



Outlook

Public Comment HC 1/27/25 meeting re: 22 trees alteration request

From Alice Mansell <alice@mansell.com>**Date** Mon 1/27/2025 1:21 PM**To** Public Comment - HC <HCpubliccomment@losaltosca.gov>

Los Altos Historical Commission meeting 1/27/25
Public Comment for Agenda item #2

Los Altos City Hall is requesting an Historic Alteration Permit for the City's historic orchard which sounds on its face to be a simple dead tree removal and replace request but it is not simple. Before the City contracted with the Los Altos History Museum (LAHM) in Summer 2023 to maintain and rehabilitate the orchard there was no California State required Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) to define clearly through the Historic Commission's public due process what should be the standards of care for, how to coordinate the orchard with all its historical context lands and the surviving orchardist house, nor define the precise boundaries of the historic orchard. There is to date no publically available LAHM Maintenance Plan (due January 2024) or an Annual Report (due by August 2024) for the public to know precisely why trees are dying under the 1.5+ years of LAHC's care. Until such plans and reports are available for public review at HC, I urge the HC to deny this request to replace and remove any orchard trees. The recent die-off rate of trees is extraordinarily below the death rates of fruit trees in other local orchards indicating a lack of due care. The arborist/orchardist company hired by LAHM specializes in home garden orchards, many merely ornamental gardens, whose landowners can afford to pay for large replacement trees if any die from any lack of care.

Neither a complete HRE by qualified professionals as warranted in support of alterations to this landmark resource nor a Cumulative EIR has been done to date. Both an HRE and EIR are necessary to understand any of the initial replantings and other work on the orchard including since Fall 2023 the already replaced trees, abandonment of tree sites, and the partial irrigation installed in Fall 2023, as well as new gougings into the boundaries of the heritage orchard with unchecked City's developments from the carve-out for the proposed LALE library courtyard and new LAYC/staff offices' HVAC fenced yard and newly fenced patios as well as the staff's Summer 2024 proposed new paved parking spaces on orchard lands for the Dog Park's library parking mitigation.

An HRE was supposed to be done as required by law last year at least for the orchard land the City in November 2023 approved LALE to use for a new library courtyard, as well as the apparent permanent disappearances beginning in 2024 of 40%+ of trees and tree sites removed for new underground utilities and the abandonment in September 2024 of the "North East Grove" of all apricot trees expressly noted on the current State Primary Document for the entire orchard historic resource. Please note, City staffers' have proposed on at least two existing and staff-discretionary permitted construction plans (some work already due for completion by Spring 2025) multiple new paved parking spaces and other new pavement on orchard lands for the LAYC conversion to private staff offices (\$4.5M+) and EOC (\$800k+) projects while the Dog Park (\$1M) final plans with its lost-library parking mitigation designs are not yet public.

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