



**City of Santa Ana  
20 Civic Center Plaza, Santa Ana, CA 92701  
Historic Resources Commission Staff Report  
January 11, 2024**

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**Topic:** HRCA No. 2023-20, HRC No. 2023-06, HPPA No. 2023-12 – Woitke House (925 North Lowell Street)

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**RECOMMENDED ACTION**

1. Adopt a resolution approving Historic Resources Commission Application No. 2023-20 and Historic Register Categorization No. 2023-06 (Exhibit 1).
2. Recommend that the City Council authorize the City Manager and Clerk of the Council to execute the attached Mills Act agreement with Kelly S. Thomas and Bethany S. Thomas, Trustees of the Thomas Living Trust Dated March 28, 2022, subject to non-substantive changes approved by the City Manager and City Attorney (Exhibit 2).

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Kelly and Bethany Thomas are requesting approval to designate an existing Spanish Revival style residence located at 925 North Lowell Street to the Santa Ana Register of Historical Properties, as well as approval to execute a Mills Act agreement with the City of Santa Ana. The property is worthy of “Contributive” categorization because it contributes to the overall character and history of Washington Square and is a representative example of Spanish Revival architecture in Santa Ana, which features an asymmetrical faced; clay tile roof; and tripartite, casement, and double-hung wood windows; among other original features.

**DISCUSSION**

**Project Location and Site Description**

The subject property is located on a corner lot, on the east side of North Lowell Street and the south side of West 10<sup>th</sup> Street, in the Washington Square neighborhood in Santa Ana. The site contains a 1,698-square-foot, Spanish Revival style residence and detached garage, on a 6,368-square-foot residential lot (Exhibit 3).

## **Analysis of the Issues**

### *Historical Listing*

In March 1999, the City Council approved Ordinance No. NS-2363 establishing the Historic Resources Commission and the Santa Ana Register of Historical Properties. The Historic Resources Commission may, by resolution and at a noticed public hearing, designate as a historical property any building or part thereof, object, structure, or site having importance to the history or architecture of the city in accordance with the criteria set forth in Section 30-2 of the Santa Ana Municipal Code (SAMC). This project entails applying the selection criteria established in Chapter 30 of the Santa Ana Municipal Code (Places of Historical and Architectural Significance) to determine if this structure is eligible for historic designation to the Santa Ana Register of Historical Properties. The first criterion for selection requires that the structures be 50 or more years old.

The structure identified meets the selection criteria for inclusion on the Santa Ana Register of Historical Properties pursuant to criteria contained in Section 30-2 of the Santa Ana Municipal Code, as the structure is 95 years old and is a sound example of period architecture. No known code violations exist on record for this property.

The Woitke House is architecturally significant as an intact example of a Spanish Revival style house in Santa Ana. The original building permit was not uncovered; however, County assessor data indicates the property was built in 1928. The address first appears in City directories in 1929. The original architect and builder are unknown. From 1929 to 1932, the subject property was owned by F E Woitke. Russell Munro occupied the property for one year in 1933. From 1934 to 1935, E E Sidnam owned the property. D D Hilyard then bought the property and resided in it from 1936 to 1944. The property is listed as "vacant" in the 1945 city directory and there was no city directory available for 1946. From 1947 to at least 1962, G N Ginther owned the property. No records were available between 1963 and 1964, and in 1965 the address is not listed in the city directory. No records were available from 1966 to 1978, and the address was not listed in 1979-1990. In the 1999-2000 Criss-Cross directory, Herbert McCoy is listed as the building occupant. The present-day owners, Kelly and Bethany Thomas, have owned the property since 2003. No additional information was uncovered regarding the past owners and tenants.

The Woitke House is a one story, single-family, Spanish Revival Style residence located on a modestly sized parcel in the Washington Square neighborhood. The asymmetrical residence exhibits a rectangular-shaped plan with a hipped roof clad in clay tiles that has a flat roof at its center. The roof has minimal eave overhang. The exterior of the house is clad in a coarse/textured stucco finish. The primary (west) façade is divided into three bays. A partially enclosed covered patio with multiple arched openings encloses the northern two bays, which features a tripartite wood window and the main entrance. The tripartite window has two casement windows with a centered fixed window and upper

multi-light transoms at all three window segments. The main entrance door is composed of a single wood frame door with obscure glass, including metal hardware and decorative metal ornamentation fixed to the door's exterior. The southern third bay contains a smaller version of the tripartite wood window that is located in the front porch.

Fenestration on the side (north) façade features a mix of window types, including paired, single-light casement wood windows; a wide fixed wood window with upper multi-light transoms; a tripartite wood-frame multi-light side door with a central door flanked by narrower doors that is located within an arched recessed porch; and one-over-one double-hung wood windows. Similarly, the side (south) façade's fenestration is a mix of double-hung wood windows and fixed wood windows. The rear (east) façade contains single-light casement wood windows, a fixed wood window, and double-hung wood windows, along with two wood doors, one of which is a multi-light door and the other has a single upper light. All windows throughout the residence contain a prominent wood window sill.

