



City of Los Altos  
Non-Profit and Civic Organization Contributions Application

**Organization Information**

Name: Los Altos History Museum

Address: 51 South San Antonio Road

Website: www.losaltoshistory.org

Tax Identification Number: 94-2542813

Non-profit? Y/N Y

Civic organization? Y/N Y

Benefit Los Altos community? Y/N Y

Description of organizational activities: \_\_\_\_\_

The Los Altos History Museum gathers and presents compelling stories and artifacts that bridge the past and the present by fostering the creative energy of staff and volunteers to challenge established narratives and produce engaging educational programs and exhibits for our community. The Museum recently opened a new permanent exhibition that uses place-based storytelling and advanced technology to tell about the people who have lived in this special place, from the original inhabitants to modern innovators. Changing Museum exhibits highlight diverse facets of local history, from Juana Briones to Wallace Stegner, from Eichler architecture to the annual Pet Parade. The Museum presents events like Train Days and the Apricot STEM Fair. And of course, the Museum continues its original mission of preserving and sharing the historical landmark Smith House.

Description of organizational impact on Los Altos community: \_\_\_\_\_

The Los Altos History Museum provides educational opportunities for adults and children to learn about the community via interactive exhibits and hands-on activities. Other programs include third and fourth grade tours and curriculum for local school children, walking tours around town, oral history collections, and much more. In collaboration with the city, the Museum organizes the annual Margaret Thompson essay contest, providing a creative way for local children to connect with the history of their community. The Museum finds ways to share its collection beyond the building walls, for example with the regular "Peek into the Past" feature in the Los Altos Town Crier. As a non-profit organization, the Museum has benefited from private donations amounting to millions of dollars since its inception, yielding strong leverage to supplement the City's investments. Numerous residents volunteer countless hours at the Museum, creating new exhibits and programs, beautifying the facilities and grounds, and welcoming visitors.

**Contact Information**

Contact name: Larry Lang

Contact role: Board President

Email: llang@larrylang.net

Phone: (650) 948-9427

**Contribution Information**

Annual contribution amount requested: \$55,000 increase

Length of contribution request? Ongoing contract

Total contribution amount requested: \$120,000

Repeat request from a previous budget cycle? Y / N Y

Use of funds:

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Provide a detailed explanation of the use of requested funds</b>	<b>Explain how this expense will benefit the City</b>
see attached annual r			
<b>Total</b>			

**Agreement**

As the official representative for the above organization, I agree to comply with all requirements listed or otherwise enforced through the City of Los Altos Non-Profit and Civic Organization Contribution Policy. The City reserves the right to revoke this application at any time for any purpose. The organization shall provide all documents and organizational information as required by the City of Los Altos necessary to comply with Non-Profit and Civic Organization Contribution Policy application. The official representative certifies that the above information is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 26 April 2023

**Background Explanation**

The Los Altos History Museum began in 1977 with the opening of the J. Gilbert Smith House historic farmhouse, built in 1905. In 2001, the Los Altos History Museum opened its modern building next door, which houses the Museum’s collections, permanent and changing exhibits, store and administrative offices. Its collections are owned by the City of Los Altos and are managed by the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum, an independent nonprofit organization, whose staff and volunteers are responsible for all programs and operations.

The existing contract with the City, signed in 2005, calls for a payment to the Museum of \$65,000 per year. The proposed increase to \$120,000 per year is an adjustment based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI), covering the intervening 18 years and projecting forward 4 years based on the average of the previous 4 years.



Gabriel Engeland, City Manager  
Los Altos City Hall  
1 North San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
[gengeland@losaltosca.gov](mailto:gengeland@losaltosca.gov)

March 17, 2023

Re: City budget requests from Los Altos History Museum

Dear Gabe,

With the new exhibit opening, it's an exciting time for the Museum and the whole community. We sincerely appreciate the support of the City of Los Altos, and look forward to continuing the collaboration.

