Reviewed By:	
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CITY OF DANA POINT
AGENDA REPORT

DATE: FEBRUARY 17, 2026

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: MICHAEL VILLAR, CITY COUNCILMEMBER

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF A COMMEMORATIVE INSTALLATION TO LUCY CHAVARRIAS

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The City Council discuss and provide direction to Staff regarding a potential commemorative installation to Lucy Chavarrias.

BACKGROUND:

Lucy Chavarrias was a pioneering local entrepreneur whose personal story and professional legacy are deeply interwoven with the history, culture, and identity of Dana Point and Capistrano Beach. For more than eight decades, her restaurant, El Patio Café, has contributed to the local economy and continues to serve as a gathering place for the community.

Lucy began her career in food service in 1937, assisting her grandmother as a cook for the Cotton estate workers in San Clemente. She later established her own restaurant, working through several partnerships before creating what would become one of the longest-running and most iconic restaurants in Dana Point history.

Lucy's Cafe opened at its historic location in Doheny Village in 1951, after her prior restaurant was displaced by construction of the Beach Cities I-5 connector. Originally a fruit stand, the cafe's location was expanded and adapted to accommodate the restaurant, with original counters and interior furnishings relocated to preserve continuity. The restaurant would come to be known as "El Patio" after the beloved family friendly outdoor patio or simply "Lucy's" to local patrons. Today, El Patio Café remains a recognized mid-century style landmark along Doheny Park Road, known for its authentic Mexican recipes and distinctive roadside sign.

Lucy's impact extended beyond her restaurant. El Patio Café remains a gathering place for local residents, watermen, surfers, and visitors, and continues to be part of everyday life in Capistrano Beach. Her commitment to hospitality and quality has carried the business across generations, with her son, Jack Saunderson, continuing to operate the restaurant using Lucy's recipes.

Lucy Chavarrias is widely recognized as an industrious, second-generation Mexican-American woman who succeeded as a business owner during a period when such opportunities were limited. Her story reflects themes of perseverance, entrepreneurship, and cultural contribution, and her restaurant is one of the most iconic businesses in the Capistrano Beach area.

DISCUSSION:

Considering Lucy's lasting contributions to local history, commerce, and community life, consideration of a commemorative installation honoring Lucy Chavarrias would recognize not only an individual, but also the broader story of small business, immigrant heritage, and neighborhood gathering places that helped shape Dana Point's character over the past century.

NOTIFICATION AND FOLLOW-UP:

Jack Saunderson

FISCAL IMPACT:

None

STRATEGIC PLAN IMPLEMENTATION:

Strategic Plan Goal #5 – Maintain and Enhance Dana Point's Unique Sense of Place

ALTERNATIVE ACTIONS:

Other action as directed by City Council.