



# Staff Report and Recommendations Agenda of March 10, 2025, Item 6a

**COUNTY of VENTURA**  
Resource Management Agency

**County of Ventura • Resource Management Agency**

800 S. Victoria Avenue, Ventura, CA 93009-1740 • (805) 654-2478 • [www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning](http://www.vcrma.org/divisions/planning)

## **I. APPLICANT/PROPERTY OWNERS:**

**Applicant:** Michael Boone  
Two Trees Architects  
112 Cañada Street  
Ojai, CA 93023

**Property Owners:** Dan and Nancy Yih  
3935 Thatcher Road  
Ojai, CA 93023

## **II. REQUEST:**

A request for a Certificate of Review to authorize a mix of construction activity at a property located at 3935 Thacher Road, Ojai, CA 93023 (Site of Merit). The scope of work includes the construction of a new detached 1,200 sq. ft. accessory dwelling unit (ADU) with 452 sq. ft. of attached patio covers, a detached 432 sq. ft. garage, a 845 sq. ft. patio cover with an outdoor kitchen, dining area, and fireplace, a 300 sq. ft. trellis patio cover, and demolition of an existing pool and construction of a new 900 sq. ft. pool and spa and associated pool equipment area. The scope of work also includes the conversion of the existing garage into a 442 sq. ft. gym, 75 sq. ft. changing area, 48 sq. ft. bathroom, and 80 sq. ft. laundry area. The existing garage to be converted will have an addition of 310 sq. ft. for a pool house, a 426 sq. ft. covered patio with exterior stairs, and a 96 sq. ft. storage area. In addition, the existing single-family dwelling will have improvements to the driveway, addition of paths and stairs, and new retaining walls. (Case No. CH25-0009).

## **III. LOCATION AND PROPERTY INFORMATION:**

Location: 3935 Thacher Road, Ojai, CA 93023 (unincorporated Ventura County)  
Assessor's Parcel Number (APN): 014-0-100-260  
Historic Designation: Site of Merit  
Common/Historic Name: N/A

The 1.65-acre property at 3935 Thacher Road is located at the east end of the Ojai Valley in a semi-rural setting comprised primarily of individually built residences surrounded by citrus orchards, avocado groves, and native oak trees. Many properties, as in the case of the property at 3935 Thacher Road, are lined with low dry-stacked sandstone walls. The subject property contains an existing single-family residence and detached garage with living quarters above, both built in 1938; the residence is accessed via a semi-circular driveway that extends in a northly direction. The house is significant as a good unaltered example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style and designed by the regionally important architect, Roy C. Wilson.

#### IV. PROJECT SCOPE:

The proposed scope of work includes a mix of new construction, including the following:

- Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU):
  - Construction of a 1,200 sq. ft. ADU, including a 452 sq. ft. patio and a two-car parking space. (*exempt from cultural heritage review*)
- Detached Garage Conversion:
  - Existing garage to be converted into the following:
    - 442 sq. ft. gym.
    - 75 sq. ft. pool dressing room.
    - 48 sq. ft. pool toilet.
    - 80 sq. ft. laundry area.
  - Additions to the converted garage include:
    - 310 sq. ft. pool house.
    - 426 sq. ft. balcony with exterior stairs.
    - 96 sq. ft. mechanical/storage area below the balcony.
- New Detached Garage:
  - Construction of a detached 432 sq. ft. garage.
- Main Residence Modifications:
  - Interior remodel of the existing main house.
  - Exterior additions to the main house, including:
    - 845 sq. ft. exterior patio/BBQ area.
    - Exterior mountain view fireplace.
    - 300 sq. ft. dining trellis.
  - Installation of a new 15 ft. by 60 ft. pool and jacuzzi.
  - Construction of a walled pool equipment area (non-covered).
- Miscellaneous Improvements:
  - Landscaping, paths, stairs, walls, and courtyards.
  - Parking and Fire Department-required driveway upgrades.
  - New septic system installation.
  - Electrical service upgrades.

Refer to Exhibit 1 for the full proposed plans, Exhibit 2 for selected plan sets in 11 in. by 17 in. size, Exhibit 3 for information on proposed materials, and Exhibit 4 for a photo exhibit of the property. In addition, refer to Figure 1 for an aerial view of the subject property, Figure 2 for a contemporary oblique aerial view of the site, Figure 3 for a proposed rendering of the project, and Figure 4 for a proposed site plan.