Following up on our February meeting, with ongoing analysis from our Executive Director Elisabeth Ward and my fellow board members, this letter details the budget requests to the City from the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum. It does not include new arrangements regarding the heritage apricot orchard, which are proceeding separately.

The existing contract with the City calls for a payment to the Museum of \$65,000 per year. We propose increasing that amount to \$120,000 per year. While that increase might seem unexpectedly large, it's simply an adjustment based on the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI), covering the intervening 18 years and projecting forward 4 years based on the average of the previous 4 years. (During our meeting, you'd mentioned moving to a 4-year review cycle for expected recurring costs.) A spreadsheet with the CPI data and calculations is available here: <https://tinyurl.com/lahminflation>

Besides the annual payment, we have also been compiling ideas for arts programs that would be eligible for funding under the Public Arts Fund established by ordinance 2018-446. Focus areas would include visual arts, literary arts, and

performing arts. As a recent example of the Museum's approach, the opening celebration for the new permanent exhibit featured performances from cultures representing our diverse community, from Native Americans to India, from the Azores to Asia. The event was free to the public and attended by hundreds of enthusiastic residents. We anticipate that programs would take place both at the Museum and at other locations around the community, as part of our "museum without walls" initiative.

The budget for our arts-related programs would total approximately \$40,000 during the next fiscal year. Please advise about how to apply for this funding. In particular, rather than creating smaller applications for each program, we would suggest preparing a single comprehensive application. This would be more efficient for the Museum staff, and hopefully would streamline the process for the City staff and council.

Since the Museum first began, with a small group of residents looking after the J. Gilbert Smith house, the City's annual investment has seen incredible leverage. Total private donations are approaching \$10 million, substantial grants have been applied for and received from public and private sources, and hundreds of dedicated community members have volunteered countless hours. We trust that you, the City council, and the community would agree that such a strong track record of good stewardship warrants these budget additions.

Please contact me with any questions or issues. In particular, please advise about how to engage with the ongoing City budget process for best effectiveness and efficiency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Larry", written in a cursive style.

Larry Lang  
Board President  
Los Altos History Museum

# Preparing for the Future



los altos  
history  
museum

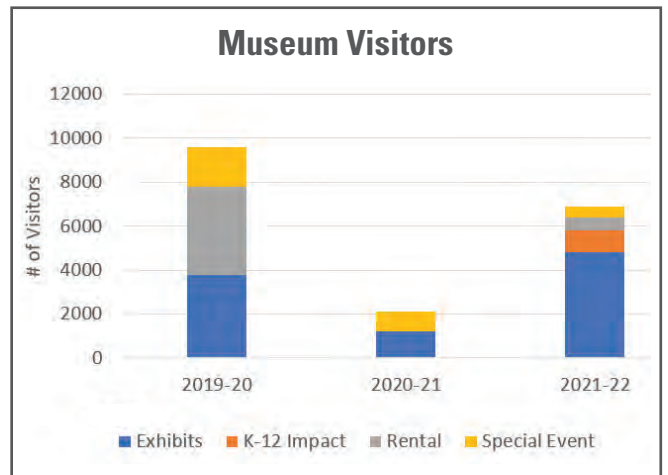
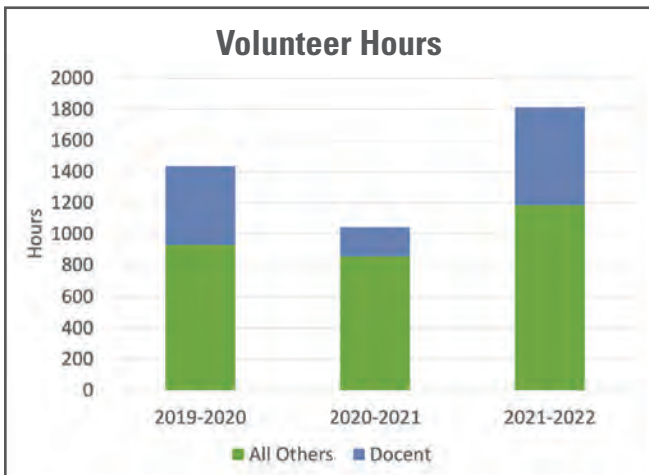
2021-2022  
ANNUAL REPORT

