



# Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of October 14, 2024, Item 6a

## 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:** Allisen Carmichael  
2429 South Mountain Road  
Fillmore, CA 93015

**Property Owner:** The Thacher Creek Ranch Trust  
6310 San Vicente Boulevard, Suite 501  
Los Angeles, CA 90048

### II. REQUEST:

A request for a Certificate of Appropriateness (Cultural Heritage Ordinance Sec. 1371) to authorize the demolition of an existing 1,700-square-foot residence and a 600-square-foot detached garage at a property addressed as 282 McNell Road, Ojai, CA 93023 (Historic Site of Merit) (Case No. CH24-0033).

### III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:

282 McNell Road, Ojai, CA 93023 (unincorporated Ventura County)  
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 029-0-082-025  
Historic Designation: Site of Merit  
Common/Historic Name: Krutz-Leighton Ranch (contributor)  
Zoning: AE-40 ac/TRU/DKS  
General Plan Designation: Open Space

The subject property consists of a 19.42-acre parcel containing a principal dwelling of 1,700 square feet and a detached garage of 600 square feet (Exhibit 1). The property has historically been used for the cultivation of citrus trees.

### IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The applicant is requesting to demolish the existing 1,700-square-foot residence and 600-square-foot detached garage. The applicant contends that the unoccupied structures are in a state of major disrepair and susceptible to vandalism by trespassers. Current photos of the residence and detached garage are shown in Exhibit 2. No new construction plans have been submitted to the Planning Division.

### V. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

The subject property was documented in the Ojai Historic Resources Survey (Phase III, July 1995) prepared by Judith Triem of San Buenaventura Research Associates (Exhibit 3). The historic survey identified the residence at 282 McNell Road as a component of the larger Krutz-Leighton Ranch, an agricultural property in the eastern

Ojai Valley that was determined potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The larger Krutz-Leighton Ranch was determined to consist of a large, two-story main residence, a two-story water tower, and two bungalows historically used to house ranch hands. The historic survey described the Krutz-Leighton Ranch and its main house as follows:

*Historically the ranch and [main] house are significant for they were part of the Krutz-Leighton Ranch, purchased in 1887. The Krutz family, living in Kansas, sent Edward Thacher as their agent to look for a good orange producing area. He purchased F.S. Buckman's ranch. Krutz-Leighton had about 80 acres. Their land was later divided from Thacher's. Thomas Krutz lived in Los Angeles and would come to the ranch on weekends. The original house was torn down about 1910 and the present one built. Heirs of Krutz still own 40 acres of the original property, and raise citrus. The house is a good virtually unaltered example of a California Bungalow.*

According to the historic survey, the subject residence at 282 McNell Road was built around 1910 was described as follows:

*This California Bungalow, on the Krutz-Leighton Ranch, was built about 1910. It is L-shaped with an offset front gable and a lower gabled wing on the north side. Siding is wide clapboard. The house rests on a stone foundation and has knee brackets and rafters under the eaves. The house was believed built by a Mr. Greer, who was a ranch hand. He used lumber from the original Krutz ranch house when it was torn down.*

In 2000, the County Board of Supervisors established that properties documented in the Ojai Historic Resources Survey that were assigned status codes of 1 through 5 (including the subject property) were also to be designated Ventura County Sites of Merit.

## **VI. CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE ANALYSIS AND STAFF CONCLUSIONS:**

The Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (Ordinance) Sec. 1371 requires that the Cultural Heritage Board (CHB) issue a Certificate of Appropriateness in the case of proposed demolition at a Site of Merit. The applicant proposes to demolish the subject residence at 282 McNell Road, a designated Site of Merit.

The applicant seeks to demonstrate through contemporary photography that the existing residence and garage building are considerably physically deteriorated and beyond repair (Exhibit 2). While some alterations, such as replacement windows, are apparent at the residence, Planning Division staff considers the property to generally retain its integrity as a Site of Merit.

In order to approve a Certificate of Appropriateness, the CHB, using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards as a guide, must determine whether one of the required standards outlined in Ordinance Section 1371-4 have been met. Based on the level of apparent property integrity remaining, staff does not recommend issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness pursuant to the standards outlined in Ordinance Section 1371-4.

According to Ordinance Section 1371-4(d), the CHB may approve a Certificate of Appropriateness if the applicant presents facts and clear evidence demonstrating that failure to approve the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness 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. Planning Division staff could not determine whether the structures appear to be neglected beyond repair without additional architectural or engineering evaluation by a building industry professional. Based on insufficient documentary evidence, staff does not recommend issuance of the Certificate of Appropriateness pursuant to Ordinance Section 1371-4(d).

Pursuant to Ordinance Sec. 1371-8, if the request for a Certificate of Appropriateness is denied by the CHB, the property owner is prohibited from taking action on the requested permit for 180 days from the date of the disapproval. Following completion of this waiting period, the property owner may proceed with their permit application. The Ordinance emphasizes education of the public as to the importance of designated and potentially eligible cultural resources. Accordingly, the potential for this delay period is intended to encourage possible partnership and collaboration between the CHB, community stakeholders, County representatives, and project applicants to preserve important resources or implement applicant-agreed-to project modifications.

**VII. 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 Certificate of Appropriateness would cause a hardship as provided by Ordinance Section 1371-4(d).

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

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

**IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

Pursuant to Ordinance Section 1371-1, the CHB may approve issuance of a Certificate of Appropriateness for the project as proposed or with applicant

modifications, or deny the request. 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. **DETERMINE** that the proposed project does not meet the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance Section 1371-4; and
3. **DENY** the Certificate of Appropriateness pursuant to Ordinance Section 1371-1.

Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Site Map
- Exhibit 2: Photo Exhibit
- Exhibit 3: Historic Survey