Figure 1 – Aerial View of Subject Property

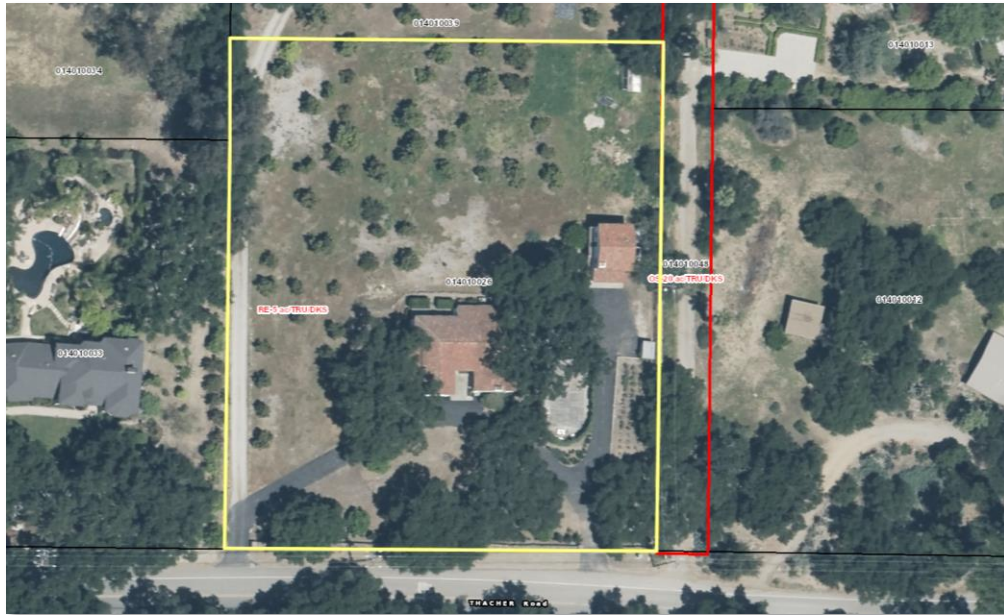


Figure 2 – Contemporary Oblique Aerial View of Site



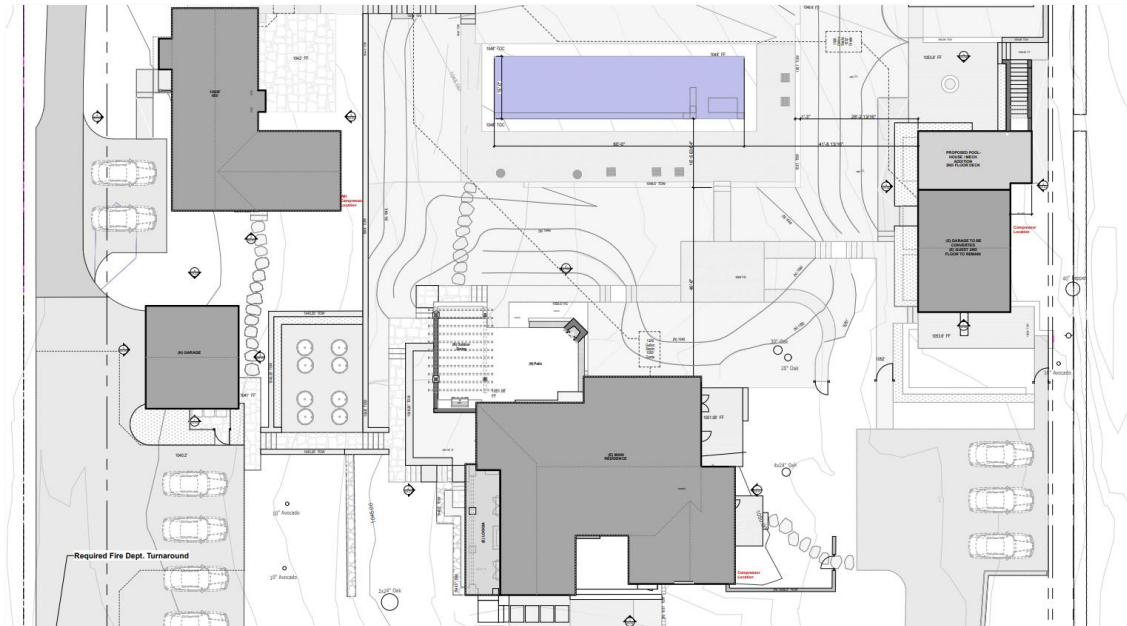
*Credit: Ojai Property Group, Inc.*

Figure 3 – Proposed Rendering, Looking Southeast



*Credit: Two Trees Architects*

Figure 4 – Proposed Site Plan



*Credit: Two Trees Architects*

## V. HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

The subject property was previously evaluated in July 1985 as part of the *Phase III Ojai Historic Resources Survey* (“Historic Survey”) prepared by San Buenaventura Research Associates (Exhibit 6). At that time, the property was determined significant as a good unaltered example of the Spanish Colonial Revival style. In February 2025, the property was further evaluated for historical significance by Post/Hazeltine Associates (Exhibit 5) and additional historical context was developed<sup>1</sup>. The property information contained in this staff report is generally sourced from Exhibit 5. The property was determined eligible for listing in the National Register, California Register, and as a Ventura County Landmark as an excellent example of one of Roy C. Wilson’s designs in the Spanish Colonial Revival style.<sup>2</sup>

### Historical Background

In 1938, Mrs. Donald Ryder (Florence) Dickey developed a lot at the east end of the Ojai Valley, at what is now 3935 Thacher Road.<sup>3</sup> The architect, Roy C. Wilson, was hired by Florence Dickey to design for the property a Spanish Colonial Revival style house and a detached two-story garage with living quarters above. In or around 1915, Wilson established the first architectural practice in Ventura County and designed a number of architecturally significant buildings over the course of his career.

Mrs. Dickey’s late husband, Dr. Dickey (1887-1932), was a lecturer, researcher, and writer at the California Institute of Technology.<sup>4</sup> Dr. Dickey rose to prominence in his field, and at his death in 1932 at the age of 45, he “was credited with owning the largest collection of mammals and birds in the world.”<sup>5</sup> Following her husband’s death, Florence and her son, Donald Jr., moved to Paris, where they lived until at least 1935. A few years later, they moved back to California. By 1940, Florence Dickey was living at the Twin Peaks Ranch in the Ojai Valley at what is now 4403 Thacher Road. Florence Dickey died at age 86 in Nevada on August 19, 1974.<sup>6</sup>