*"I hope we will never forget to ask about the past."*

Maud Daujean



The Museum offered three changing exhibits in the main gallery during last fiscal year—*Gold Fever!*, *Annie Knapp Fitz Paints*, and *Every Wrinkle Tells a Story*—before closing that gallery to make room for construction on the Permanent Exhibition.



Like a caterpillar spinning a cocoon to safely transform into a butterfly, organizations need to take opportunities to prepare for the future. Sometimes these moments come organically, as part of natural organizational change. Other times, external factors compel an organization to adapt to new circumstances and quickly adjust. For Los Altos History Museum in the 12 months spanning our last fiscal year (July 2021 to June 2022), both of those forces were simultaneously at play. With this Annual Report, we’re sharing with you how we’ve put in place structures that will help us emerge transformed in the year ahead.

In the following pages, you’ll hear about how we took the opportunities afforded by the reduced traffic of COVID closures to revamp some of our programs, and how we intend to keep that momentum going for even greater impact in 2023. You’ll also hear about strategic personnel decisions we have made to help poise the museum for future growth, both on the staff and Board. And you’ll hear about new programs we unveiled in 2022. But the most exciting reveal is yet to come: in this report, we are delighted to share news of the wonderful progress being made on our new Permanent Exhibition, which will open in 2023 and truly redefine the Museum.

These processes did not all begin in June of 2021, and they were not all complete by July of 2022. But last fiscal year was a particularly dynamic year internally for Los Altos History Museum, as we simultaneously reopened thanks to lifted COVID restrictions, AND closed portions of our operations due to construction of the Permanent Exhibition. This has in effect meant that the “hibernation” period for the Museum, which began with the parking lot closures associated with the Community Center, and lasted through all of COVID, continues. But in just a few short months, all members, donors, and residents of Los Altos and beyond will be welcomed into a truly dazzling and transformed museum.

**Thank you so much for your steadfast support and your belief in our potential.**

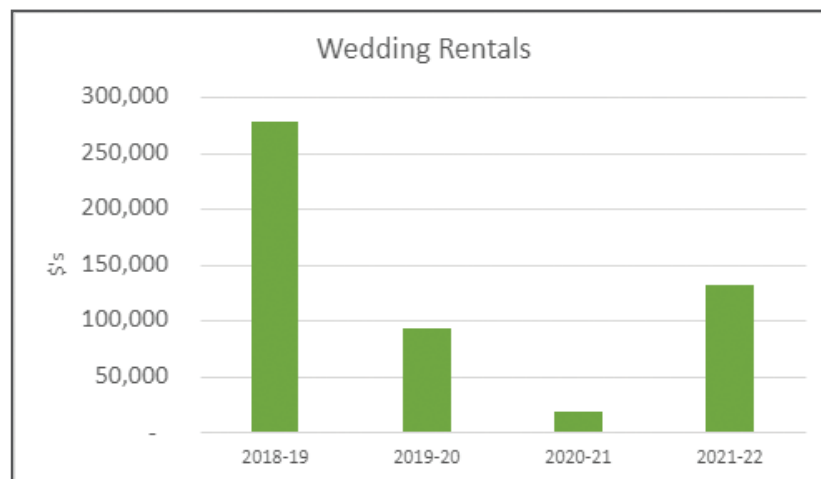


The most dramatic impact of the COVID-19 closures on LAHM was to our external rentals program. It was not until July of 2021 that we were able to once again offer indoor dancing to wedding guests, and many of the weddings that had been scheduled for 2020 were finally able to be held in late Summer and early Fall of 2021. It was our pleasure to welcome these happy couples to the Museum. By allowing them to reschedule without any additional fees, the Museum did see a loss of revenue; those Saturdays would have normally been sold to new clients. To compensate for that, the Museum has been pursuing programs to help shuttered venues, and we are also grateful that we had the reserves to weather this.

