

CULTURAL HERITAGE COMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT

SUBJECT: AGRICULTURAL HERITAGE AND LEARNING CENTER IN THE SAN LUIS RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN, WHICH CONSISTS OF THE REHABILITATION OF TWO HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT STRUCTURES, THE PRESERVATION OF REMNANTS OF THE GRANDSTAND VIEWING BARN, AND FOUR NEW STRUCTURES INCLUDING

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1.0 RECOMMENDATION

Provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding the consistency of the proposed work with the City's Historical Preservation Ordinance and SOI Standards, and San Luis Ranch Specific Plan including any necessary conditions of approval to ensure such consistency.

2.0 BACKGROUND

The project is the "Agricultural Heritage and Learning Center" as envisioned in the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan, which was adopted in 2017. The applicant calls the proposed development the San Luis Farms and Marketplace, but it is often more commonly referred to as the "Ag Heritage Center".

Consistent with what is described in the specific plan, the project consists of a farm market, restaurant, general retail and agricultural processing buildings (Attachment A, project plans). Pursuant to mitigation requirements in the Final EIR, the project was originally intended to relocate and incorporate three historic structures from the Dalidio Ranch, but one of those structures—a grandstand viewing barn—was severely damaged in a fire in February 2019. Consequently, the project now will incorporate the two intact relocated historic buildings, including the ranch house and barn, which will be rehabilitated and used as part of the development.

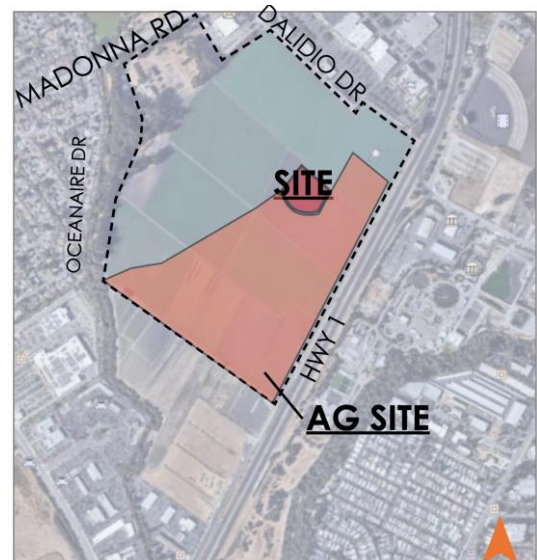


Figure 1: Subject Property

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The project also includes the stabilized remains of the damaged historic grandstand viewing barn, which is an important visual and historic component of the project. The balance of the AG zoned area within the specific plan will be maintained as a working farm with associated ag support structures and farm roads.

For more background on the Cultural Resources assessment in the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan EIR, please see the following link for the January 23, 2017, CHC Agenda Packet:

<https://opengov.slocity.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=63020&dbid=0&repo=CityClerk>

For more background information on the Cultural Resources component of the Specific plan and the approach to treatment of the historic resources on the site, please see the following link for the May 15, 2017, CHC Agenda Packet:

<https://opengov.slocity.org/WebLink/DocView.aspx?id=64731&dbid=0&repo=CityClerk>

2.0 SITE AND PROJECT CONTEXT

2.1 Ag Heritage Center Project Location and Concept

The subject site is the AG-zoned portion of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan, which encompasses 53.5 acres within the southern half of the 131-acre Specific Plan area. The Specific Plan calls for an Agricultural Heritage and Learning Center within a small portion of the AG zone, which is the focus of this application. Figure 2 (below) shows the location of proposed development in the context of surrounding development, both existing and planned within San Luis Ranch.



