

TREANORHL

LOS ALTOS LIBRARY COURTYARD PROJECT,
LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA
STANDARDS COMPLIANCE REVIEW

FINAL

JANUARY 20, 2025



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1. INTRODUCTION

David J. Powers & Associates has requested TreanorHL evaluate the proposed Los Altos Library Courtyard Project. This report includes an evaluation of the proposed project for compliance to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (the Standards)*, to city code CDHR 1 and 12 as described in the Los Altos Community Design & Historic Resources Element, and to sections 12.44.010F and 12.44040 in Chapter 12.44 Historic Preservation of Los Altos' Code of Ordinances relative to the J. Gilbert Smith House and the Civic Center Orchard (APN 170-42-029 and 170-43-001), both of which are identified historic resources. The Los Altos Public Library is not an identified historic resource and was not included in the scope of this report. TreanorHL updated the DPR 523 forms for the Civic Center Orchard in December 2024 and determined it still possesses integrity and significance to remain a resource.

2. METHODOLOGY

TreanorHL conducted a site visit to the Civic Center Orchard and J. Gilbert Smith House on June 20th, 2024, to evaluate and photograph the existing conditions, historic features, and architectural significance of the subject site and the surrounding area. Staff also reviewed the June 2000 DPR and July 2011 DPR of the Civic Center Orchard at the direction of the City of Los Altos. Additionally, staff reviewed the proposed project drawings by SSA Landscape Architects.

To identify the approximate number of potential planting sites within the Civic Center Orchard, the sketch of the landmark designation boundaries (Resolution No. 91-31) and proposed project drawings were overlaid on historic photographs spanning the years of 1948 to 2022. The typical spacing between the trees and rows of trees was determined by analyzing historic aerials and researching historical orchard planting spacing.¹

3. PROPOSED PROJECT

The project is the construction of an approximately 8,265 square foot (0.2 acre) outdoor courtyard directly north of the existing Los Altos Library that is broken up into two parts with one part spanning the length of northern side of the library and the second part north of the existing northern library entrance/exit. The purpose of the courtyard is to host and support existing events at the Los Altos Library in conjunction with allowing for expanded programming opportunities. The courtyard would provide a flexible area to accommodate a variety of events year-round. The implementation of the project would remove the existing trellis, patio, and pedestrian pathway and construct an outdoor seating area, courtyard consisting of new hardscape and pedestrian pathways, a multi-purpose outdoor seating area with an audio-visual system, lighting, and landscaping.

¹ Dolan, Susan. *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places*. National Park Service, 2009.