During the shutdown period, the Museum implemented several strategic decisions about our external rentals program that will continue to provide dividends into the future. These included repairs to our outdoor surfaces and lighting, as well as more signage.

The biggest change was that we brought the person responsible for these events “in house.” Due to changes in California law, and our own desire to have more Board oversight into the frequency and types of rentals, this position went from being an external contractor to an internal staff member. We were pleased to welcome to the staff in June of 2021 Maria Crowder, who then trained her replacement, Jacqui Marchesinni, in early 2022.

Led by an internal staff member, the external rental program can become better aligned with our mission. We introduced a new pricing structure in 2022, which offers new types of rentals more focused on the needs of local corporations, organizations, and families. Our hope is for ongoing relationships and recurring rentals that strengthen the Museum’s sense of community. We are also grateful for a strong and cooperative relationship with the new Community Center; we’ve already had some couples have their wedding ceremony at the Museum and their reception at the Community Center, and we expect more of that in the future.





In April and May of every year since 2005, Los Altos History Museum has welcomed area 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. That was not possible in Spring of 2020 or Spring of 2021. But we used the time off to make some changes to the program, which we were excited to reveal in April and May of 2022, when the kids were finally back! The Museum is grateful to the many members of our Education Committee who returned to teach the program and helped revamp the offerings.

The Museum hired a Museum Educator in 2021 to help with this transformation, Georgianna Shea. With her background in theatre, she suggested our Education Docents dress in costume and play the parts of our historical figures, like J. Gilbert Smith and Annie Knapp Fitz. This change was welcomed by all and helped make the 2022 school tours doubly special!

The Museum Educator position includes not only supporting the youth educational programs, but also all of the adult educational programs, such as lectures and classes. The topics of public programs at the Museum have and will continue to be tied to our Changing Exhibition program, so the Museum Educator will also be working with our Exhibits Committee in deciding on exhibit topics and associated programs. By emphasizing the educational nature of our exhibits and programs, this new position will help guide the Museum and solidify our role in the community. The impact of this change will cause positive ripple effects into the future!



Georgianna Shea with Anya McClatchie and Ghania Medhi, who helped lead the teen docent program in 2022. Over a dozen teens returned to this successful program last year.



Lindsay Carpenter and Carole Katz, playing the roles of J. Gilbert Smith and Margaret Smith for the third-grade tours.



Creating any exhibit always represents many hours of research and planning. Imagine then how much more time, energy, resources, research, and meetings have gone into our new Permanent Exhibition! Meant to last years, not months, this exhibition has taken a team of 7 curators, 3 script writers, 4 special-topic research groups, 9 contractual firms (each with their own team of employees), an oversight committee, and over 100 donors to bring to fruition. Everyone involved in this exhibition has been focused on creating a novel, exciting, informative, engaging, and welcoming experience.

The Museum closed our original Permanent Exhibition, called *Crown of the Peninsula*, in March of 2022. Some of our visitors were disappointed to discover that the model railroad was not available, but happy to hear it will be returning in 2023 with new features.

