



# Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of April 22, 2024, Item 9a

## County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

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

### I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

**Applicant:** Helen Eloyan  
Sespe Consulting, Inc.  
374 Poli Street, Suite 200  
Ventura, California 93001

**Property Owner:** Christopher Ardalan  
Lockwood Valley Ranch, LLC  
3225 Old Conejo Road  
Newbury Park, CA 91320

### II. REQUEST:

A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish an existing adobe structure and preserve an existing smokehouse building at a property located on Lockwood Valley Road, 2 miles east of Highway 33 at Reyes Creek (Ventura County Landmark #21: Rafael Reyes Adobe). The scope of work is intended to partially abate code violation case no. CV23-0403. An interpretive exhibit is proposed to be installed at the location of the adobe using salvageable adobe bricks and/or other building materials (case no. CH23-0043).

### III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

Location: Along Lockwood Valley Road, 2 miles east of Highway 33 at Reyes Creek (unincorporated Ventura County)  
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 002-0-140-275  
Historic Designation: Ventura County Landmark #21  
Common/Historic Name: Rafael Reyes Adobe

The subject property consists of a 60-acre parcel in northern Ventura County on Lockwood Valley Road, two miles east of Route 33. The property contains a two-room adobe constructed in 1854 with several alterations and additions made over the years, including a two-story addition on the south end (built c. 1947). Other buildings on the parcel include a smokehouse (1854) located approximately 15 feet west of the main adobe building, a cabin (built 1956), and a washroom (built 1947).<sup>1</sup>

### IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

In August 2021, Ventura County Code Compliance Division staff confirmed the following code violations at the subject property (case no. CV23-0403):

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<sup>1</sup> Shannon Davis, ASM Affiliates, Inc., *Recommendations for Historic Preservation Compliance, Lockwood Valley Ranch, Unincorporated Ventura County, California*, June 27, 2023.

- Violation 1. Dangerous buildings collapsing and in disrepair, open and accessible to entry.
- Violation 2. Nonpermitted conversion of accessory structure to single family dwelling.
- Violation 3. Open storage of trash, debris, appliances, clothing, etc.

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.

In order to partially abate the violation case, the applicant requests a Certificate of Appropriateness to demolish an existing adobe structure and preserve an existing smokehouse building at the subject property. The smokehouse will be preserved according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, following the Preservation approach and further informed by Preservation Brief 31, *Mothballing Historic Buildings*. This will focus on the highest priorities on protecting the building from sudden loss, weatherizing and protecting the adobe from moisture penetration, and the monitoring of humidity levels once the smokehouse has been secured. An interpretive exhibit is proposed to be installed at the location of the adobe using salvageable adobe bricks and/or other building materials. Refer to Exhibit 1 for a site plan and Exhibit 2 for a Historic Consultant Assessment Report.

## **V. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:**

### **Historical Significance**

In June 2023, a summary of research into the history of the subject property was prepared by Shannon Davis of ASM Affiliates, Inc., in a report titled "Recommendations for Historic Preservation Compliance, Lockwood Valley Ranch, Unincorporated Ventura County, California" (Exhibit 2).<sup>2</sup> According to the historic report, the adobe was built by Rafael Reyes in 1854; however, the homestead was first established by his brother, Manuel Reyes, in 1854.<sup>3</sup> The Reyes family owned the Triunfo Ranch in Calabasas, but a severe drought caused the brothers to move a herd of 2,000 cattle and 1,000 horses across the Tejon Pass and into the Cuyama Valley.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

Born in 1834, Rafael Reyes lived in Ventura but frequently visited the ranch property.<sup>5</sup> In 1868, he married Maria Ignacia Ortega and the couple had ten children born between 1871 and 1892. According to assessor records, a barn was built on the property in 1890, around the time Rafael Reyes used the property to raise bulls for bullfighting.<sup>6</sup> It was demolished between 1964 and 1965. In 1894, the family made the decision to permanently move from Ventura to the Reyes Ranch in hopes that it would help Maria Reyes, who had contracted pneumonia.<sup>7</sup> After Rafael's death in 1907, the ranch was divided among their surviving children and Maria Reyes continued to live on the property.

