

News Release



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Project to Revitalize Sonoma State Historic Park

A California State Park project that will revitalize a heavily visited park site, reveal its history and tell a uniquely Californian story is scheduled to begin on Monday August 19, 2013 at Sonoma State Historic Park across the street from the popular Sonoma Plaza.

The project will be completed in two phases. Phase I is expected to be finalized in December and Phase II is expected to begin next summer, barring any unforeseen circumstances. The half-block wide site straddles the area from 20 East Spain Street north to the 120-space Barracks Parking Lot. Known as the Casa Grande site, it will be fenced with no through access to the Plaza during construction. Plaza access will continue to be available by traveling a short distance to 1st Street East, and then to Spain Street.

The project will provide an attractive, inviting and interpretive setting to enhance the visitor experience to the Sonoma State Historic Park. Project Manager, Regional Interpretive Specialist Karen Barrett calls the site, "history hiding out in the open". This project will introduce visitors to the heritage of California Indians, history of General Mariano Vallejo and the early 20th Century quarry workers who left their mark on the site.

Phase I of the project will include re-facing entrance walls, installing solid wooden benches, planting attractive vegetation, and a creating a mural highlighting the rich history of people who lived on the site. A striking feature of Phase I will be the addition of a hardened surface outlining the footprint of General Mariano Vallejo's original 1836 two-story adobe brick home, the Casa Grande which faced the Plaza. The structure served as headquarters for the Mexican military command when Sonoma was Mexican territory. It was there that the "Bear Flaggers," men who in 1846 wanted to establish an independent California arrested Vallejo, an event that eventually led to California's statehood.

Phase II will fund interpretive panels and a model of the Plaza so that the entire Casa Grande site's history can be shared. The site includes the historic Toscano Hotel annex and Tank House.

A compelling need to share the park's history and update site aesthetics was identified as a priority by community members, stakeholders, teachers, visitors and park staff who participated in the development of the park's Interpretation Management Plan.

The project is a California State Park Interpretation Exhibit Project funded by Proposition 84, the Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Bond Act of 2006. On November 7, 2006, voters passed Proposition 84 by 53.9 percent.

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