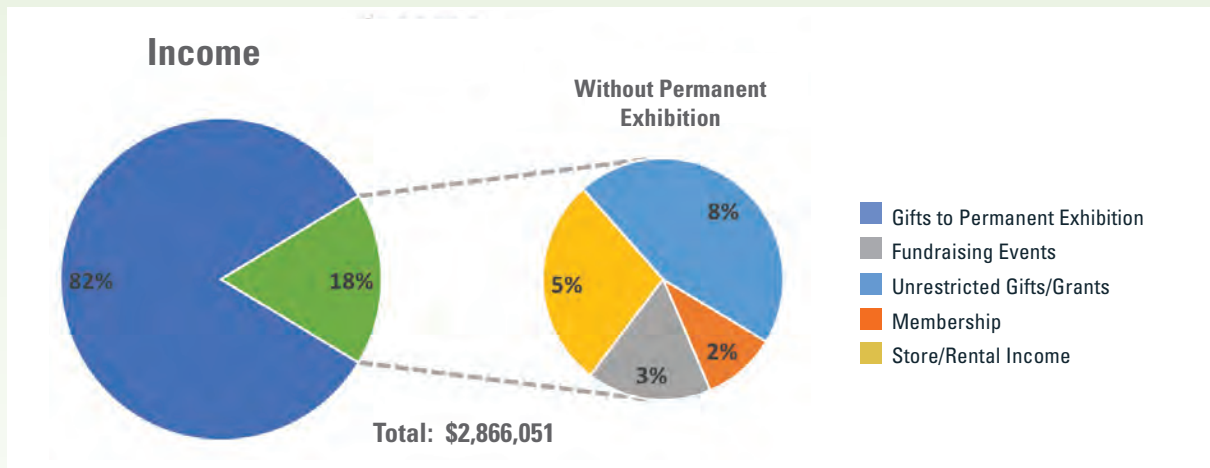
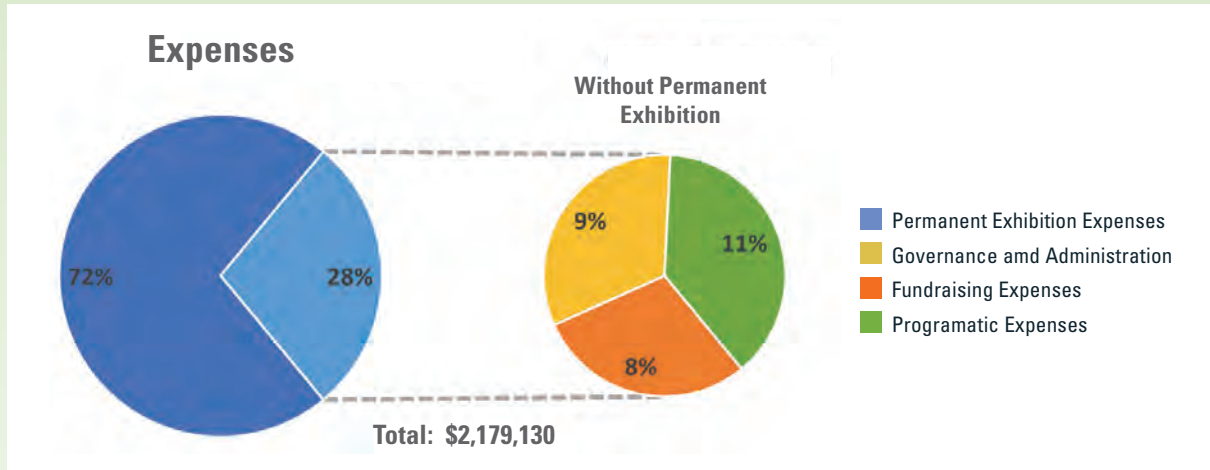
Since then, as contractors worked—ripping up the flooring, checking on the wiring, measuring the walls—the top floor of the museum has been covered in plastic sheeting. It has indeed been cocooned away from the public. But the new Permanent Exhibition, titled *Making Connections: Stories from the Land*, will emerge to absolutely delight the public in early 2023. We cannot wait to share it with everyone!

Behind the scenes, staff, volunteers, and contractors have been taking a deep dive into the Museum’s collection and archives. We’ve digitized many records, and added vast amounts of detail and information to our database. This back-end work will position us for another wonderful reveal: the Museum is planning to present our collection database to the public online in 2023.