January 20, 2025

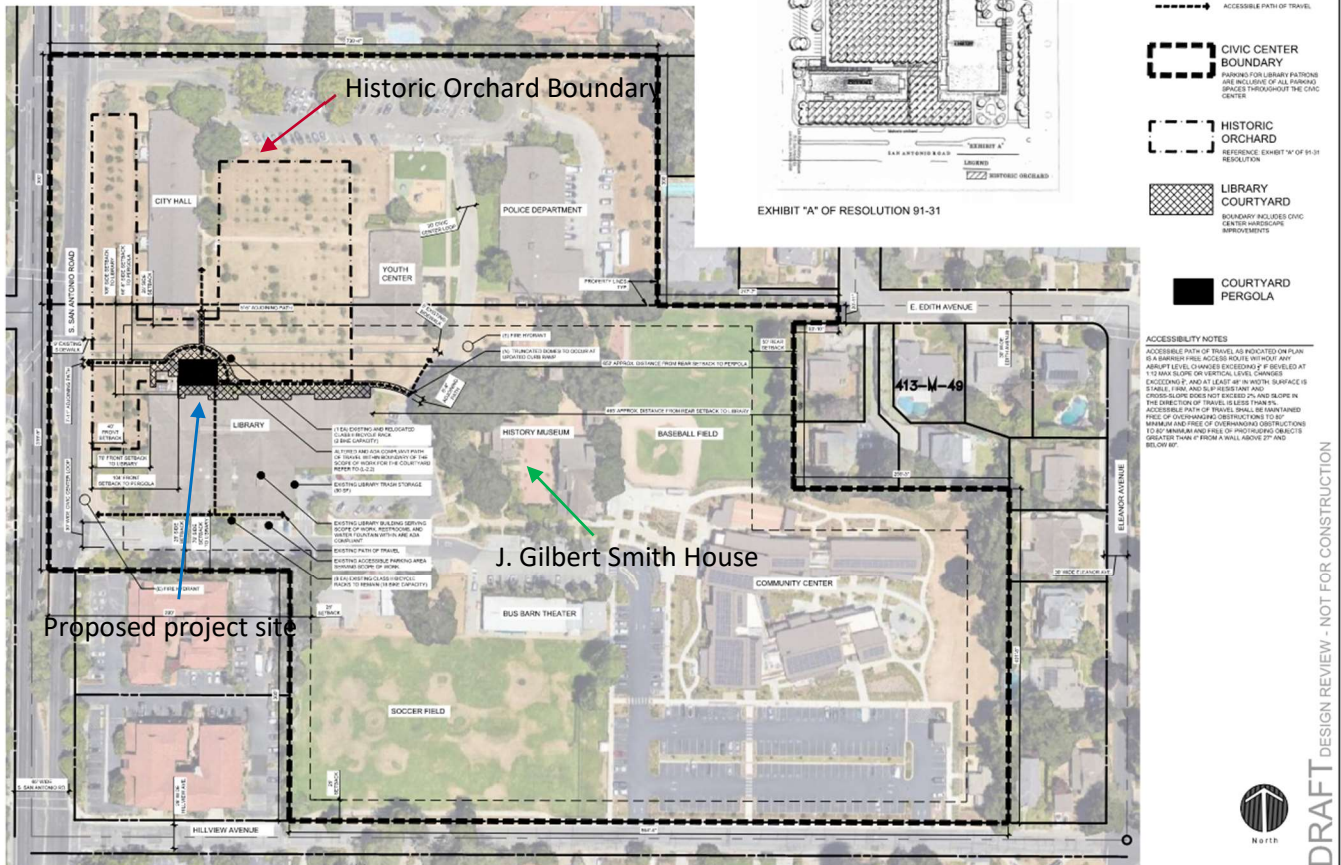


Figure 1. Site plan of the proposed project within Civic Center. The proposed project site identified with a blue arrow, the boundaries of the Civic Center Orchard is identified with a red arrow, and the J. Gilbert Smith House is identified with a green arrow. "Exhibit A" in the upper right corner is taken from Los Altos Resolution 91-31, an illustration describing the Landmark designation boundaries of the Civic Center Orchard in 1991. (SSA Landscape Architects).

4. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION

The approximately 0.2-acre project site is located at the Los Altos Civic Center. The Civic Center complex is located on a block bound by Angela Drive to the north, Cielito Drive and Eleanor Avenue to the east, Hillview Avenue to the south, and San Antonio Road to the west. The civic center complex consists of City Hall, Los Altos Police Department, Los Altos Community Center, Los Altos Library, J. Gilbert Smith House, Los Altos History Museum, Hillview Baseball Field, Hillview Park, Bus Barn Theater, historic Civic Center Orchard, a playground, and parking and landscaping areas. The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial buildings.



Figure 2. The Civic Center Orchard outlined in dashed red and the J. Gilbert Smith House identified with a red arrow (Google Earth, imagery date April 2022).

Civic Center Orchard (Portion of APN 170-42-029 and 170-43-001)

The Civic Center Orchard surrounds City Hall and is largely broken up into two main areas with a strip of land east of San Antonio Road and City Hall and continues east of City Hall, occupying land south of the surface parking lot and north of the Los Altos Library. The orchard connects north of the Los Altos Library and south of City Hall. Although the boundaries of the orchard have remained the same since its modification in 1991, many trees within the orchard have been replaced over time since some have died or were removed due to disease. In early 2024, the orchard was planted with many new apricot saplings and irrigation was added.² The number of trees planted within the boundaries of the resource have varied over time and there is not a defined number of trees or planting sites established with the original designation in 1981 or modification in 1991. The orchard is currently arranged on rectangular areas of land with orthogonal rows and trees spaced approximately 12 feet apart from each other.

² 2024 orchard maintenance background information provided by City staff.



Figure 3. View of the Civic Center Orchard along San Antonio Road looking south.



Figures 4 and 5. Views of the orchard west of the Los Altos City Hall looking east.



Figures 6 and 7. Sign along San Antonio Road (left) and a sign on an orchard tree (right).

J. Gilbert Smith House (APN 170-42-029)

The J. Gilbert Smith House is located within the Los Altos Civic Center. Constructed between 1901 and 1905, this two-story wood-frame shingled farmhouse, is rectangular in plan.³ Clad in wood shingles, the building is capped with a steeply pitched wood shingle-clad gable roof with a moderate overhang and exposed rafters. Dormers are found on the east and west elevation. An open wrap-around porch with a hipped roof runs on the north elevation, and partially on the east and west elevations. A mix of window types are featured on the house, all of which have a wide wood trim. The main façade faces west. The entrance is centered on the façade as is composed of a wood paneled door behind a wood screen door. The door is flanked by a wood-sash casement window and a one-over-one. A brick chimney punctuates the dormer's shed roof. The dormer holds two pairs of one-over-one windows and a single one-over-one window.

The north elevation features three pairs of one-over-one windows all of which have lamb's tongue lugs. Two pairs are on the ground floor and one pair is on the upper floor. The east elevation has two stairs on the north and south ends. The north wood stair, with square wood railings, opens to the wrap around porch. A wood glazed door behind a wood screen faces east, while a five-cross panel door with a wood screen door faces south. The south-facing door is used to access a small one-story volume on this elevation. The stair on the south end has a simple wood railing and leads to a shingle-clad landing. The glazed wood door is flanked by wood posts and divided sidelights and capped by a transom. A pair of wood-sash double-hung windows and a single double-hung window sit on the main volume of the house. The shed-roof dormer holds a pair of smaller double-hung windows.

The south elevation presents a gable end composed of a shallow one-story volume with stairs leading to the second floor, and several single double-hung windows on both floors. The stairs at the east end lead to a glazed wood door on the second floor. On the ground floor a solid wood door faces west and provides access to the one-story volume. A low sliding window provides access to the basement on the west end.



Figure 8. The west façade.

³ P. Leach. *J. Gilbert Smith Home Primary Record*. August 14, 2007.



Figure 9. North elevation.



Figure 10. East elevation.



Figure 11. South elevation.

5. SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY

Civic Center Orchard

The Civic Center Orchard, a portion of the Blenheim apricot orchard planted by the J. Gilbert Smith family in 1901, is one of the last remaining orchards in Los Altos and holds significance for being planted by early Los Altos resident, J. Gilbert Smith. The orchard is also a designated City of Los Altos Historical Landmark and is assigned the California Register Status Code 5S1: "Individual property that is listed or designated locally." In 1981, the orchard was designated a City Landmark per Resolution No. 81-23, and in 1991, the orchard's landmark boundaries were modified, per Resolution No. 91-31. Since the landmark designation resolution in 1991, the boundaries of the orchard appear to have remained consistent. At the time of the site visit in June 2024, the apricot orchard was extant and still maintained by the City of Los Altos.