By 1945, the property was owned by James Atkinson, a rancher, and his wife, Mildred.<sup>7</sup> The Atkinson's continued to own the property until the 1960s, when it was purchased by Robert and Carole Adams. It was acquired by the current property owners in 2022.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *Historic Resources Report for 3935 Thacher Road, Ojai, California, County of Ventura*, Post/Hazeltine Associates, February 18, 2025.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

**Property Description**

The Spanish Colonial Revival style is one of a number of Period Revival styles that enjoyed great popularity in the United States during the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>9</sup> In California, this style, based largely on Spanish Colonial and Mexican antecedents, began to gain widespread popularity following Bertram Goodhue’s design scheme for the Panama Pacific Exposition in San Diego (1913-1915).<sup>10</sup> Attributes of the Spanish Colonial Revival style include, among others: 1) use of vernacular materials, such as plaster, stucco, wood, and terra cotta; 2) classically inspired ornamental detailing; 3) the emphasis on broad, uninterrupted wall surfaces, punctuated by a careful use of openings (fenestration was generally asymmetrical), and 4) an emphasis on the interplay of cubic volume, emphasizing the hierarchical division between the house’s utilitarian service areas and the private and public areas meant for the use of the family and its guests).<sup>11</sup> The style gained additional popularity in Santa Barbara after 1925, when a devastating earthquake required constructing or repairing hundreds of buildings in the Santa Barbara area.<sup>12</sup>

**VI. CULTURAL HERITAGE ORDINANCE ANALYSIS:**

The scope of work requires a Certificate of Review from the CHB. Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance (Ordinance) §1372-2 provides that the CHB use *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* (“Secretary’s Standards”) in its evaluation of the property and the proposed scope of work. The Certificate of Review process consists of the provision of voluntary recommendations on the scope of work to better conform to the Secretary’s Standards. CHB staff determined the standards for rehabilitation are appropriate for this request and evaluated the scope of work against the relevant standards below.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
<b>#1.</b> A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.	<p>The project would preserve the main residence’s existing footprint, roof, plastered walls, and porches on the south and east elevations. Further, the south elevation facing Thacher Road would not be altered, ensuring the entry façade, which is the side of the building visible to the public, would not be altered.</p> <p>The proposed removal and replacement of some of the windows and doors on the north, east, and west</p>