The oldest son, Jacinto Damien Reyes, was born in 1871. In 1900, he became the Forest Ranger for the Cuyama district, and the adobe served as both home and ranger station until at least 1925.<sup>8</sup> At the end of 1916, Jacinto married Glendora Georgianna Butke; the couple had one daughter, Gloria, born in 1919. According to personal accounts, a kitchen was added to the original adobe during this time.<sup>9</sup> After 30 years of service, Jacinto Reyes retired from the Forest Service in 1931. Several accounts of his career and recollections appeared in local newspapers around this time.<sup>10</sup> After his retirement the family moved to Ojai but retained the ranch property until after his mother's death in 1940.<sup>11</sup>

In 1943, a deed conveyance from the Estate of Maria Reyes to Roy Wheatley was published in the Ventura County Star.<sup>12</sup> Wheatley was born in California in 1896 and married Florence Carville in Los Angeles in 1932. The couple lived in Los Angeles prior to acquiring the ranch property. Although it is not certain when the Wheatleys moved to the property, in 1948 they applied for a license to sell beer on the premises.<sup>13</sup> In 1949, the Wheatleys made improvements to the property, including the addition of restrooms (1947), a storage area (1947), the addition of a kitchen, and renovation of the original adobe, including a two-story addition.<sup>14</sup> The Wheatleys began to rent rooms to hunters and people coming to fish in Reyes Creek. The Wheatleys owned the property until 1952. According to the assessor records, Jeff Butler was the owner of the property until sometime in the late 1960s.<sup>15</sup> During this time a cabin was constructed on the property (1956) along with a horse barn and corral (1960). At the time of the landmark nomination in 1971, the owner of the property was listed as Joyce

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5        ibid.  
6        ibid.  
7        ibid.  
8        ibid.  
9        ibid.  
10       ibid.  
11       ibid.  
12       ibid.  
13       ibid.  
14       ibid.  
15       ibid.

Campbell. Assessor records indicate the barn was demolished sometime between 1964 and 1965 although it was not marked as demolished until 1972. A likely period of significance consists of 1854, the homestead was established, and ending the year the Reyes family sold the property, 1943.<sup>16</sup>

### **Property Description**

The main building consists of a two-room adobe constructed in 1854 with several alterations and additions made over the years, including a two-story addition on the south end (built circa 1947). Other buildings on the parcel include a smokehouse (built 1854) located approximately 15 feet west of the main building, a cabin (built 1956), and a washroom (built 1947).<sup>17</sup>

- **Adobe**. The condition of the adobe has been steadily deteriorating since 1972, with the assessor determining the building had no value in 2013.<sup>18</sup> The roof has collapsed in most locations and several walls have fallen. The building has an irregular rectangular plan with a one-story rectangular section to the north containing the central original adobe surrounded by later additions. To the south is a two-story rectangular building abutting the earlier building and at one time connected by a porch. The adobe walls of the later additions to the north are still standing, indicating the original side gable shape of the roof. Portions of these walls have been covered with cement and have the only recognizable fenestration. Although the central portion of the adobe is mostly deteriorated, a chimney located in the middle of the original section is still extant. The two-story building is less deteriorated with its fenestration pattern still evident. Capped by a side-gable roof, the first story is constructed of brick with the wood frame clad in horizontal clapboards on the second story.<sup>19</sup>
  - An excerpt from the 1976 journal *Historic Adobes of Ventura County* by Richard Senate (Exhibit 3) provides an overview of early adobe construction. As described therein, the “word ‘adobe’ means a brick made of sun-dried mud mixed with straw...The early adobes were roofed with tule reeds smeared with waterproof asphalt. Later adobes were roofed with wooden shakes, although some were roofed with Spanish tiles...The outsides of the adobes were, for the most part, plastered and whitewashed as protection from the elements. Left untended an adobe melts, returning to the earth from which it was made.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Senate, *Historic Adobes of Ventura County*, November 1, 1976.

- Smokehouse. The smokehouse has a simple, rectangular plan with adobe walls and a wood-frame front-facing gable roof clad in corrugated metal.<sup>21</sup> A wood framed door opening is located on the east façade. There is no other fenestration except for a small opening in the upper portion of the west façade.<sup>22</sup>

Refer to Figures 1 and 2 on the next page for aerial and street views of the subject property, respectively.