Historic Context and Chronology of the Civic Center Orchard

When J. Gilbert Smith arrived in Los Altos on August 1, 1901, he purchased five acres of land near the area by San Antonio Road (formerly Giffin Road), Edith Avenue, and railroad tracks that are no longer extant. The land was undeveloped, with poppies, lupine, and trees. By 1902, Smith had planted apricots trees on the five acres and began construction on his home, the Smith House.⁴ Smith's orchard was developed within a period established by the National Park Service as the United States' modern orchard fruit growing era (1881-1945). Orchards established between the years of 1881 and 1945 were characterized by a limited variety of fruit types grown within a farm, because not every variety of fruit was commercially viable. Prior to this period, hundreds of fruit varieties were found on farms and orchards throughout the United States. Research did not confirm what all the types of apricot J. Gilbert Smith grew throughout his career as an orchardist, however the orchard that has been maintained by the City consists of only Blenheim apricot trees and saplings.⁵

⁴ Smith, J. Gilbert. "Reminiscences of J. Gilbert Smith. Notes made in 1957." in *A Collection of Historical Materials, Los Altos California*. City of Los Altos, 1957.

⁵ City of Los Altos, Maintenance Division. *Apricot Orchard Management & Guidelines*. Updated August 2016; Google Earth; Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places*, (National Park Service, 2009), 63-64.

According to *Fruitful Legacy*, a text issued by the National Park Service that provides information on the history of orchards in the United States, pruning orchard trees to have shorter trunks was a technique that began in the early 20th century and became widespread after World War II. A pruned tree trunk, approximately 18 to 36 inches in height, led to a shorter tree overall, which allowed for a more manageable canopy. The practice also encouraged early fruit bearing because the pruning also had the effect of altering the hormones of the tree. A photograph (Figure 12) taken in the early 20th century shows J. Gilbert Smith among his orchard trees, which appear to have short trunks and broad canopies. Fruit trees of this period not only featured a shorter trunk but would have been pruned to have one of a variety of canopy forms. In the historic photograph (Figure 12), Smith's fruit trees had an "open bowl vase" styled canopy, which did not have a central leader branch that extended from the center of the tree but rather had three to five main shoots that radiated from the head of the trunk. This "open bowl vase" style created an opened center that allowed sunlight to reach deep into the canopy. This style benefited the grower since they had more control of the tree height. The central leader style was more common since it required less skill and labor since the "open bowl vase" style needed more interventions, such as pruning.⁶



Figure 12. Gilbert Smith in his apricot orchard, early 20th century (*Los Altos Remembered*).

The typical spacing of trees in orchards also changed in the early 20th century. Earlier orchards were tightly spaced, however with the rise of tractors, wider rows were needed for the angle of turning of the machine. The rectangle shape of the orchard was adopted when a square orchard was previously more popular. Trees planted 15 feet of each other and 20 feet between rows became more common, opposed to a tighter square of the 19th century.⁷ Apricot orchards in the United States grown between 1880 and 1945 commonly held 100 trees per acre on a 20- by 20- foot grid. Contemporary apricot orchards are arranged on a 10- by 20-foot grid with 200 trees per acre.⁸ As described below in the chronology section of this report, the orchard has changed over time. The Civic Center Orchard is currently arranged on rectangular areas of land with orthogonal rows with trees spaced approximately 12- by 12- foot grid.

⁶ Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places*, (National Park Service, 2009), 8, 88-91.

⁷ Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places*, (National Park Service, 2009), 90-91.

⁸ Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places*, (National Park Service, 2009), 145.

A chronology of the orchard between 1948 and 2022 is shown below through aerial photographs. The first aerial photograph below is from 1948 and shows what the area looked like before the Smiths sold to the City of Los Altos.

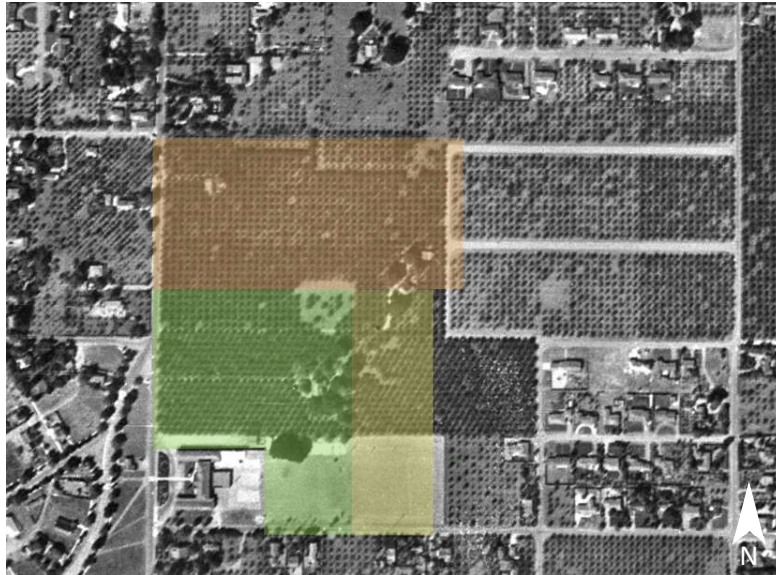


Figure 13. 1948 aerial photograph of Los Altos and the approximate area of the Smith orchard blocked out in green, yellow, and orange (Google Earth Historic Imagery).

