



Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of September 26, 2022, Item 7a

County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency

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I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNER:

Applicant:

Jonathan Friedman
Jemstreet Properties
612 Lone Oak Drive
Thousand Oaks, CA 91362

Property Owner:

AJU BBI Holdings LLC
15600 Mulholland Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90077

II. REQUEST:

A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) (Cultural Heritage Ordinance (CHO) §1371) and environmental review related to a proposed Modification of Conditional Use Permit 1776 (Case No. PL22-0032) at the Brandeis-Bardin Campus of American Jewish University, located at 1101 Peppertree Lane adjacent to the City of Simi Valley and the Santa Susanna Knolls Area. The proposed project includes the demolition of six existing structures and construction of approximately 41,000 square feet (sq. ft.) of new accessible camper housing and bathrooms, replacement of existing administration buildings and staff lounge with a 6,000-square-foot Welcome Center and associated parking area, the addition of an exterior open-air shaded pavilion, and landscaping improvements. (Case No. CH22-0022).

III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

1101 Peppertree Lane, Simi Valley, CA 93064 (unincorporated Ventura County)
Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs): 685-0-051-040, -050, -140, -190, and -210
Historic Designation: Landmark No. 53 - Brandeis-Bardin Institute, House of the Book
Common Name: Brandeis-Bardin Campus, American Jewish University

Zoning: The developed portion of the project site (a 328-acre portion of Parcels 1 and 2) is zoned Rural Agricultural (RA). The remainder of the property is zoned Open Space (OS).

General Plan Designation: Rural and Open Space

The 2,558-acre property contains the Brandeis-Bardin Campus and features over one hundred buildings that accommodate the following assembly and camp uses: educational centers, meeting halls, two dining halls, two outdoor dance pavilions, cabins and cottages for guests, barns and stables for guest use, staff housing, sports fields, tennis courts, basketball courts, an adventure course, a private cemetery, and associated infrastructure. Access to the site is provided by a two-lane asphalt private

road known as Peppertree Lane which commences at the Guardian Road and Tapo Canyon Road intersection.

IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The applicant requests a Modification to Conditional Use Permit (CUP) 1776 for the continued operation and maintenance of a recreational camp with special events at the existing American Jewish University's Brandeis-Bardin Campus for a 30-year period. The facility would continue to be used for recreational uses, temporary events, and assembly uses. In support of the camp uses, the applicant proposes the construction of 13 new camper cabins and 3 counselor cabins as shown on the included site plan and architectural exhibits (Exhibit 1). The proposed camper cabins are approximately 1,930 sq. ft. each and the counselor cabins are approximately 441 sq. ft.. A total of 26,400 sq. ft. of new building construction is proposed at the Camper Village. Additional proposed structures include a 4,460 sq. ft. (interior) Welcome Center and a minor addition to the Art Pavilion of 292 square feet of indoor space and a covered patio of approximately 2,000 square feet. All areas of new construction will have significant landscaping installed, with special emphasis on the use of native plants in and around the Welcome Center and Camper Village. Refer to Exhibit 2 for renderings of the proposed construction. The Contemporary architectural style of the proposed buildings incorporates materials, landscape, and natural lighting and is intended to create a juxtaposition between nature and architecture in a rustic camp environment.

Overall, the applicant proposes the demolition of six existing structures and construction of approximately 41,000 sq. ft. of new accessible camper housing and bathrooms, replacement of existing administration buildings and staff lounge with a 6,000-square-foot Welcome Center and associated parking area, the addition of an exterior open-air shaded pavilion, and landscaping improvements. The proposed structures are approximately 2,800 feet away from the House of the Book (Ventura County Landmark No. 53). Refer to Exhibit 3 for existing photos of the structures proposed for demolition. These structures consist of the following:

Building Name	Current Building No.	Historic Report Building No.	Description	Size	Construction date
Alonim Director Cottage	9	17.7	staff housing	858 sq. ft.	n/a
Varble Cottage	10	17.8	staff housing	1,632 sq. ft.	Circa 1930

Varble Cottage garage	11	17.9	garage	696 sq. ft.	n/a
housing trailer	55	13.1	guest housing	950 sq. ft.	n/a (c. late 20 th century)
housing trailer	56	13.2	guest housing	2,224 sq. ft.	n/a (c. late 20 th century)
housing trailer	57	13.3	guest housing	816 sq. ft.	n/a (c. late 20 th century)

V. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

On March 31, 2013, a historic resource report¹ (“Historic Report”) was prepared for the campus for the purpose of assisting the County of Ventura in their compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) as it relates to historic resources, in connection with an application to renew the Conditional Use Permit (Exhibit 4). The report assessed the historical and architectural significance of potentially significant historic properties in accordance with the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP), the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) Criteria for Evaluation, and County of Ventura criteria.

