



**HISTORICAL  
COMMISSION  
STAFF REPORT  
NOVEMBER 14, 2023**

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**Agenda Item:** 1  
**Prepared by:** Amy Wolfson, City Planner

**DATA SUMMARY**

**Subject:** Consideration of a city-sponsored application to the Landmarks Commission to establish Memorial Park as an historic landmark  
**Location/APN:** 350 Race Street /009-300-001  
**Applicant/Owner:** City of Grass Valley  
**Zoning/General Plan:** Open Space (OS)  
**Entitlement:** Mural Sign Permit  
**Environmental Status:** Class 1 Exemption

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

The Historical Commission recommends that City Council direct staff to complete an application to the Nevada County Landmarks Commission for consideration of establishing Memorial Park as an Historic Landmark as presented, or as modified by the City Council, which includes the following actions:

1. Determine the project is exempt from review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) by the “common sense” rule that CEQA applies only to projects which have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment.
2. Adopt Findings of Fact for approval of the Mural Sign Permit as presented in the Staff Report; and,
3. Direct staff to complete an application to the Nevada County Landmarks Commission to establish Memorial Park as an historic landmark
4. Authorize the expenditure of up to \$2,000 for the erection of a plaque at the Centennial Courtyard, or as may be modified by Council, with plaque language as indicated in the attachment, or as may be modified by Council.

**BACKGROUND:**

Memorial Park currently exhibits five existing war-memorial plaques honoring those who served our country in the armed forces. However, there is no historical landmark designation or plaque honoring the establishment of the park itself. The Nevada County Landmark Commission’s assists in identifying historical sites within Nevada County that are worthy of landmark designation after an application request is made. The commission also oversees the erecting and maintenance of markers and plaques for historical landmarks. Their evaluation is informed by the historic registration guidelines issued by national, state and private commissions.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION:**

Linda Jack, Chair of the Grass Valley Historical Commission, has requested that the city consider the submission of an application to the Nevada County Landmarks Commission to establish Memorial Park as an historic landmark. Jack has also submitted draft language for a plaque to accompany the designation with recommended language to be considered by City Council and the Landmarks Commission. The plaque is recommended to be placed at the newly established Centennial Courtyard. Staff is requesting that the historical commission review the recommended language and make any modifications, and also make any recommendations for precise plaque locations and mounting options for consideration by City Council.

**SITE DESCRIPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING:**

The Centennial Courtyard is a recently installed courtyard within Memorial Park that was approved and funded by City Council at their May 20, 2021 meeting, approved in honor of the centennial anniversary on November 11, 2021. The courtyard project was completed in October 2023 with the installation of four informational kiosks providing a history of the park.

**ENVIRONMENTAL DETERMINATION:**

The project qualifies for a Class 1 Categorical Exemption. A Class 1 Categorical Exemption consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures or facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of use. Consistent with this class of exemption, the designation of the park as an historical landmark and the installation of a historical landmarks plaque provides historical context to the existing park and does not involve the expansion of its use.

**FINDINGS OF FACT:**

The following findings are required to be supported in the affirmative by the evidence presented in the record, including, but not limited to the staff report and supporting attachments.

1. The Community Development Department reviewed the project in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act and Guidelines and determined that the project qualifies for an exemption from CEQA under the Class 1 Categorical Exemptions.
2. That the designation of Memorial Park as an historic landmark and the installation of an historic landmark plaque is consistent with the City Council’s strategic goal no. 1, that *“the City of Grass Valley is dedicated to promoting programs and projects that improve livability and enhance the character and charm of Grass Valley.”*

**ATTACHMENTS:**

**Attachment 1** – Proposed Plaque Language

**Attachment 2** – Diagram of Centennial Park (for purposes of discussing plaque location)

# MEMORIAL PARK: GRASS VALLEY'S GREATEST ASSET

At noon on November 11, 1921, bells tolled throughout the city of Grass Valley as over two thousand residents and visitors gathered to attend the opening of Memorial Park. Presided over by Jim Tyrrell, Secretary of the Chamber of Commerce, the ceremony celebrated an unprecedented act of community philanthropy and collaboration that transformed an abandoned pear orchard into a park that would come to be known as the city's greatest asset. The park honored the community's some 450 World War I service members and memorialized its war dead, provided residents with opportunities for recreation and community gatherings and created a destination for automobile tourism. Completed in just under a year, the park was built through the financial generosity, time, and talents of countless volunteers from all walks of life and social positions. No city funds or taxes were used. Visitors arriving at the park found a lushly planted memorial grove to honor the war dead, picnic grounds, a spacious pool with changing rooms, tennis courts, a children's playground, a creek stocked with trout, a baseball diamond, a community building, and a travel campground with cottages. Inspired by the park's centennial in 2021 the City of Grass Valley's Historical Commission initiated the creation of this Centennial Courtyard to tell the story of the community's collective act of remembrance and renewal that built Memorial Park. Still enjoyed today by residents and visitors alike, the ever-evolving park keeps alive the motto of the 1921 building campaign, *In Memory of the Past, We Build for the Future*.



**GRASS VALLEY**  
A PLACE TO LIVE AND THRIVE

Landmark registered by Nevada County

\_\_\_\_\_ 2024 - NEV 24-0?

Monument dedicated 2024 by the

Nevada County Historical Landmarks  
Commission

In cooperation with the City of Grass Valley



1851

FUTURE  
BASKETBALL  
COURT

FUTURE FENCING

# MEMORIAL PARK CENTENNIAL COURTYARD

6" CONCRETE MOW  
CURB TO SEPERATE  
TURF FROM PLANTER

EXISTING  
DRAIN



5x8' PANELS ON POSTS  
SET IN CONCRETE FOOTINGS

LAWN  
AREA

NEW SIDEWALK