Additional architectural features include terra cotta tile flooring at the main entrance walkway, front and side porches, and rear entrance steps; decorative tiles within the terra cotta flooring. The rear yard contains a single-story, detached garage with a square footprint and a flat roof with parapet. Clay tile coping wraps around the garage's parapet roofline, with a clay tile roof awning at the primary (north) façade. Garage fenestration consists of a metal roll up door at the primary (north) façade, and a wood door and fixed wood window at the side (west) facade. The property is landscaped with a front lawn, two mature palm trees that flank the entrance walkway, additional medium-sized mature trees, along with shrubs, bushes, small palm trees and succulents. A tall, manicured hedge wraps around the side (north) façade, which is contained by a small metal fence.

Character-defining features of the Woitke House include, but may not be limited to: Rectangular-shaped building footprint and massing; asymmetrical primary façade; hipped roof clad in clay tiles that has a flat roof at its center; minimal eave overhang; original smooth stucco siding (to be restored with or without trowel pattern); a partially enclosed covered patio at the primary façade with multiple arched openings; a covered patio at the side (north) facade with an arched opening; two tripartite wood windows at the primary (west) façade that each contain two casement windows with a centered fixed window and upper multi-light transoms at all three window segments; additional windows including single-light casement wood windows, a tripartite wood-frame multi-light side door with a central door flanked by narrower doors, fixed wood windows, one-over-one double-hung wood windows; rear, single and multi-light wood-frame doors; prominent wood window sill on all original windows; terra cotta tile flooring at the main entrance walkway, front and side porches, and rear entrance steps; decorative tiles within the terra cotta flooring; detached garage with a flat roof and parapet that has clay tile coping and a clay tile roof awning at the primary (north) façade; and front yard landscaping including small and mature palm trees and succulents.

The Woitke House qualifies for listing in the Santa Ana Register of Historical Properties under Criterion 1 as an intact example of a Spanish Revival style home in Santa Ana. The recommended categorization is “Contributive” because it contributes to the overall character and history of Washington Square and is a representative example of Spanish Revival architecture in Santa Ana.

### *Mills Act Agreement*

Ordinance No. NS-2382 authorized the Historic Resources Commission to execute Historic Property Preservation Agreements (HPPA), commonly known as Mills Act agreements for eligible properties (Exhibit 2). To be eligible for the Mills Act, the property must be listed on the Santa Ana Register of Historical Properties. The Historic Resources Commission Application and Historic Register Categorization actions proposed for this site authorize the listing of the property on the local register. The agreement provides monetary incentives to the property owner in the form of a property tax reduction in exchange for the owner’s voluntary commitment to maintain the property in a good state of repair as necessary to maintain its character and appearance. Once recorded, the agreement generates a different valuation method in determining the property’s assessed value, resulting in tax savings for the owner. Aside from the tax savings, the benefits include:

- Long term preservation of the property and visual improvement to the neighborhood
- A mechanism to provide for property rehabilitation
- Incentives for potential buyers to purchase historic structures
- Discouraging inappropriate alterations to the property

The property has no identified unauthorized modifications. Upon consideration of the application, it is recommended that the City enter into a Historic Property Preservation Agreement subject to a completion of future improvements as described in an attached Work Plan.

Overall, future improvements (Work Plan) proposed by the homeowner during the initial ten years of the Mills Act Agreement include the following: replace electrical knob-and-tube wiring, replace all security lighting with compatible lighting, repair in-kind all wood windows as needed and replace any wood rot that is beyond repair to match existing, rear yard gate replacement or removal of the decorative iron ornamentation on existing gate, front door and garage door replacement with compatible style doors, stucco restoration with compatible smooth stucco with trowel pattern, earthquake retrofit of property’s foundation, driveway and garage floor repairs, and interior wood restoration including doors, floors, and window casing, along with general on-going maintenance. Staff will ensure that the proposed work will be done sensitively and will maintain the property’s character-defining features as part of the Mills Act Agreement for this property.

As part of the Mills Act approval process, staff will work with the applicant to ensure that a bronze plaque is installed honoring and recognizing the structure. The plaque will include the historic name, address, year built, and local historic register designation. Lastly, the site will be subject to general maintenance and upkeep requirements including, but not limited to, replacement or restoration of damaged character-defining features, landscaping upkeep, painting, etc. Upon consideration of the application, it is recommended that the City enter into a Historic Property Preservation Agreement to enable the Mills Act.

### **Public Notification**

The subject site is located within the Washington Square Neighborhood Association. The president of this Neighborhood Association was notified by mail 10 days prior to this public hearing. In addition, the project site was posted with a notice advertising this public hearing, a notice was published in the Orange County Reporter and mailed notices were sent to all property owners within 500 feet of the project site. At the time of this printing, no correspondence, either written or electronic, has been received from any members of the public.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and the CEQA Guidelines, the project is exempt from further review pursuant to Section 15331 of the CEQA Guidelines (Class 31 – Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation) as these actions are designed to preserve historic resources. Based on this analysis, a Notice of Exemption, Environmental Review No. 2023-121 will be filed for this project.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

The Historic Property Preservation Agreement will reduce the Property Tax revenue account 01102002-50011 to the City by an estimated \$622.99 annually, for a period of not less than ten years.

### **EXHIBIT(S)**

1. Resolution
2. Mills Act Agreement
3. 500-Foot Radius Map

Submitted By: Andrea Heywood, Associate Planner

Approved By: Minh Thai, Executive Director of Planning and Building Agency, Planning and Building Agency