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Napa Valley's Iconic Welcome Sign Faces Possible Relocation

Safety Concerns Prompt Rethink of Historic Sign's Location

Thursday, January 11, 2024



The iconic "Welcome to Napa Valley" sign, a long-standing emblem welcoming wine tourists for decades, is currently at the center of a safety-driven debate regarding its potential removal and relocation. This discussion implicates one of California's wine region's most recognizable symbols, stirring a community and visitor-based dialogue around the emblematic destination.

Positioned on Highway 29 between Yountville and Oakville, the sign has historically been a mandatory stop for about five million people each year. Its popularity is not solely rooted in its historical value but also in the stunning backdrop it provides for visitors eager to capture their Napa Valley experience. This sign, along with its twin

located at the northern end of the valley near Calistoga, was erected in 1949 and is crafted from carved redwood, as noted in a 1967 Weekly Calistogan article.

However, the surge in visitor numbers and the perilous nature of its current location have prompted authorities to consider its relocation. The primary concern revolves around the safety of tourists, who often cross the busy highway and railroad tracks for the perfect photograph, thus creating congestion and potential hazards in the area.

The Napa Valley Sheriff's Department has expressed concern over the congestion around the sign and is evaluating potential new locations. This issue extends beyond road safety, encompassing respect and preservation for a historical symbol that has witnessed the growth and evolution of the wine industry in the region.

Originally, the signage was intended to promote a then relatively unknown wine region, at a time when only a few wineries were in operation. The sign's current debated location was donated by the Mondavi family in the 1970s, underscoring its historical and cultural importance in promoting Napa as a globally renowned wine destination.

Recently, a new location about a mile south was considered but this plan did not materialize. Currently, negotiations are underway with a nearby landowner, whose identity remains undisclosed.

Shawn Casey-White, from the Napa Valley Vine Trail Coalition, told ABC7 News that they will work closely with Napa Valley vintners, the county, the city of Yountville, and all relevant area stakeholders to decide what is best for both the sign and the community. A series of meetings have been scheduled during the last week of January and the first week of February, with more to follow in March.

This debate coincides with the Coalition's efforts to expand active travel access for pedestrians and cyclists along the trail, which will stretch from Vallejo to Calistoga, passing by the sign. This initiative is part of a broader effort to enhance accessibility and visitor experience in Napa Valley, a place that continues to be synonymous with excellence in wine production and a premier tourist destination.