Figure 2: Ag Heritage Center in Surrounding Context

[illegible]

Figure 3: Ag Heritage Center Proposed Layout

2.2 Dalidio Ranch – Historic Ranch Complex

Dating back to the turn of the 20th century, the Dalidio Ranch (now known as “San Luis Ranch”) included a collection of structures: the Wood Residence (Dalidio home), Laguna Racetrack viewing stand, barn, water tower, and other buildings supporting the farming of the ranch. Some buildings within the complex, most notably the Wood Residence, Hay Barn and the Laguna Racetrack viewing stand, were found historically significant based on State and local criteria in the FEIR prepared for the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan.

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The February 2019 fire at San Luis Ranch severely damaged the former 16th District Agricultural Association's racetrack grandstand which had been planned for relocation to the Ag Heritage Center along with the Main Barn, and Wood Residence (Dalidio home). The racetrack grandstand was a rare architectural type and a significant historical resource both locally and statewide. As planning for the Agricultural Heritage Center continues in the aftermath of the fire, the applicant team developed a post-fire approach to meeting the mitigation measures specified in the certified Final EIR for the San Luis Ranch project, the results of which are summarized in the memoranda dated March 11 and July 22, 2021 (Attachments B & C).



Figure 4: Historic Residence showing rehabilitation concept



Figure 5: Historic Barn showing rehabilitation concept



Figure 6: Fire-damaged Racetrack Grandstand Wall

3.0 FOCUS OF REVIEW

New construction, additions, or alterations on historically listed properties are subject to review by the Cultural Heritage Committee,¹ who will make a recommendation to the decision-making body for the project (Planning Commission) as to the consistency of the proposed work with applicable historical preservation policies and standards and may recommend related conditions of project approval. This evaluation is focused on the proposal for rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of the remaining historically significant structures and preservation of the remaining viewing stand remnants in the context of the approved Specific Plan and certified FEIR.

4.0 PREVIOUS CHC REVIEW

The CHC previously reviewed the project on two occasions in 2017 to consider the conceptual plan for what is now under consideration. In May 2017, CHC formally provided recommendations to the Planning Commission for the project that were considered in the approval of the Specific Plan in July 2017. Consequently, the approved Specific Plan includes policy guidance that had the benefit of previous CHC review.

5.0 PROPOSED WORK

The Agricultural Heritage and Learning Center is intended to be a destination for residents and tourists alike and will provide the community with local food, education, and a connection to agriculture. The relocation and rehabilitation of historic structures integrated into this site is a crucial part of the development concept.

¹ Historic Preservation Ordinance § 14.01.030 (C)

Three historically significant buildings in the area, the Dalidio Home (or Wood Residence), the Hay Barn, and the Laguna Racetrack Viewing Stand remnants have already been relocated from their previous location closer to Madonna Road to a temporary location on the Ag Heritage Center site, where they will be repositioned and permanently preserved as part of development of the site. The preservation and rehabilitation concept for each structure in the context of future development is described below.

Wood Residence. The first floor of the Wood Residence (or “Main Residence” as described in the Final EIR; also known as the “Dalidio Home”), with its wrap-around porch, craftsman cabinetry, leaded glass, and other historic features, will be used in the Agricultural Heritage Center as an education hub and display area, with interpretive signage and historic artifacts from the site. The second floor will be used as farm offices. The structure will be available for educational events featuring everything from sustainable farming practices to traditional crafts such as quilting.

Hay Barn. The Hay Barn (or “Main Barn” as described in the Final EIR), with its corrugated metal roof, original lichen-stained wood siding, hay-fork and other features, will be incorporated into the Ag Heritage Center as retail space, adorned with historic signage and adjoined by a glass atrium exhibition corridor filled with exhibits and photos from the 16th District Agricultural Association horse races and fairs.

Laguna Racetrack Viewing Grandstand Wall. The fire-damaged Grandstand Wall (part of the “Spectator’s Barn/Viewing Stand” as described in the Final EIR), the only surviving portion of that structure, will be positioned as it was at the turn of the 19th century, overlooking the agricultural field as once did the racetrack. Its redwood timbers and hand-wrought iron nails will become a focal point of the entire Ag Heritage Center, with interpretive signage, mounted on the adjacent patio wall. All signage, displays and exhibit are being developed in conjunction with a qualified architectural historian (Paula Carr of SWCA). The proposed layout, exhibits and uses are intended to meet all applicable Specific Plan standards and required mitigation measures.