To accommodate the construction schedule of the new Permanent Exhibition, all Museum operations moved to the J. Gilbert Smith House, including the Store. We created four changing exhibits in the Smith House Gallery!

Our financial status remained on positive footing, thanks to a strong annual appeal in the Winter of 2021.



The Museum debuted our new annual fundraiser, Dancing through the Decades, in April of 2022, and raised 50% more than at our previous fundraisers. Every spring, we will pick a new decade and create a fun, themed fundraising auction event!



Strategic choices require strong leadership and careful planning. In addition to adding positions to the staff, the Board also spent much of 2021/2022 working on their own “staffing.” During a Board retreat in Fall of 2021, Directors recognized how important it is to have a mix of talents on the Board as they lead the Museum. This also includes a mix of “insiders” (long-term volunteers involved with the Museum) and “outsiders” (members of the community with particular talents new to the Museum).

In late 2021 and early 2022, Gary Hedden and the Nominating Committee created a rubric of all the skills needed to successfully manage a museum, from financial oversight to marketing savvy, fundraising acumen to knowledge of local history, involvement with local organizations to human resource policies. It is a big job, which is why it takes 14 dedicated and talented people working together to make good decisions. Gary appointed several new Board members to fill vacancies that had come up during COVID. Margo Horn of the Historical Commission, Jan Thomas from the docent committee, Kuljeet Kalkat from the Finance Commission, and Catherine Greenberg of the marketing committee, all joined the Board during the last fiscal year.

The rubric tool and the strategic appointment of so many great new Board members were designed to assist the Museum in meeting the challenges of the future. We recognize that in many ways, 2023 will not just be a reopening of the Permanent Exhibition, but also the re-introduction of the Museum to a whole new group of people. Many new people have moved into Los Altos since the Museum opened, and this big new project offers us a renewed opportunity to bring in new audiences.



Catherine Greenberg and Jan Thomas



Kuljeet Kalkat and Margo Horn



Assn. of the Los Altos Historical Museum  
51 So. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022  
[www.losaltoshistory.org](http://www.losaltoshistory.org)

#### **Board of Directors 2021-2022**

Gary Hedden, President  
Larry Lang, 1st VP  
Nicole Andrews, 2nd VP  
Victoria Holman, Secretary  
Wayne Hooper, Treasurer  
Gerri Acers  
John Beman  
Kelly Davis  
Tyler Furuichi  
Margo Horn  
Kuljeet Kalkat  
Janet Klinke  
Alex Wang

#### **Board of Directors 2022-2023**

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Nicole Andrews, 2nd VP  
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Wayne Hooper, Treasurer  
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Gerri Acers  
John Beman  
Tyler Furuichi  
Catherine Greenberg  
Margo Horn  
Kuljeet Kalkat  
Janet Klinke  
Jan Thomas  
Alex Wang

#### **Staff**

Dr. Elisabeth Ward, Executive Director  
Georgianna Shea, Museum Educator  
Diane Holcomb, Director of Communications  
Jacqui Marchessini, Events Manager  
Farshad Fallah, Bookkeeper and Office Administrator  
Faustino Carrillo, Gardener

#### **Committee Chairs**

Margie Alving, Collections  
Janet Klinke, Docents  
Anne Roberts, Education  
Pat Hedden, Exhibits  
Gary Hedden, Facilities and Newsletter  
Ed Taft, Finance and IT  
Kelly Davis, Fundraising  
Larry Lang, Governance  
Lori Tuttle, Hospitality  
Carole Flores, Membership  
Suruchi Mohan, Oral Histories

Jane Packard, Orchard Commons  
Kristen Fuller, Public Relations  
Sharon Barkoff, Smith House  
Vicki Holman, Store  
Cliff Olson, Train Committee  
Brigitte Ahlfeldt and Peggy Davis, Volunteer Development



**Los Altos History Museum was honored by the County of Santa Clara for our 2019-2021 restoration of the Spagnoli Tank House on May 21, 2022.**