According to the Historic Report, the subject property was once part of the Spanish land grant El Rancho Simi, which was acquired in 1867 by Thomas A. Scott’s Philadelphia and California Petroleum Company. Not a successful oil venture, the Simi Land and Water Company subdivided the ranch after Scott’s death and began selling the land by 1887. A county atlas of land ownership (Rancho Simi Map No. 2) shows that by 1915, Parcel A of El Rancho Simi was divided among multiple owners, including Edward R. Maier, J.W. Lehman, and J.J. Bushard. Edward R. (Eddie) Maier was a Los Angeles industrialist who had inherited the Maier Brewing Company after the deaths of his father and brother and was famous for large outings and barbecues at his ranch. The Historic Report states the following:

“In 1913, Edward Maier built a lavish home on the property (known as the Maier Ranch house) for himself and his widowed mother Mary. It was described by the Los Angeles Times as a twenty room mansion of fireproof concrete and tile with eleven bedrooms, five baths, a stone fireplace, stained glass roof, a billiard hall, wine cellar, a tiled swimming plunge, and outdoor sleeping porches and pavilions, which would enable the host to lodge forty or more guests.”

¹ *Historic Resources Report Brandeis-Bardin Campus, American Jewish University, Simi Valley, CA, San Buenaventura Research Associates, dated March 31, 2013.*

As described therein, Mr. Maier eventually went bankrupt during the prohibition years and sold the ranch property in the 1930s to William and Maud Lane, who then sold the property in 1947 to the Brandeis Camp Institute of the Pacific Coast, Inc. (the name used prior to becoming the Brandeis-Bardin Institute in 1977). In 1960, television and film actor James Arness acquired the western portion of the Maier Ranch adjacent to the Brandeis Camp Institute's property. James Arness donated his ranch to the Brandeis Institute in 1972 with an arrangement allowing his father to live in the ranch house until his death.

The property is associated with two potentially significant individuals, Los Angeles industrialist Edward Maier, and actor James Arness. Both apparently resided on the property only intermittently and did not treat it as their primary residence. The demolition of Maier's ranch house in 1994 significantly reduced his association with the property as it exists today. Mr. Arness appears to have made only occasional use of his ranch, owning or renting other homes during this time period.

The Historic Report was limited to the buildings on the property thought to have been extant during the ownerships of Edward Maier and James Arness, and about which a reasonable degree of documentary evidence could be obtained. Subsequent to Maier and Arness's periods of ownership, many buildings were purpose-built on site by the Brandeis-Bardin Institute, but a significant number were also moved to the property from movie studios and elsewhere, perhaps as early as the late 1940s. Documenting the moved buildings, and establishing their original dates of construction, when they were moved to the property, and from where, was outside the scope of this study. The buildings currently proposed for demolition (Building No. 9, 10, 11, 55, 56, and 57) were not evaluated in detail in the report and are presumed not to be substantially associated with the ownerships of Edward Maier and James Arness, nor do they appear substantially associated with the Brandeis-Bardin Institute period of ownership. In addition, Building No. 55-57 are housing trailers that appear to have been added in the late 20th century.

The evaluated buildings on the subject property were determined to not be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, or as a Ventura County Landmark.

County Landmarks

The House of the Book (designed by architect, Sidney Eisenshtat) was built in 1973 on the Brandeis-Bardin Institute property as an auditorium and library of 10,000 books on Judaism. The House of the Book was designated County Landmark No. 53 in 1979, as achieving significance within the past fifty years for its exceptional importance in

design. The Maier Ranch house was designated County Landmark No. 68 in July of 1981 for its association with an important person (Edward Maier). The 1994 Northridge earthquake severely damaged the Maier ranch house which was demolished in March of 1994. In 1997, a new administration building was built on the site of Maier Ranch house.

VI. CHO ANALYSIS AND STAFF CONCLUSIONS:

Ventura County Non-Coastal Zoning Ordinance (NCZO) Section 8111-1.2.1.7 requires the issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) where a proposed project requiring a discretionary permit is located on the same lot as a designated Cultural Heritage Site. The subject property contains the House of the Book (Ventura County Landmark No. 53). Per CHO Section 1371-4(b), the CHB shall approve a COA if, in the case of construction of a new improvement, addition, building, or structure, or object upon the site, the use and exterior of such construction will not reduce the integrity of the site.

CHO Section 1371-4 requires that the CHB use 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. CHB Staff determined the standards for rehabilitation are appropriate for this request and evaluated the proposed scope of work against the standards particularly relevant to new construction. Each one of the applicable Secretary’s Standards is outlined in the table below with corresponding comments from CHB Staff.

