



**Department:** Community Development  
**Cost Center:** 4003  
**For Agenda of:** 11/15/2022  
**Placement:** Consent  
**Estimated Time:** N/A

**FROM:** Michael Codron, Community Development Director  
**Prepared By:** Graham Bultema, Assistant Planner

**SUBJECT:** REQUEST TO INCLUDE THE PROPERTY AT 1133 PISMO STREET, KNOWN AS THE THOMAS AND MAY BRECHEEN HOUSE, IN THE CITY'S INVENTORY OF HISTORIC RESOURCES AS A MASTER LIST RESOURCE (HIST-0171-2022)

### RECOMMENDATION

As recommended by the Cultural Heritage Committee, adopt a Resolution entitled, "A Resolution of the City Council of the City of San Luis Obispo, California, adding the property located at 1133 Pismo Street to the Master List of Historic Resources as "The Thomas and May Brecheen House" (HIST-0171-2022)."

### DISCUSSION

#### Background

The applicants, Christopher and Heidi Frago, represented by James Papp, have requested that the property at 1133 Pismo Street be designated as a Master List Resource in the City's Inventory of Historic Resources, as the Thomas and May Brecheen House. The property is currently designated as a Contributing List Resource and is located with the Old Town Historic District. The applicant has provided a Historic Evaluation (Attachment B) and Addendum (Attachment C) evaluating the property and its eligibility for historic listing prepared by Historian James Papp, PhD.

#### Previous Council or Advisory Body Action

On May 24, 2022, the Cultural Heritage Committee (CHC) reviewed the proposed request and evaluated if the property met eligibility criteria for listing. The CHC voted to continue the item to a date uncertain, with direction given to the applicant to specifically identify unique qualities or characteristics of the property which would meet eligibility criteria to be designated as a Master List Resource and to demonstrate compliance with the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance. The representative revised the Historic Evaluation with an Addendum based on direction from staff and from the CHC. On September 26, 2022, the CHC reviewed the proposed amended request and found that the property meets eligibility criteria for historical listing to a degree that qualifies it for designation as a Master List Resource. The CHC voted unanimously to recommend that the City Council designate the property as a Master List Resource.

### Site and Setting

The subject property is located southeast of Downtown in a medium-density (R-2-H) residential zoned area along Pismo Street, mid-block between Toro Street and Santa Rosa Street within the La Vina tract and one block northeast of Mitchell Park in the Old Town Historic District. Surrounding architectural styles in the neighborhood include Colonial Revival and Craftsman in largely original condition from the 1910s and 1920s. At the time of the development, the property was located across the street from William Weeks high school as well as Pierre Dallidet's vineyard, both of which are now gone. Other surrounding properties on the City's Master List of Historic Resources include the neighboring Thorne/Nuss House and the Vollmer House, both Craftsman style homes.

### Building Architecture

City records describe the property as a one-story residence with a rectangular plan and a Neoclassic Rowhouse stylistic influence, with several characteristic features highlighted:

1. Composition shingle hip roof
2. Clapboard siding
3. Stairs leading to a front portico
4. Single classical column
5. Prominent triple window
6. Brick chimney



*Figure 1: Thomas and May Brecheen House*

The property is currently on the City's Inventory of Historic Resources as a Contributing List Resource (added in 1987 per City Council Resolution 6157). The City's Historic Context Statement describes the Neo-Classical Cottage style (particularly prominent along Pismo Street) as a term used to describe simple house forms or cottages with fewer decorative features than other styles from the period, with decorative detailing typically being confined to the porch or cornice line. The property exhibits many of these architectural characteristics and are discussed in detail in the Historic Resource Evaluation and Addendum (Attachments B & C, respectively) and summarized below in the Evaluation section of this report.

### Thomas and May Brecheen

The Historic Resource Evaluation also provides biographical details about Thomas Brecheen and his wife May Brecheen, who are associated with the property (see Attachment B, Historic Evaluation, pgs. 6-16). The house was purchased by 29-year-old Thomas Levin Brecheen, newly appointed principal of San Luis Obispo's public grammar school, in July 1907. T. L. Brecheen was initially described by the *Telegram* as "a hard student and thorough disciplinarian" in 1907 (Attachment B, Historic Evaluation, pg. 1), but his residency and employment in the City of San Luis Obispo was tumultuous and brief, and he moved to Alameda in 1908. As the applicant notes in the evaluation (Appendix B, Historic Evaluation, pg. 80), Thomas Brecheen's association with the property is too brief for a relevant association to be established with important historical events or significance to the community rising to a level of significance that would satisfy Historic Criteria described in Section 14.01.070(B) of the Ordinance.