## **VI. CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:**

The scope of work requires a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) from the CHB. Pursuant to CHO §1371-4(a), using the Secretary’s Standards as a guide, the CHB shall approve the COA if it can be found that the proposed work will neither reduce the significant architectural features nor reduce the character of historical, architectural, or aesthetic interest or value of the site. Alternatively, according to CHO §1371-4(d), the CHB may conditionally approve a COA, even though it does not meet the standards set forth in the CHO, if it can be demonstrated that failure to approve the COA will cause a hardship because of conditions peculiar to the structure or other feature involved, or damage to the property owner is unreasonable in comparison to the benefit conferred to the community.

### Adaptive Reuse/Rehabilitation/Reconstruction Assessment

According to the applicant, an inspection of the Reyes Adobe was conducted in 2023 by a historic architect (Architectural Resources Group) and engineer specializing in historic buildings (Silman).<sup>23</sup> The architect and engineer collaborated on their condition assessment on the adobe building, noting varying degrees of collapse and that only 50% of the walls remain, and what remains is in poor condition. As noted in the Structural Engineer’s Report (Exhibit 2),<sup>24</sup> the analysis noted a major contributor to the deterioration of the adobe was previous inappropriate repair which significantly accelerated the deterioration of the walls. Therefore, Rehabilitation was not an option the team recommended, given the insufficient materials that remain in good enough condition to do so.<sup>25</sup> The cost estimate for the reconstruction of the original two-room adobe was estimated to amount to approximately \$3,000,000.

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<sup>21</sup> Shannon Davis, ASM Affiliates, Inc., *Recommendations for Historic Preservation Compliance, Lockwood Valley Ranch, Unincorporated Ventura County, California*, June 27, 2023.

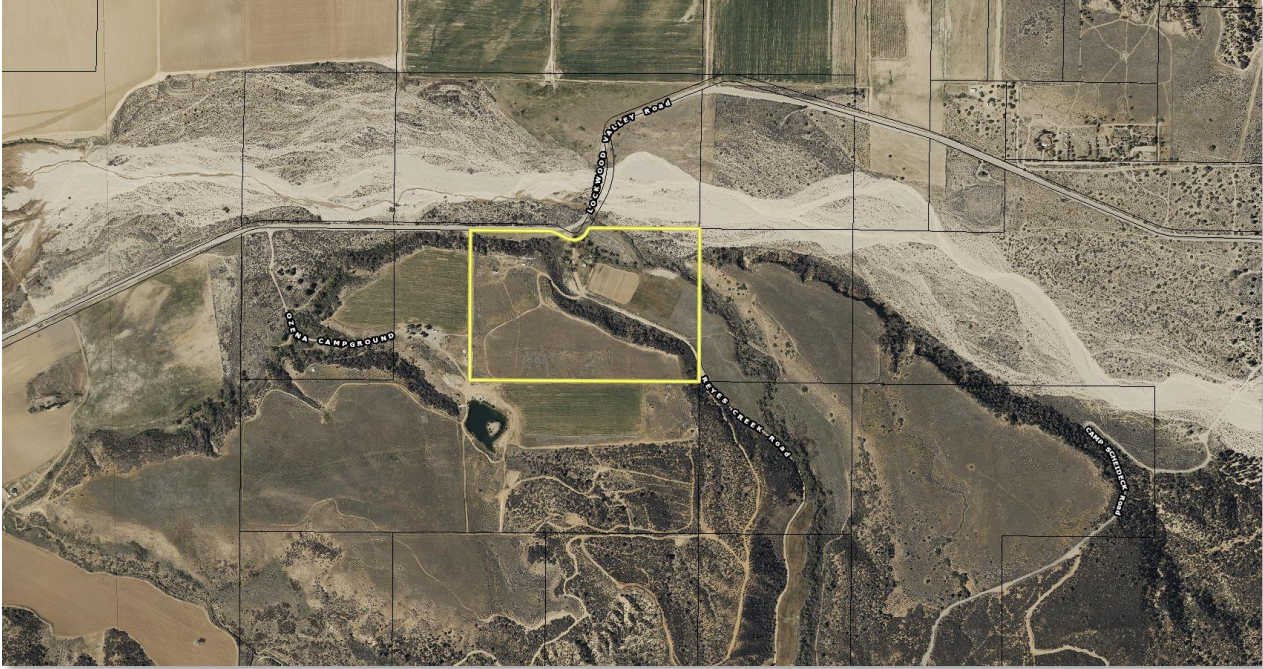
<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

