

# Chevron and City of Santa Paula Complete Donation of Historic Union Oil Company of California Headquarters and \$2 Million Grant

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Chevron, through its affiliate Union Oil Company of California, has transferred ownership and control of the former headquarters of Union Oil Company of California to the City of Santa Paula. The donation became official Dec. 27, 2023.

Included in the donation are the historic headquarters building, a "Rig Building," an adjacent parking lot, select oil industry memorabilia, and a substantial \$2 million grant. The grant is intended to assist the City in addressing maintenance for the 133-year-old iconic building.

"For over 130 years, the former Union Oil Company of California headquarters has been a major historic building that not only defines the town's aesthetics but also serves as a cultural and economic anchor to businesses of all types in downtown Santa Paula," said Mayor Leslie Cornejo. "Acquiring this piece of local history is a major win for our community, and we are looking forward to restoring operations for our residents and visitors to enjoy."

On October 17, 1890, Union Oil Company of California was founded in a second-floor office of the building. The building continued to serve as Union Oil Company of California headquarters until the company moved to Los Angeles in 1900. In 2005, the company was acquired and became a Chevron affiliate.

"The birthplace of Union Oil Company of California is part of the proud history of Chevron, and we recognize we share some of that heritage with the City of Santa Paula," said Gaynor Shirreffs, President of Chevron Environmental Management Company. "We are pleased to donate this historic building and entrust it to the City's stewardship so it may be used for the benefit and enjoyment of the community."

The Union Oil Company of California headquarters building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is also a California State Historical Landmark and Ventura County Historical Landmark.

Since 1993, Union Oil Company of California has leased its former headquarters and adjacent properties near the corner of Main Street and 10th Street to the City of Santa Paula to serve as the home of the California Oil Museum. The City, responsible for facility repairs and maintenance, saw the museum managed by the California Oil Museum Foundation, a small nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the historical significance of the petroleum industry's early impact on the region. Unfortunately, due to pandemic-induced financial hardships, the California Oil Museum Foundation had to close the museum in September 2021.

As the lease neared expiration, the City actively engaged with Chevron to strategize the best approach to protect, preserve, and financially support the property. In October 2022, the City Council explored the opportunity to transfer ownership of the property, aiming to broaden funding avenues for reopening the facility through federal, state, and local grants, as well as capital fundraising efforts.

In November 2022, Chevron proposed a donation by Union Oil Company of California, encompassing the historic headquarters building, the "Rig Building," an adjacent parking lot, a \$2 million grant to address building maintenance along with select oil industry memorabilia displayed in the museum.

The City, committed to responsible stewardship, plans to utilize the generous grant for critical repairs and improvements, including roof and HVAC system replacements, water damage repairs, and flood prevention

measures as well as establishing a trust to develop reserves to maintain the building for generations to come.

Additionally, while the details of the transfer agreement were in the works, the City Council commissioned an ad hoc committee to explore options for the future use of the building. To ensure inclusive community involvement in shaping the property's future, the City hosted a series of community workshops, including one focused on youth feedback, led by David Yoshitomi, Arts & Culture Manager of the County of Ventura. City staff, working closely with the ad-hoc committee of the Council, current tenants, and stakeholders, identified potential uses for the buildings.

"I am profoundly grateful to Chevron for their exceptional generosity in donating the historic headquarters to the City," said Dan Singer, City Manager of Santa Paula. "Their support ensures that the legacy of the Union Oil Company of California will continue to thrive, serving as a catalyst for economic development and community engagement in downtown Santa Paula. We extend our heartfelt thanks to Chevron for their pivotal role in shaping the future of our beloved city."

On December 19, 2023, the City published a Request for Proposals (RFP) to invite proposals for the potential use of this historic property. The City envisions future tenants transforming the space into a vibrant, educational, and community-oriented hub, stimulating local businesses and attracting residents and visitors alike. This multifaceted approach aligns with the vision of the Union Oil Building as a catalyst for economic development in downtown Santa Paula.

The City plans to commemorate this significant occasion with a formal ribbon-cutting ceremony in April 2024, coinciding with the celebration of Santa Paula's 122 years of incorporation. For additional information on the RFP, go to [www.spcity.org](http://www.spcity.org).

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