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>10</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>11</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
	<p>elevations of the main residence would emulate the existing fenestration in design. However, the applicant proposes windows and doors where none existed historically, and window sizes and proportions that did not exist previously. According to the National Park Service, “windows are one of the most visible aspects of a building’s exterior, and play a crucial role in determining a building’s significance from an architectural perspective.”<sup>13</sup> Moreover, the project would introduce some door types, such as the new French doors, that did not exist previously. Replacement of missing features, such as windows and doors, should be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.</p> <p>The location and scale and massing of the new detached garage, which is one-story in height and located near the west end of the property, will not remove historic landscape features or impair the setting of the historic house or the dry-stacked stone walls along Thacher Road.</p> <p>The proposed landscaping plan and hardscape improvements would not impair the setting of the historic resource or remove character-defining landscape features. Moreover, the design, scale and massing of the landscape features are deferential to the historic resource’s setting.</p> <p>Based on the above, Staff determined that this Standard has been partially met.</p>
<p><b>#2.</b> The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.</p>	<p>The Secretary’s Standards<sup>14</sup> encourage the retention of historic features that contribute to the interpretation of the significance of a historic property and, when appropriate, repair of materials and limited replacement of deteriorated or missing parts rather than full replacement.</p> <p>The project does not propose the removal of significant hardscape features or landscaping. The</p>

<sup>13</sup> National Park Service, “Windows,” <https://www.nps.gov/articles/windows.htm>, last updated July 5, 2018, accessed July 10, 2024.

<sup>14</sup> Weeks, Kay D., *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings*, U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, revised 2017, pg. 140.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
	<p>placement of almost all of the proposed improvements to the rear of the property ensures the property's streetscape will remain unimpaired.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p><b>#3.</b> Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>
<p><b>#4.</b> Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.</p>	<p>No buildings, structures or landscape features on the subject property postdating the construction of the house and garage have achieved historic significance in their own right.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been met.</p>
<p><b>#5.</b> Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.</p>	<p>The proposed new windows, doors, siding, and roofing materials would generally introduce components and materials that are historically appropriate to the property because they are architecturally in-kind, both with what existed at the building previously, such as siding and detailing, and with other structures that currently occupy the site.</p> <p>However, the project's replacement of several windows and doors at the house would constitute the loss of historic fabric.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been partially met.</p>
<p><b>#6.</b> Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.</p>	<p>No deteriorated historic buildings or landscape features are proposed for repair. If such repairs are required in the future, the repair or replacement of historic building materials or the dry-stacked stone walls should be undertaken pursuant to the requirements of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard is Not Applicable.</p>
<p><b>#7.</b> Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.</p>	<p>Not Applicable.</p>



<b>Standards</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.	
<b>#8.</b> Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.	Not Applicable.
<b>#9.</b> New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.	<p>The location and scale and massing of the new detached garage, which is one-story in height and located near the west end of the property, will not remove historic landscape features or impair the setting of the historic house or the dry-stacked stone walls along Thacher Road.</p> <p>The proposed landscaping plan and hardscape improvements would not impair the setting of the historic resource or remove character-defining landscape features. Moreover, the design, scale and massing of the landscape features are deferential to the historic resource’s setting.</p> <p>However, the proposed project would involve the removal and replacement of some of the windows and doors on the north, east, and west elevations of the main residence, and the construction of windows and doors where none existed historically.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been partially met.</p>
<b>#10.</b> New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.	New construction is most appropriately located where its visibility from the primary views of the historic building is minimized. <sup>15</sup> This is often a rear or obscure elevation. Inherent in all of the guidance is the concept that new construction needs to be subordinate to the historic building. The size, scale, and massing of a new addition all pertain to the addition’s overall volume and three-dimensional qualities. <sup>16</sup> Taken together, size, scale and massing are critical elements for ensuring that a new addition is subordinate to the historic building, thus preserving the historic character of a historic property. <sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, “New Additions to Historic Buildings,” <https://www.nps.gov/tps/standards/applying-rehabilitation/successful-rehab/additions.htm>.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<b>Standards</b>	<b>Staff Comments</b>
	<p>The proposed project would preserve the footprint of the house and almost all of its contributing building materials and design features. The other proposed improvements such as the detached garage, swimming pool, and other hardscape improvements could be removed in the future with minimal impact to the historic resource.</p> <p>The proposed addition to the detached garage would be in keeping with the architectural style of the existing building. However, the design of the proposed addition would follow and extend along the same wall plane of the existing building, risking unification of the two volumes into a single architectural whole.</p> <p>In some cases, separating the addition from the historic building by offsetting it or setting it back from the mass of the historic building can reduce the visual impact of an addition.<sup>18</sup> It is important that the new portion of the structure is clearly differentiated and distinguishable as a new addition so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost altogether in a new and larger composition.<sup>19</sup> The historic building must be clearly identifiable and its physical integrity must not be compromised by the new addition should it be removed in the future.</p> <p>Staff determined that this Standard has been partially met.</p>

