST:

Nomination to designate the Piru Quonset Hut Community Center, formerly located at 802 Orchard Street, Piru, CA 93040 (Unincorporated Ventura County), as Ventura County Point of Interest No. 19. (Case No. CH26-0042).

#### III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

802 Orchard Street, Piru, CA 93040 (unincorporated Ventura County)  
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 056-0-070-030

The subject property consists of a 3.9-acre site within Warring Park in the community of Piru that formerly contained a World War II–era Quonset Hut, likely built in the 1940s and used for a wide variety of community gatherings. The hut featured the characteristic curved steel-rib construction associated with wartime modular design and served as a venue for religious ceremonies, weddings, parties, and other community events throughout its 1950s period of active use. Although the structure held long-standing cultural significance for Piru residents, it was demolished around 2003 following years of decline. Figure 1, below, shows the former location of the Piru Quonset Hut Community Center in relation to Warring Park, and Figure 2 illustrates the building's distinctive form.

#### IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance No. 4604 (Ordinance) Section 1366 provides for the designation of Cultural Heritage Sites by the Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) when a property owner does not object and when the site is determined to meet the appropriate designation criteria. CHB staff have identified the former Piru Quonset Hut Community Center as appearing to meet the criteria for designation as a Point of Interest.

Figure 1 – Aerial View of Piru Quonset Hut Community Center, 2003



Figure 2 – Front of Piru Quonset Hut Community Center, 2000



*Credit: Ricardo DeAratanha, Los Angeles Times, 2000*

## **V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:**

Historical information regarding the former Piru Quonset Hut is drawn from research by San Buenaventura Research Associates into similar structures in Ventura County.<sup>1</sup> Additional details about the structure's role within the community are provided by newspaper reporting, including an October 11, 2000, article from the *Los Angeles Times* documenting the structure's use and its role in local preservation efforts (Exhibit 1). Quonset Huts were introduced during World War II as prefabricated semicylindrical structures composed of curved steel ribs clad in corrugated metal, designed for rapid assembly, portability, and versatile use.<sup>2</sup> Following the war, surplus Quonset Huts became widely available for civilian reuse throughout Ventura County, many originating from the Seabee Base at Port Hueneme; the Piru Quonset Hut was likely erected around this time (circa 1945-1950).

According to newspaper accounts, the Piru Quonset Hut became a major community gathering place beginning in the 1950s and throughout later decades. It hosted weddings, baptisms, quinceañeras, community dances, and other social events and was remembered by residents as a lively and central venue during its heyday. According to the *Los Angeles Times*, "Everyone [in Piru] remembers good times in the hut, but few have specifics: photographs, baptism certificates..." By the late twentieth century, however, the hut had deteriorated significantly. The 2000 article describes broken windows, damaged siding, and aging interior finishes, noting that the newer Piru Community Center built in 1990 gradually displaced the structure as the town's primary event space.

The *Los Angeles Times* article also documented the community's interest in preserving the building around the turn of the century. Residents such as Al Gaitan, a lifelong Piru community member, actively campaigned for historical landmark status, emphasizing that the hut represented an important part of local identity and social history. His efforts, and the involvement of other community members, highlighted the building's strong cultural significance. Despite this advocacy, the Quonset Hut was eventually demolished around 2003 after decades of physical decline.

## **VI. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

The former Piru Quonset Hut holds historical significance for its association with the social and cultural life of Piru during the mid- to late twentieth century and for its representation of a distinctive prefabricated wartime building type adapted for community use. Quonset Huts were an important architectural product of World War II, designed for rapid assembly and functional flexibility. Their widespread civilian

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<sup>1</sup> San Buenaventura Research Associates, (2019, May 8), *Historic Resources Report*, 335 S. Briggs Road, Santa Paula.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

reuse in Ventura County following the war reflects a broader regional trend in which surplus military buildings were integrated into local communities.

Although the structure was demolished around 2003, it remains historically important for its contributions to Piru’s social fabric and as one of the few known examples of postwar architectural reuse that served as a central gathering place for multiple generations of residents.