Figure 7 illustrates the development concept showing these three structures in the overall project context.



Figure 7: Development rendering showing historic structures. View is south.

All historic rehabilitation is intended to comply with the Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Treatment of Historic Structures, and with cultural resource mitigation measures CR-1(a) and CR-1(c) of the Final EIR. For additional details regarding mitigation compliance, please refer to the attached memorandum dated July 22, 2021 (Attachment C).

6.0 DISCUSSION ITEMS

Relevant guidance is provided mainly in the approved Specific Plan, which was informed to some extent by the previous CHC review in May 2017. Additional guidance is provided in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.² Selected applicable guidelines, standards, and recommendations from these documents are outlined below.

6.1 San Luis Ranch Specific Plan

The approved Specific Plan includes guidance for the relocation and reuse of historic structures that will become part of the project. It also includes related narratives to clarify intent of the relevant policies and programs, which include the following:

² Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service; Technical Preservation Services, 2017

San Luis Ranch Specific Plan Policy Framework	
3.7.3. Agricultural Heritage Facilities and Learning Center Design Guidelines	<i>Agricultural Heritage Facilities and Learning Center Concept. Historic structures identified on-site will be integrated into the site plan design as part of the Agricultural Heritage Facilities and Learning Center, as directed by a qualified Historic Architect, then through a Historical Structure Relocation Plan, as specified in Mitigation Measure CR-1. Archival documentation of the historic structures on-site and informational displays of historic resources will also be completed and included in the site plan when appropriate.</i>
8.1.2 Goals, Policies, and Programs	
Policy 2.5	<i>Protect associated structures such as the Dalidio Home, Laguna Race Track viewing stand, barn, and water tower.</i>
Program 2.5.1	<i>Evaluate historic structures on the site for purposes of preservation and protective reuse.</i>
Policy. 7.1	<i>Ensure that buildings are designed in a manner consistent with the character of the Plan Area.</i>
Program 7.1.1	<i>Establish guidelines for: building facades, orientation and form, and materials that reflect and convey human scale and the historic traditions of the Plan Area.</i>

Discussion: The relocation and repurposing of the historic structures in question will comply with the requirements of the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan. Treatment of the structures to be integrated into new development will follow required mitigation measures from the Final EIR and be designed in a manner to promote and celebrate their historic context, while providing educational opportunities regarding the City's agricultural heritage. See additional discussion in Section 6.2, which describes how all reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts will comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards.

6.2 Secretary of the Interior's Standards (Rehabilitation)

Standards for Rehabilitation
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.
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.
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.
4: Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5: Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
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.
7: Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8: Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken. <i>[not applicable to this project]</i>
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 will 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.
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.

Discussion: The Secretary of Interior's Standards provide guidance on rehabilitation³ of historic buildings, including approaches to work treatments and techniques that are either consistent ("Recommended") or inconsistent ("Not Recommended") with the Standards, specific to various features of historic buildings and sites.

The July 22, 2021 memorandum (Attachment C) describes in detail how the project addresses the SOI standards, outlining the compliance approach associated with each of the three structures included in the project. Please refer to that memo for this detailed discussion. Based on City staff's review of the analysis included in the memorandum, the project appears to comply with all applicable SOI standards. Key aspects related to this determination are discussed below.