Figure 1 – Aerial View of Subject Property



2022

Figure 2 – Street View of Rafael Reyes Adobe



Credit: Google Maps, 2023

## VII. STAFF CONCLUSION:

The Rafael Reyes Adobe is historically significant for its architecture and association with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of Ventura County history. However, CHO Section 1365-8 “Preservation of Cultural Heritage Sites” states, in pertinent part, that the CHB may “take steps necessary to preserve Cultural Heritage Sites when not in conflict with the public health, safety, and general welfare.” Due to multiple issues cited in the violation case, including the presence of a dangerous building collapsing and in disrepair that is open and accessible to entry, denial of the COA and continuation of current conditions would appear to be in conflict with public health, safety, and general welfare.

Per CHO Section 1371-4(d), the CHB may conditionally approve a COA, even though it does not meet the standards set forth in the CHO, if it can be demonstrated that failure to approve the COA will cause a hardship because of conditions peculiar to the structure or other feature involved, or damage to the property owner is unreasonable in comparison to the benefit conferred to the community. In determining whether a hardship exists, the Cultural Heritage Board shall consider evidence that demonstrates, in pertinent part, whether an adaptive reuse study has been conducted and found that utilization of the property for lawful purposes is prohibited or impractical.

According to the applicant team, the adobe building is in poor condition with varying degrees of collapse and only 50% of the walls remaining. Therefore, Rehabilitation was not an option the team recommended, given the insufficient materials that remain in good enough condition to do so. Moreover, the cost estimate for the reconstruction of the original two-room adobe was estimated to amount to approximately \$3,000,000. Based on these factors, CHB staff recommends the CHB approve the COA pursuant to CHO Section 1371-4(d) with the following recommendations in order to better conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines*:

1. **Recommendation #1: Archaeology Site.** As an alternate to stabilizing localized wall segments, the greatest number of the walls feasible should be taken down to the foundation stones. The base of the walls should be left and protected to show the historic footprint of the Reyes Adobe.
2. **Recommendation #2: HABS Photo Documentation.** Prior to demolition activities, the project applicant should submit photographic documentation of the property prepared to the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) standards by a qualified professional familiar with HABS guidelines. A digital proof of the photo documentation should be provided to CHB staff for approval and determination of consistency with *The Secretary of Interior's Guidelines for Architectural and Engineering Documentation*. The photo documentation should consist of the following:

- As determined by the HABS professional, a sufficient number of photographic views so as to convey the property and its identified historic contributors following clearance of overgrowth and debris and removal of plywood coverings/obstructions;
    - Photographs should include character-defining features. The historic consultant may assist in identifying features and views to be included in the photo documentation;
    - HABS standards will require the original negatives having a minimum size of 4"x5" and production of one set of large-format, black-and-white, film photography on 8.5 x 11 inkjet mount cards;
    - Photographs must include a photo key index and photo key map.
  - Submission of one set of digital scans in PDF digital form to CHB staff;
  - Donation of final film negatives and prints to both the Library of Congress and Museum of Ventura County accompanied by the photo key index, photo key map, and written data report (historic resources report); and
  - Provide to CHB staff a letter from the library/museum acknowledging receipt of the photo documentation.
3. **Recommendation #3: Interpretive Display and Program.** The applicant should create an interpretive display and program related to the historic significance of the site. An interpretive exhibit should be installed at the subject property using salvageable adobe bricks and/or other building materials and explain the significance of the site. As part of the interpretive program, the applicant should prepare aerial drone videography of the site prior to demolition. Videography may be stored on the CHB website.

#### **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;
2. **FIND** that the proposed project meets the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance §1371-4(d); and
3. Based on the preceding evidence and analysis, **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness (Cultural Heritage Ordinance §1371) with any Cultural Heritage Board or staff recommendations determined necessary to better conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.



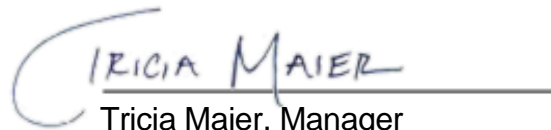
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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Site Plan
- Exhibit 2: Historic Consultant Assessment Report
- Exhibit 3: Historic Adobes of Ventura County by Richard Senate, 1976 (Excerpt)