## **VII. STAFF CONCLUSIONS:**

The information provided in the record supports making the findings under Cultural Heritage Ordinance Section 1367(c) that the former Piru Quonset Hut is eligible for designation as a Ventura County Point of Interest. The October 11, 2000, *Los Angeles Times* article describes the hut as a vibrant social gathering place during the mid- to late twentieth century, hosting weddings, baptisms, quinceañeras, community dances, and other events central to the cultural life of Piru residents. The article further documents its symbolic importance, noting that residents viewed the hut as “a part of the town’s history” and that community members, led by lifelong resident Al Gaitan, actively sought historical landmark status before the structure was demolished.

The evidence also supports making the additional findings required under Ordinance Section 1367-1. The site possesses clear historic character, value, and interest to the general public, as demonstrated by documented community advocacy and multi-generational ties to the events once held in the hut. The designation would not infringe upon the rights of the Property Owner because it does not affect allowable land uses, and the Property Owner consents to designation. The proposed designation is also consistent with the Cultural Heritage Board’s adopted goals for the Cultural Heritage Program for 2025 to 2026 (*Goal #15: Designate Additional Points of Interest* and *Goal #16: Hold 1-2 Mobile Meetings of the Cultural Heritage Board Each Year at Offsite Locations*). A staff analysis of the required findings for Point of Interest designation are included in Table 1 below.

**Table 1: Required Designation Findings Analysis**

| <b>Required Finding</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Staff Comment</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Point of Interest Criteria (1): The site of a building, structure or object that no longer exists, but was associated with historic events, important persons, or embodied a distinctive character or architectural style. | The former Piru Quonset Hut Community Center is historically significant for its association with the social and cultural development of the Piru community and for embodying the distinctive characteristics of a World War II-era Quonset Hut adapted for civilian use. The building served as a community gathering place for weddings, baptisms, |

| Required Finding                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | Staff Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | quinceañeras, dances, and other public events for several decades.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Additional Designation Standard (a): It shall have historic, aesthetic or special character or interest for the general public, and not be limited in interest to a special group of persons.                                                  | The site possesses historic character and value to the general public because of its long-standing role as Piru's principal community gathering place and its association with the town's social and cultural history. The Quonset Hut hosted events attended by multiple generations of residents and represents broader themes of post-World War II community development, making its significance one of general public interest rather than one limited to a particular group.                                                                                                                      |
| Additional Designation Standard (b): Its designation shall not require the expenditure by the County of Ventura of any amount of money not commensurate with the value of the object to be preserved.                                          | Designation would not result in any foreseeable costs to the County beyond routine administrative activities associated with maintaining the Cultural Heritage Program.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Additional Designation Standard (c): Its designation shall not infringe upon the rights of a private owner thereof to make any and all reasonable uses thereof which are not in conflict with the purposes of the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. | Designation would not infringe upon the rights of the Property Owner because it does not alter the property's existing land use, zoning, or development rights. The property is currently owned by the County of Ventura Parks Department and continues to function as part of Warring Park. The Property Owner has provided written consent to the proposed Point of Interest designation. Accordingly, the designation recognizes the site's historical significance without imposing restrictions that would prevent reasonable use of the property consistent with the Cultural Heritage Ordinance. |

Therefore, CHB staff recommends that the CHB approve the request for Ventura County Point of Interest designation.

**VIII. HEARING NOTICE AND PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

A public notice was sent by U.S. mail to the Property Owner of the subject property not less than fifteen days prior to the date of this hearing (Exhibit 2). In addition, the public notice was sent by electronic mail in advance of this hearing. As part of the public outreach conducted by Planning Division staff in March 2025 regarding potential Point of Interest designation, the property owner indicated their consent to the property being designated as a Point of Interest (Exhibit 3).

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

**IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

CHB staff recommends the CHB take the following actions regarding this item:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **FIND** that the Property Owner was given a 15-day notice in accordance with Ordinance Section 1366-2, and that the Property Owner consents to designation;
3. **FIND** that the former Piru Quonset Hut Community Center meets County Point of Interest Criterion 1 as required by Ordinance Section 1367(c), and the additional standards required by Ordinance Section 1367-1 based on the substantial evidence in the staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto; and
4. **ADOPT** CHB Resolution No. 2026-8 (Exhibit 4) approving the designation of the Piru Quonset Hut Community Center, formerly located at 802 Orchard Street, Piru, CA 93040, as Ventura County Point of Interest No. 19.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:



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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Newspaper Article, October 11, 2000
- Exhibit 2: 15-Day Public Hearing Notice
- Exhibit 3: Property Owner Consent to Designation
- Exhibit 4: CHB Resolution No. 2026-8