The Smith orchard land was sold to the City of Los Altos in 1954, however the J. Gilbert Smith House and its surrounding grounds were not part of the sale. A provision in their will stated that the house and grounds were donated to the City upon the deaths of J. Gilbert and Margaret. Shown below is an aerial photograph of the general area of the Smith orchard land in 1956.



Figure 14. 1956 aerial photograph of the general area of the orchard, Smith House is identified with a red arrow.

In 1981, the City of Los Altos designated the orchard, the Smith House, and the surrounding garden as a local historical landmark, per Resolution No. 81-23, which included the boundaries of three parcels (See Figure 16 for parcels identified on aerial). The resolution also included a clause: "All other structures on the land, as well as a presently undefined portion of the orchard necessary to accommodate the future Council Chambers, are specifically excluded." Since the excluded land is not specified or detailed in the resolution, the boundaries of the initial landmark designation are unclear. Shown below is a 1981 aerial photograph of the property.

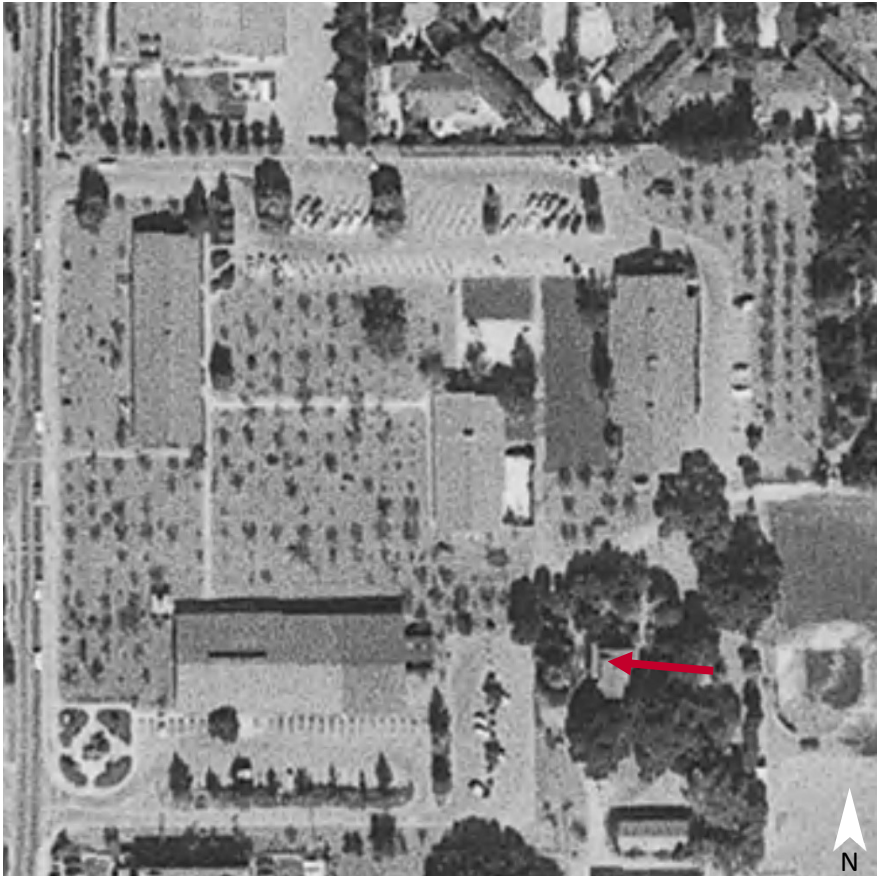


Figure 15. 1980 aerial photograph of the property a year prior to designation as a City Landmark. No specific orchard boundaries were included in the resolution, rather the language simply called out the orchard on the land described in the legal property descriptions provided, which included all three parcels previously owned by the Smiths.

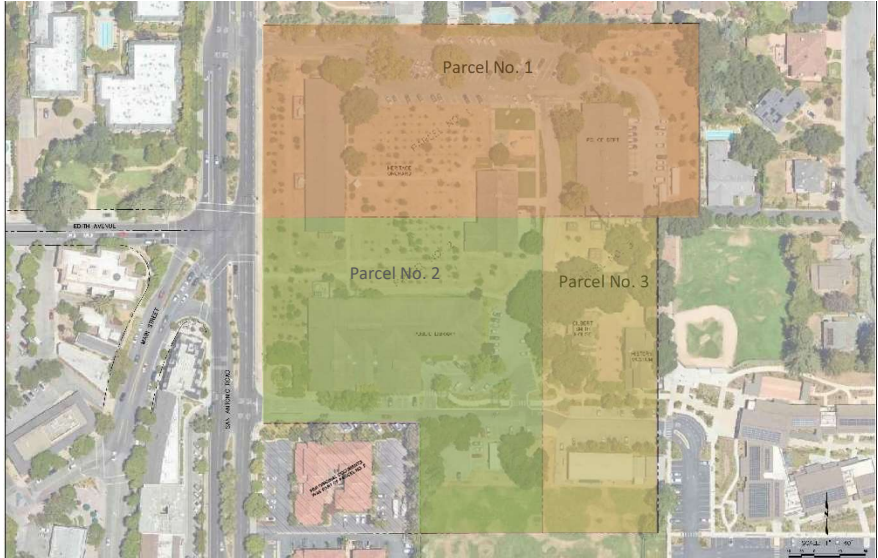


Figure 16. 2022 aerial photograph with the three parcels, as described in the legal description of Resolution No. 81-23 indicated in a graphic overlay.

The boundaries of the Civic Center Orchard were modified in 1991, as described in Resolution No. 91-31. Included in Resolution No. 91-31 is a sketch of the boundaries of the historic orchard. Shown below is the sketch from the resolution and a 1991 aerial photograph with an overlay of the boundaries described in the sketch.