**VII. STAFF CONCLUSION:**

Based on the above considerations, the scope of work appears partially consistent with the Secretary’s Standards. The proposed construction activities, including new additions and new construction, generally introduce components and materials that are historically appropriate to the property because they are architecturally in-kind, both with what existed at the building previously, such as siding and detailing, and with other existing structures at the property. However, the applicant proposes the removal of windows and doors that constitute important historic fabric, new windows and doors where none existed historically, and window sizes and proportions and door types, such as a new style of French doors, that did not exist historically.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

In addition, the proposed addition to the detached garage would extend the wall plane of the existing building and risk unification of the two volumes into a single architectural whole. The proposed changes would be located at the north (rear side) elevation and are less noticeable; however, in some cases, separating the addition from the historic building with a simple, small-scale architectural hyphen or connector can reduce the visual impact of an addition to a historic building. Another way of minimizing the impact of a new addition to an historic building is to offset it or step it back from the mass of the historic building. It is important that the new portion of the structure is clearly differentiated and distinguishable as a new addition so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost altogether in a new and larger composition. The historic building must be clearly identifiable, and its physical integrity must not be compromised by the new addition.

Based on the above, CHB staff recommends adoption of the following recommendations related to the scope of work in order to better conform to the Secretary's Standards:

- **Recommendation #1: Window and Door Pattern.** The applicant should retain the existing pattern of fenestration by avoiding to the greatest extent feasible construction and/or size modification of window and door openings where they are not documented to have existed previously at the main house and detached garage.
- **Recommendation #2: New Doors.** To ensure the design of any new French doors is sympathetic to the main house and garage's Spanish Colonial Revival architecture, it is recommended that the lower quarter or third of all French doors feature wood panels, a design feature characteristic of early 20th century Spanish Colonial Revival houses, that would provide a subtle visual differentiation between the historic windows and the proposed French doors.
- **Recommendation #3: Existing Garage Door.** The project includes the replacement of the existing bay doors on the garage's south elevation with French doors set into the bay doors' existing openings. If feasible, it is recommended that the existing bay doors also be retained as part of the proposed project, in addition to the new doors (as revised per Recommendation #2), and kept in an open position or the like, or incorporated into the building in some fashion.
- **Recommendation #4: Rear Garage Addition.** The proposed design should separate the addition from the historic building to the greatest extent feasible by offsetting the addition or stepping it back from the mass of the historic building, or minimizing visual impacts through other similar means. With implementation of this recommendation, the addition should be clearly

differentiated and distinguishable as a new addition so that the identity of the historic structure is not lost altogether in a new and larger composition. Should revisions be incorporated, it's recommended that they be reviewed by Planning staff in consultation with the CHB Chair.

- **Recommendation #5: Ventura County Landmark Designation.** It is recommended that the property owners pursue designation of the property as a Ventura County Landmark. For more information, refer to Section 1370 of the Ventura County Cultural Heritage Ordinance for a description of the range of financial and land use incentives available to owners of landmark properties, and Section 1371 for review requirements for future projects.

**VIII. PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

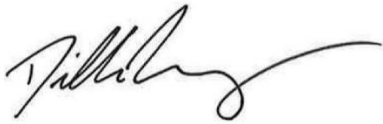
No public comment regarding this item has been received to date.

**IX. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:**

CHB staff recommends the CHB take the following actions regarding the request:

1. **CONDUCT** public hearing, **RECEIVE** oral and written testimony, and **CONSIDER** the Planning Division staff report and all exhibits and attachments hereto; and
2. **REVIEW** and **COMMENT** on the proposed project in accordance with Ordinance §1372 based on the preceding evidence and analysis.

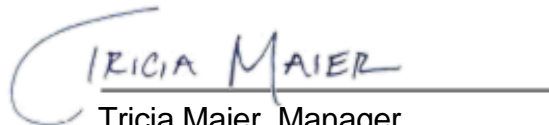
Prepared by:



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Reviewed by:



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Exhibits:

- Exhibit 1: Full Plans and Elevations
- Exhibit 2: Select Plans and Elevations in 11x17 size
- Exhibit 3: Proposed Materials

Exhibit 4: Photo Exhibit

Exhibit 5: Historic Resources Report prepared by Post/Hazeltine Associates, dated February 18, 2025

Exhibit 6: Phase III Ojai Historic Resources Survey, dated July 1985