Standards	Staff Comments
<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.² 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.³ 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.⁴</p>

² National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, “New Additions to Historic Buildings,” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/additions.htm>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

Standards	Staff Comments
	<p>As mentioned previously, the Historic Report was limited to the buildings on the property thought to have been extant during the ownerships of Edward Maier and James Arness, and about which a reasonable degree of documentary evidence could be obtained. The buildings currently proposed for demolition (Building No. 9, 10, 11, 55, 56, and 57) were not evaluated in detail in the report and are presumed not to be associated with the ownerships of Edward Maier and James Arness.</p> <p>The entire site is large with the new proposed structures located approximately 2,800 feet away from the known historical resource on the property (House of the Book, Ventura County Landmark No. 53), minimizing any visual impacts.</p> <p>Based on the above considerations, Staff determined the scope of work is consistent 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 location of the proposed new construction is located a sufficient distance from the known historical resource at the subject property (House of the Book, Ventura County Landmark No. 53) such that the form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired</p> <p>Based on the above considerations, Staff determined the scope of work is consistent with this Standard.</p>

VII. CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (“CEQA”) ANALYSIS:

Pursuant to title 14, California Code of Regulations (“CEQA Guidelines”), sections 15060 and 15378, the proposed Modification of Conditional Use Permit 1776 (Case No. PL22-0032) at the Brandeis-Bardin Campus of American Jewish University is a project subject to CEQA. A review of both statutory and categorical exemptions from CEQA environmental impact analysis under CEQA Guidelines sections 15260-15285 and 15300-15333, respectively, indicates that the project is not exempt from CEQA environmental impact analysis.

1. Role of the CHB during CEQA Review of a Discretionary Project

The CHB is being consulted to provide input during the CEQA review process. The CHB's role as a CEQA project reviewer is: (1) to advise and provide comment to the Planning Division (who functions as the Lead Agency) on designated Cultural Heritage Sites or those potentially eligible for designation; (2) where a site is determined to be a historical resource, to assess and advise the Planning Director whether a proposed project would have a substantial change on the significance of such Cultural heritage Sites or potential sites; and, (3) recommend to the Planning Director appropriate action in compliance with the ISAGs (Exhibit 5).

2. Public Resources Code § 21084.1 and CEQA Guidelines § 15064.5(b) (ISAG's Step 2):

CEQA statutory and regulatory provisions help guide the CHB in determining whether a project, treatment, or other development activity may cause a significant adverse change in the significance of an historical resource.

The proposed project is considered to have a significant historical resources impact if it will cause a substantial adverse change of a historic resource as defined in Section 15064.5 (b)(1) of the CEQA Guidelines. A "substantial adverse change" is the physical demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration of the historical resource or its immediate surroundings such that the significance of an historical resource would be materially impaired. Material impairment means altering in an adverse manner those physical characteristics of an historical resource that convey its historical significance and its inclusion in a local register or its identification in an historical resources survey meeting the requirements of Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, unless the public agency reviewing the effects of the project establishes by a preponderance of evidence that the resource is not historically or culturally significant.

There are several well-established and applicable criteria or guidance for determining whether a particular treatment, development, or building project will have a significant adverse impact on an historic resource, such as the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties ("Secretary's Standards").

3. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Illustrated Guidelines for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings and Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties ("Standards" - 36 C.F.R. Part 68)

As required by the Cultural Heritage Ordinance, the Standards have been used to review this project and the Board's review must be based on consistency of the project with them. Standards Nos. 9 and 10 apply to this case in particular. As shown in Section VI of this report, the proposed project complies with the relevant Standards.

VIII. OPPORTUNITY TO SHOW HARDSHIP:

At the CHB public hearing on this matter, if desired, the property owner is provided the opportunity to present facts and evidence demonstrating a failure to grant the requested COA would cause an economic hardship as provided by CHO Section 1371-4(d).

IX. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

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

X. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

Pursuant to CHO Section 1371-4, the CHB may identify project modifications for the applicant's review and consideration. Staff is recommending the CHB take the following actions regarding the request:

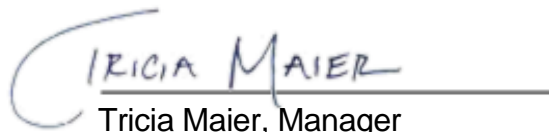
1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division Staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto;
2. **REVIEW** and **COMMENT** on the proposed project in accordance with the County of Ventura Initial Study Assessment Guidelines (ISAGs) Section 8b, Item E. Methodology Step 1 through Step 3 (Exhibit 5), based on the preceding evidence and analysis;
3. **FIND** whether the proposed project meets the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance Section 1371-4(b); and
4. If the requisite finding can be made based on the preceding evidence and analysis, **APPROVE** the Certificate of Appropriateness (CHO Section 1371-4) with any recommendations determined necessary to better conform to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*.

Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



Tricia Maier, Manager
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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Proposed Plans and Elevations
- Exhibit 2: Renderings
- Exhibit 3: Existing Photos
- Exhibit 4: Historic Resources Report, dated March 31, 2013
- Exhibit 5: Initial Study Assessment Guidelines Section 8b. Cultural Resources –
Historic, pages 69 through 74