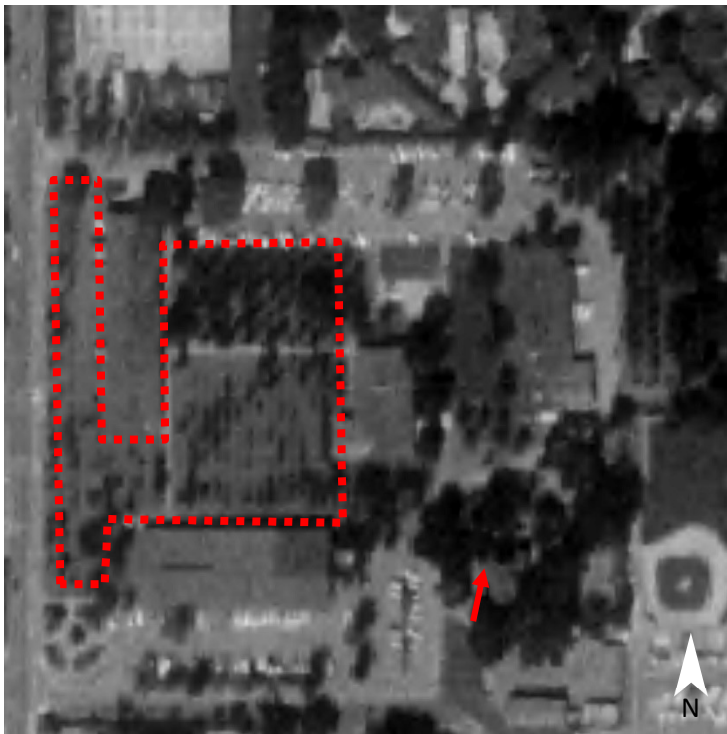
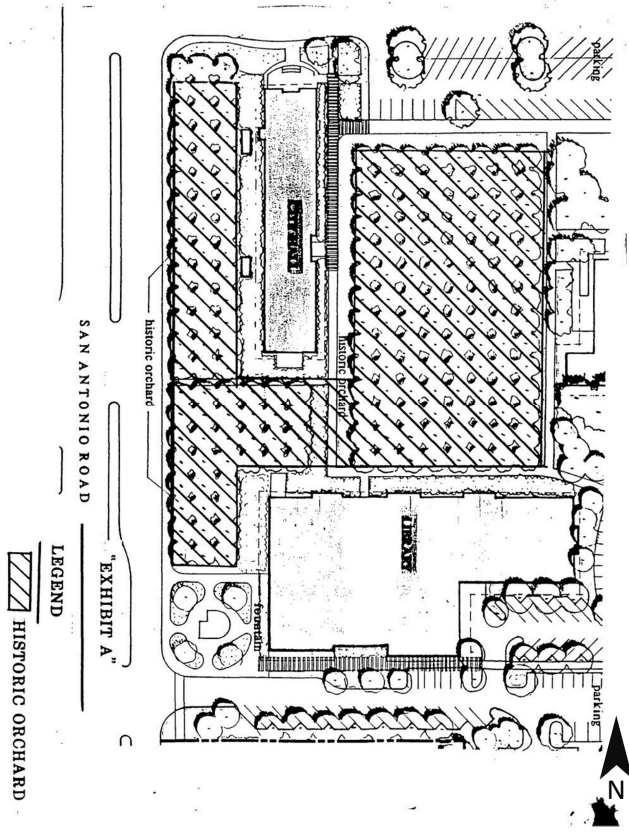


Figure 17. 1991 aerial photograph of the orchard with the boundaries as presented in Resolution No. 91-31, red arrow identifies Smith House for reference.

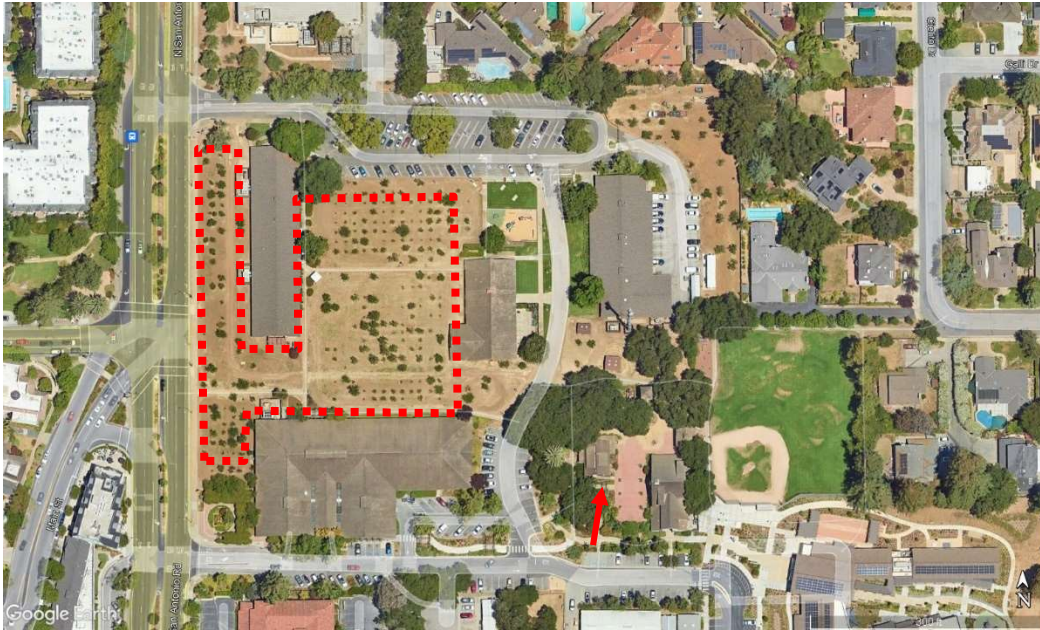


Figure 18. Aerial photograph of the Civic Center, Smith House identified with a red arrow for reference (Google Earth, April 2022).