The existing structures are unsafe in their current condition and not habitable. Existing materials will be preserved and incorporated into the rehabilitated structures where feasible consistent with SOI standards and under the direction of a qualified historic consultant and will maintain the original exterior visual appearance of the residence and barn, while restoring the interior in the context of appropriate building code requirements. In the case of the Hay Barn, it will be repurposed as retail space, adorned with historic signage and adjoined by a glass atrium exhibition corridor filled with memorabilia from the 16th District Agricultural Association horse races and fairs. The residence will be used as an education hub and display area, with interpretive signage and historic artifacts from the site. In both cases, the intent is to increase public awareness of the history of the ranch and the City's agricultural heritage.

The fire-damaged Grandstand Wall will not be a habitable structure but will be positioned as it was at the turn of the 19th century, overlooking the agricultural field as once did the racetrack. It will become a focal point of the entire Ag Heritage Center, with interpretive signage, mounted on a low, protective perimeter wall, that describes the historic activities linked to this important site.

6.3 California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Compliance

On July 18, 2017, the City of San Luis Obispo (City) adopted a Final Environmental Impact Report (FEIR; SCH #2015101083) for the proposed San Luis Ranch Specific Plan (San Luis Ranch Project) and approved the requested project entitlements, including a proposed Specific Plan, General Plan Amendment/Pre-zoning, Development Plan/Vesting Tentative Tract Map, and application for annexation of the site into the city of San Luis Obispo. The FEIR addressed proposed development of the entire site and contemplated the relocation and rehabilitation of historic structures into the Ag Heritage Center portion of the Specific Plan. The document included mitigation measures to ensure that this aspect of the project was mitigated to the extent feasible, as the impact was not considered fully mitigable to a less than significant level.

³ Rehabilitation is defined as the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. The Rehabilitation Standards acknowledge the need to alter or add to a historic building to meet continuing or new uses while retaining the building's historic character. (SOI Standards, pg. 3)

Subsequent to certification of the FEIR, additional information regarding the 16th District Agricultural Association racetrack grandstand (also referred to as the spectator's barn/viewing stand) was identified that altered the previous eligibility findings of the resource as described in the adopted FEIR. Consequently, an Addendum to the certified FEIR was prepared to address this updated information, specifically to document the revised status of the grandstand and associated racetrack, and to confirm the change of mitigation strategy for the grandstand would not result in any new or more severe significant environmental effects not previously analyzed in the FEIR.

The Addendum containing the updated information and analysis is included as Attachment D. It concludes that no new significant impacts are identified, and no changes to existing mitigation measures are required. Consistent with CEQA requirements, the Addendum does not require circulation because it does not provide significant new information that changes the adopted FEIR in a way that deprives the public of a meaningful opportunity to comment upon a substantial adverse environmental effect of the project or a feasible way to mitigate or avoid such an effect. The City will consider the Addendum with the adopted FEIR as part of the basis for potential approval of the Agricultural Heritage Center portion of the San Luis Ranch Project.

7.0 SUMMARY

The proposed Agricultural Heritage Center is intended to function as a focal point for not only the new San Luis Ranch community, but act as a significant resource for residents throughout the City. Consistent with the San Luis Ranch Specific Plan, its purpose is to celebrate the agricultural heritage of the area in a variety of ways—not only through retail sales of locally grown products, but through fun and interactive educational opportunities. A key aspect of the educational goal is the integration of three historic structures into the development, which in the case of the historic residence and barn, be functional structures that facilitate agricultural sales, farm offices, and public education opportunities. The integration of these historic features into the project will increase public awareness of the City's rich agricultural history, and in that way, promote public stewardship of other agricultural and historical resources within the region.

8.0 ALTERNATIVES

1. Provide a recommendation to the Planning Commission regarding the consistency of the proposed work with the City's Historical Preservation Ordinance and SOI Standards, and San Luis Ranch Specific Plan including any necessary conditions of approval to ensure such consistency.
2. Continue review to another date with direction to staff and applicant.

9.0 ATTACHMENTS

A – Project Plans

B – Memorandum of March 11, 2021 (prepared by SWCA)

C – Memorandum of July 22, 2021 (prepared by SWCA)

D – Addendum to the Final EIR