25-985 **Agenda Date: 10/2/2025**

REPORT TO HISTORICAL AND LANDMARKS COMMISSION

SUBJECT

Public Hearing: Consideration of a Historical Preservation Agreement (Mills Act Contract) (File No. PLN25-00350) for 1458 Lexington Street

BACKGROUND

On behalf of property owners Cameron Carty and Rachel Law, Robert Mayer filed a Historical Preservation Agreement (Mills Act Contract) (File No. PLN25-00350) request for the property located at 1458 Lexington Street. Enacted in 1972, the California Mills Act legislation grants participating local governments the authority to enter into contracts with owners of qualified historic properties who actively participate in the restoration and maintenance of their historic properties while receiving property tax relief. Santa Clara participates in the Mills Act Program. A requirement of the Mills Act Contract is that the building must be a qualified structure, listed on either a local, State, or National register. The subject site is currently listed on the City's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI).

The subject property is an approximate 7,500 square-foot lot located on the south side of Lexington Street. Constructed in 1899, the existing residence on the property is designed in the Pioneer architectural style. The house is set back from the street, featuring a lawn, ornamental shrubs, and a concrete walkway leading to the entrance porch. Its pioneer style reflects Santa Clara's early architectural era.

The property owners submitted the requisite application, including an updated historic survey (Department of Parks and Recreation DPR 523A Form) of the property (Attachment 2), a Statement of Justification for the request (Attachment 4), and a 10-Year Restoration and Maintenance Plan outlining the proposed workplan to restore, rehabilitate, and maintain the property (Attachment 5).

The Historical and Landmarks Commission (HLC) provides Mills Act Contract recommendations to the City Council for their final determination. Approved contracts are executed between the City and the property owner and recorded with the County for a minimum ten-year term. Contracts are automatically renewed each year and are transferred to new owners when the property is sold.

If approved, this would be the third Mills Act Contract for this calendar year, where 10 are permitted.

DISCUSSION

In August 2025, William Kostura of Kostura Architectural History prepared a DPR 523A Form assessing the property's historical significance under National, State, and local criteria. The evaluator found that the structure at 1458 Lexington Street is well maintained and that the design elements that comprise the architectural integrity of the structure have not been diminished. The evaluator concluded that the property continues to retain enough of its historic character and appearance to be recognizable as a historic resource on the City's HRI.

The property owners submitted a Statement of Justification and a 10-Year Restoration and Maintenance Plan. The plan includes plumbing and electrical upgrades, improved drainage near the foundation, seismic reinforcement, exterior painting, replacement of aluminum windows with wood-framed versions, restoration or repair of historic wood window sashes, and interior door and trim upgrades. The owners acknowledge that some work may overlap to support the overall improvement plan. All work will be evaluated through Significant Property Alteration permits, as required by the Historic Preservation Ordinance.

Staff finds that the work proposed in the 10-Year Restoration and Maintenance Plan adheres to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Attachment 3). The proposed improvements, and the owner's statement of justification, support the preservation, protection, and maintenance of a locally designated significant structure.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

A Mills Act Contract is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Section 15331 of the CEQA Guidelines (Class 31 - Historical Resource Restoration / Rehabilitation). This exemption consists of projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation, or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards. Entering into the contract will result in the restoration and rehabilitation of the 1899 structure consistent with the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

PUBLIC CONTACT

No public notice is required for a Mills Act Contract and no public inquiries have been made regarding the project.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Historical and Landmarks Commission determine the project to be exempt from CEQA pursuant to CEQA Section 15331 of the CEQA Guidelines (Class 31 - Historical Resource Restoration / Rehabilitation) and find that the Mills Act Application and associated 10-Year Plan for restoration and maintenance accomplishes the intent of preserving and maintaining the historical significance of the property; and therefore, recommends City Council approval of a Mills Act Contract, and the adoption of a 10-Year Restoration and Maintenance Plan associated with the Historical Preservation Agreement for the property located at 1458 Lexington Street.

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Reviewed by: Rebecca Bustos, Principal Planner
Approved by: Lesley Xavier, Planning Manager

ATTACHMENTS

1. Legal Property Description
2. Historic Survey (DPR 523A Form)
3. Secretary of Interior Standards for Rehabilitation
4. Statement of Justification
5. 10-Year Restoration and Maintenance Plan
6. Draft Historic Property Preservation Agreement (Mills Act Contract)