J. Gilbert Smith House

The J. Gilbert Smith House holds significance for its association with early Los Altos resident, J. Gilbert Smith. Per City of Los Altos Historical Landmarks Resolution 81-23, passed in 1981, the house was designated a local landmark. The historical designation included the historic house, the surrounding garden, and the apricot orchard, also known as the Civic Center Orchard in Los Altos. In August 1987, the house was designated as a California Point of Historical Interest.⁹

6. PROPOSED PROJECT

The Los Altos Courtyard Project proposes the construction of a new courtyard to the north of the Los Altos Public Library, which will encroach into a portion of the orchard. Using the proposed drawings and the sketch of the boundaries from Resolution No. 91-31 on a 2022 aerial photograph of the site, it was determined the proposed project will not require the removal of any existing trees, since no trees currently stand in the area. However, through the process of graphical overlays and onsite investigation, it appears that approximately seven potential planting sites will be obstructed. Shown below is the 2022 aerial photograph of the area with the 1991 boundaries of the landmark in blue, tree sites as described in Resolution 91-31 sketched in green, and the proposed project courtyard in red.

⁹ "J. Gilbert Smith house/Los Altos History House Museum." *California State Parks, Office of Historic Preservation*. Accessed January 8, 2025, <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/Detail/P692>.

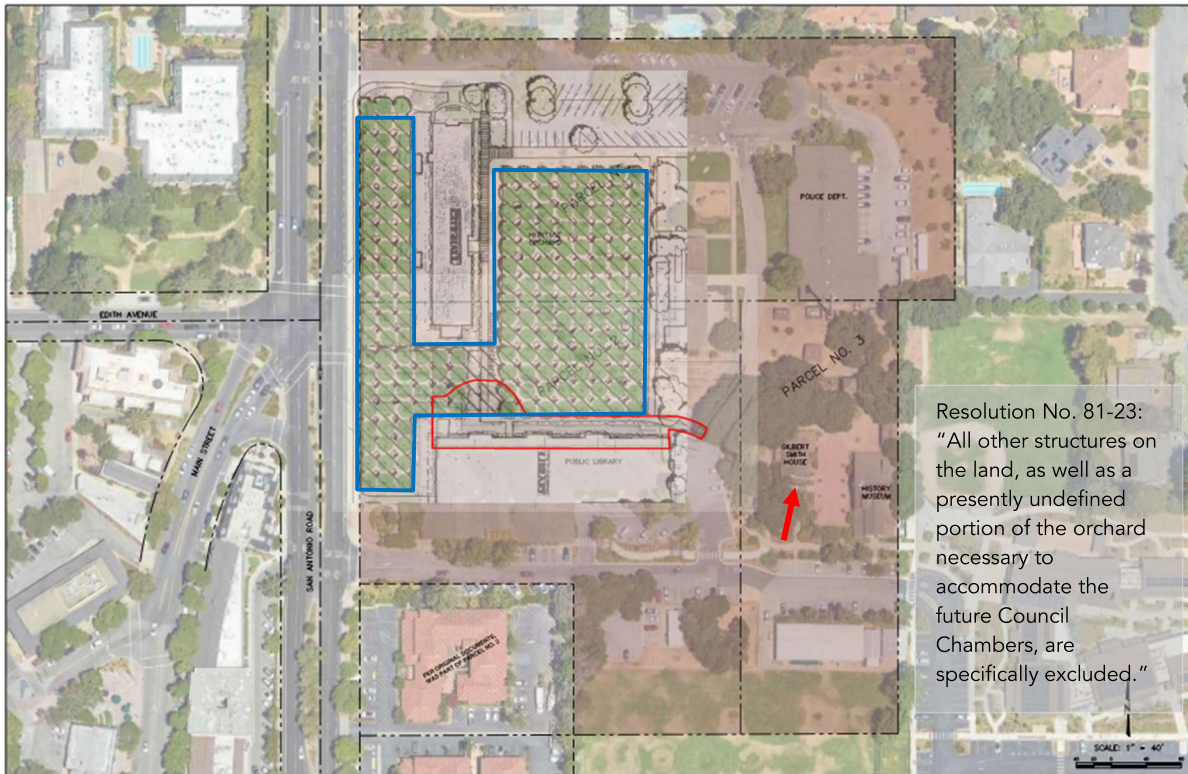


Figure 19. 2022 Aerial photograph of the orchard with the outline of the 1991 boundaries in blue and the proposed courtyard shown outlined in red. The red shaded parcels indicate the parcels in the original designation 81-23. Tree sites within the blue line are marked with green circles. Note the clause from Resolution No. 81-23. The Smith is identified with a red arrow for reference.

7. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The Los Altos General Plan, published in November 2002, provides guidance for new construction and development. The document also provides goals and policies that aim to preserve the City's character and history.

Los Altos Community Design & Historic Resource (CDHR) Elements, Los Altos General Plan 2002-2020.¹⁰

CDHR 1: Community Identity and Character

Enhance the City's unique identity and character by:

- 1) Maintaining the low density, low profile residential character of the community through zoning regulations and design guidelines;
- 2) Adopting and updating street design standards;
- 3) Preserving trees, especially those designated as heritage and landmark trees;
- 4) Implementing the street tree planting and management program with City approval for tree planting in street right-of-ways.
- 5) Encouraging the installation of planting medians along major arterial roadways as appropriate;

¹⁰ City of Los Altos. *Los Altos General Plan 2002-2020, Community Design & Historic Resources Element*. November 2002.