## Evaluation of Eligibility

To be eligible for listing as an historic resource, a building must exhibit a high level of historic integrity, be at least 50 years old, and meet one or more of the eligibility criteria described in § 14.01.070 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance (see Attachment D). As provided in § 14.01.050, the most unique and important resources and properties in terms of age, architectural or historical significance, rarity, or association with important persons or events in the City's past may be designated as "Master List Resources".

### 1. Architectural Criteria

As described and depicted in pages 76-82 of the applicant's Historical Evaluation (Attachment B), the dwelling embodies distinctive characteristics features of the Neo-Classical Cottage style, in a manner that expresses interesting details with notable attractiveness, consistent with listing criteria for "Style" and "Design":

*The character-defining features of the Brecheen House are its low-pitched bellcast roof, asymmetric porch, single Tuscan column on a solid railing, echoing single and tripartite sash windows on its street façade with their muntined upper sashes and plate glass lower sashes, rhythmic fenestration on the southwest façade, plain frieze, novelty siding, string-coursed chimney with pyramidal base, and end-period Bishop Peak granite curb. (Appendix B, Historic Evaluation, pg. 80)*

As further described and depicted in pages 10-14 of the applicant's Addendum to the Historical Evaluation, the addendum provides further details stating that the dwelling includes the following unique characteristic features:

1. Low-pitch bellcast roof
2. Long extending eaves
3. Triple window arrangement
4. Hidden front door
5. Single Tuscan column
6. Solid porch parapet

The Addendum states that the subject property exhibits character-defining features which are unique in comparison to similar Colonial Revival bungalows on the City's Contributing List of Historic Resources:

*The data shows the house to be a rare subtype of the Colonial Revival bungalow stripped of structural but nonfunctional roof decoration. Within this minimalist form, the anonymous designer lowered the roof pitch to the greatest extent of any of these bungalows; extended the eaves further than any other; accentuated both with a japoniste bellcast; created the district's most sophisticated geometric pattern of fenestration; successfully experimented with minimizing columns and doors; and framed the whole with a unique pattern of frieze, architrave, corner boards, and baseboard. (Appendix C, Addendum, pg. 2)*

### Conclusion

The information in the Historic Resource Evaluation and Addendum prepared for this application documenting the architectural character of the house and reviewed by the Cultural Heritage Committee provides a basis for the Council to find that the dwelling exhibits unique character-defining features of the Neo-Classical Cottage style and satisfies Architectural Criteria for Style and Design (§ 14.01.070(A)(1&2)) to a degree that qualifies the property for designation as a Master List Historic Resource.

### Policy Context

The recommended action on this item is supported by historical preservation policies set out in § 3.0 of the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan, and with procedures and standards for listing of historic resources set out in the City's Historic Preservation Ordinance § 14.01.060 & 14.01.070.

### Public Engagement

Public notice of this hearing has been provided to owners and occupants of property near the subject site, and published in a widely circulated local newspaper, and hearing agendas for this meeting have been posted at City Hall, consistent with adopted notification procedures. Public notice was also previously provided for the Cultural Heritage Committee meetings on May 24, 2022, and September 26, 2022.

### ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Inclusion of the subject properties on the City's Inventory of Historic Resources does not have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment and is covered by the general rule described in §15061(b)(3) of the CEQA Guidelines.

### FISCAL IMPACT

Budgeted: No

Budget Year: 2022-23

Funding Identified: No

### Fiscal Analysis:

<b>Funding Sources</b>	<b>Total Budget Available</b>	<b>Current Funding Request</b>	<b>Remaining Balance</b>	<b>Annual Ongoing Cost</b>
General Fund	N/A	\$	\$	\$
State				
Federal				
Fees				
Other:				
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$</b>	<b>\$0</b>

Adding this property to the Master List of Historic Resources will have no fiscal impacts. Historic designation of property itself has no bearing on City fiscal resources. As a Master List Resource, however, this property would be eligible for historic preservation incentives under the “Mills Act”. Any subsequent request to enter into a “Mills Act Contract” with the City would be considered under a separate application. A separate fiscal analysis would be reviewed by the City Council should this property be proposed for participation in the Mills Act Program.

## ALTERNATIVES

1. ***Decline to designate the property as a Master List Resource in the Inventory of Historic Resources.*** This decision would be based on finding that the Property is not considered to be sufficiently unique or important, or found to satisfy Evaluation Criteria for listing to a degree warranting such designation. The Property would remain in the Inventory as a Contributing List Resource.
2. ***Continue consideration of the request for additional information or discussion.***

## ATTACHMENTS

- A - Draft Resolution adding 1133 Pismo Street to the Master List of Historic Resources
- B - Historic Resource Evaluation
- C - Historic Resource Evaluation Addendum
- D - Evaluation Criteria