- 6) Continuing to require the undergrounding of utilities;
- 7) Promoting site planning and project design with an emphasis on small town scale and Pedestrian friendly development;
- 8) Ensuring compatibility between residential and non-residential development through zoning regulations and design review;
- 9) Continuing to require a landscape strip along the back of properties abutting Foothill Expressway between Edith Avenue and San Antonio Road;
- 10) Developing distinguishing gateways to the City representative of its unique characteristics;
- 11) Encouraging community events throughout the City; and
- 12) Supporting public art through the Parks, Art, and Recreation Commission.

CDHR 12: Preserve Significant Historic Resources

Assess development proposals for potential impacts to significant historic resources pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines.

The following subsection is taken from the Los Altos Municipal Code Chapter 12.44 which covers Historic Preservation.

Chapter 12.44 of the Los Altos Municipal Code of Ordinances¹¹

12.44.010 - Purpose.

It is hereby declared as a matter of public policy that the recognition, preservation, enhancement and use of historic resources within the City of Los Altos is required in the interest of health, economic prosperity, cultural enrichment and general welfare of the people. The purpose of this chapter is to:

- A. Safeguard the heritage of the city by providing for the protection of irreplaceable historic resources representing significant elements of its history;
- B. Enhance the visual character of the city by encouraging the compatibility of architectural styles which reflect established architectural traditions;
- C. Encourage public knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the city's past, and foster civic and neighborhood pride and sense of identity based upon the recognition and use of the city's historic resources;
- D. Stabilize and improve property values within the city and increase the economic and financial benefits to the city and its inhabitants derived from the preservation, rehabilitation, and use of historic resources;
- E. Integrate the conservation of historic resources into the public and private development process and identify as early as possible and resolve conflicts between the preservation of such resources and alternative land uses; and
- F. Fulfill the city's responsibilities for Federal Section 106 reviews and for the California Environmental Quality Act. (Ord. No. 2011-363, § 1, 3-8-2011)

¹¹ City of Los Altos. *Los Altos Municipal Code*. July 2, 2024 version, https://library.municode.com/ca/los_altos/codes/code_of_ordinances?nodeId=TIT12BUCO.

12.44.040 - Criteria for designation.

A structure, property or object may be eligible for designation as a historic resource or historic landmark, if it/they satisfy each of the three criteria listed below:

- A. Age. A structure or property should be more than fifty (50) years in age. (Exceptions can be made to this rule if the building(s) or site(s) is/are truly remarkable for some reason - such as being associated with an outstanding architect, personage, usage or event).
- B. Determination of Integrity. A structure or property should retain sufficient historic integrity in most of the following areas:
 - 1. Design: The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property.
 - 2. Setting: The physical environment of a historic property.
 - 3. Materials: The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
 - 4. Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory.
 - 5. Feeling: A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- C. Historic Significance. A structure or property should be clearly associated with one or more of the following areas of significance:
 - 1. Event: Associated with a single significant event or a pattern of events that have made a significant contribution to broad patterns of local or regional history, or cultural heritage of California or the United States;
 - 2. Person/People: Associated with the lives of persons important to the local, California or national history;
 - 3. Architecture/Design: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a design-type, period, region or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic value; or
 - 4. Archaeology: Yields important information about prehistory or history of the local area, California or the nation.

(Ord. No. 2011-363, § 1, 3-8-2011; Ord. No. [2017-437](#), § 1, 3-13-2018)

12.44.140 - Historical alteration permit.

A. For projects that require a historical alteration permit, the historical commission shall complete its review and issue a decision at its next available scheduled meeting. In order to approve a permit, the commission shall find that:

1. The project complies with all provisions of this chapter; and
2. The project does not adversely affect the physical integrity or the historic significance of the subject property.
3. The project is in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

B. If the historical commission approves the historical alteration permit, or approves such permit subject to conditions, the development services director shall issue the permit in accordance with the recommendation, provided that no other approval is required under this code. In the event the historical commission recommends denial of the permit, the development services director shall notify the applicant that the requested permit will not be granted.

(Ord. No. 2011-363, § 1, 3-8-2011; Ord. No. [2017-437](#), § 1, 3-13-2018; [Ord. No. 2023-490](#), § 2(App. A), 3-28-2023)

California Environmental Quality Act

For the purposes of the CEQA (Guidelines Section 15064.5), the term "historical resources" shall include the following:

1. A resource listed in or determined to be eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission, for listing in, the California Register of Historical Resources (Pub. Res. Code SS5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4850 et. seq.).
2. A resource included in a local register of historical resources, as defined in Section 5020.1(k) of the Public Resources Code or identified as significant in an historical resource survey meeting the requirements of Section 5024.1(g) of the Public Resources Code, shall be presumed to be historically or culturally significant. Public agencies must treat any such resource as significant unless the preponderance of evidence demonstrates that it is not historically or culturally significant.
3. Any object, building, structure, site, area, place, record, or manuscript which a lead agency determines to be historically significant or significant in the architectural, engineering, scientific, economic, agricultural, educational, social, political, military, or cultural annals of California, may be considered to be an historical resource, provided the lead agency's determination is supported by substantial evidence in light of the whole record. Generally, a resource shall be considered by the lead agency to be "historically significant" if the resource meets the criteria for listing in the CRHR (Public Resources Code Section 5024.1, Title 14 CCR, Section 4800.3) as follows:
 - A. Is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of California's history and cultural heritage;
 - B. Is associated with the lives of persons important in our past;
 - C. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, region, or method of construction, or represents the work of an important creative individual, or possesses high artistic values; or
 - D. Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history. (Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act)

When a proposed project may adversely affect a historical resource, the CEQA requires a city or county to carefully consider the possible impacts before proceeding (Public Resources Code Sections 21084 and 21084.1). For a project that has been determined to be consistent with the Standards, the project's impact on the historical

resources is generally considered less than significant and thus to not cause a significant impact (14 CCR Section 15126.4(b)(1)).

8. PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

The project consists of the construction of an outdoor courtyard directly north of the Los Altos Library, and within a portion of the boundaries of the Civic Center Orchard, a historic resource. The project site is located within a larger parcel boundary that holds multiple buildings, including the J. Gilbert Smith House, another historic resource. The house, however, is further east and is not part of the project site.

A project that has been determined to conform with the Standards can generally be considered a project that will not cause a significant impact (14 CCR Section 15126.4(b)(1)). Therefore, the proposed project is assessed for compliance with the Standards.

Of the four prescribed treatments for historic properties outlined in the Standards, Rehabilitation provides the most appropriate set of standards for the subject project. Rehabilitation is the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values. *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* are designed to be applied to all historic resource types included in the National Register of Historic Places—buildings, sites, structures, landscapes, districts, and objects.¹² Orchards that are eligible or potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places are classified as cultural resources. Cultural landscapes like orchards rely on the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* for stabilization, treatment, and preservation maintenance philosophies.¹³

1. A property shall be used for its historic purpose or be placed in a new use that requires minimal change to the defining characteristics of the building and its site and environment.

Analysis. The Civic Center Orchard contains orchard trees and will maintain this function with the changes proposed in the project. The new construction will encroach onto the edge of the southern boundary, and while no orchard trees will be removed, approximately seven potential planting sites will be obstructed.

The new courtyard will be multi-purpose but is intended to be used for events that typically occur in the library, such as author talks and cultural events. The early 20th-century use, as established by the Smith Family, was developed for the growing of apricot trees. Prior to this, much of the land in Los Altos was used to grow grains, and it was not until the later 19th and early 20th century that fruits were found to flourish in the area. J. Gilbert Smith was one of the first in Los Altos to establish a fruit orchard. While his orchard land, once occupying 15 acres, has been subdivided and developed for urban use, a portion has been reserved and maintained for orchard trees. The development of the Los Altos Civic Center occurred after 1954, when the Smith Family sold their orchard land to the City. Since the date the orchard was designated as a landmark in 1981, the land has been used for maintaining orchard trees. In 1954, the City purchased the land from the Smiths for a new Civic Center. Although diminished in size by the Civic Center buildings, the orchard continues to convey its historic significance. The proposed project will result in the loss of approximately seven potential planting sites for new trees, however this loss does not alter the overall

¹² "Guidelines for the Treatment of Cultural Landscapes. Using Standards + Guidelines." *National Park Service, U.S. Department of Interior*. Accessed January 13, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/crps/tps/landscape-guidelines/using.htm>.

¹³ Susan Dolan, *Fruitful Legacy: A Historic Context of Orchards in the United States with Technical Information for Registering Orchards in the National Register of Historic Places*, (National Park Service, 2009), 192.

historic significance or integrity of the orchard since even with the loss of approximately seven potential planting sites, the property will still be clearly understood as an orchard and the seven sites alone have no substantial role in defining the orchard.

The change to the orchard is minimal. The new work involves the removal of the existing trellis, patio, and pedestrian pathway north of the Los Altos Library. Additionally, three ornamental trees will be removed, however these are not part of the Civic Center Orchard. A variety of trees and shrubs will be placed at the perimeter of the courtyard.

The Civic Center Orchard will maintain its historic use as an apricot orchard, and since the proposed project will have minimal change to its defining characteristics- orthogonal rows and trees spaced approximately 12 feet apart from each other- it complies with Standard 1.

The J. Gilbert Smith House is not part of the project site and is located across a parking lot from the closest proposed construction. Its use will be maintained. The proposed project complies with Standard 1.

2. The historic character of a property shall be retained and preserved. The removal of historic materials or alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

Analysis. The project does not call for the removal of character-defining features. The Civic Center Orchard is composed of orchard trees, which are the only features that characterize this historic resource. The project proposes the construction of a courtyard, which will be placed directly north of the Los Altos Library and at the southern boundary edge of the Civic Center Orchard. The new work will encroach only into the unplanted area of the orchard and does not require the removal of any of the orchard trees. The encroachment on the southern edge of the Orchard's boundary does not affect its historic character, since orchard trees still exist on the land in orthogonal rows with their original spacing and organization, and the overall area still communicates its use and function as an orchard. The location of potential planting sites within the boundaries of the historic orchard is not a character-defining feature of the orchard. With the changes proposed in the project, the historic character of the Civic Center Orchard will remain. As related to the Orchard, the project complies with Standard 2.

The proposed project will not impact the J. Gilbert Smith House, therefore its current historic character will be maintained. Therefore, the proposed project complies with Standard 2.

3. 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 architectural elements from other buildings, shall not be undertaken.

Analysis. The proposed project does not include architectural features that suggest a false sense of historical development, nor will it add conjectural historical features or architectural elements from other buildings to the Civic Center Orchard. The proposed project involves the construction of a clearly modern courtyard which will be placed at the edge of the southern boundary of the historic resource. In relation to the Civic Center Orchard, the project complies with Standard 3.

The proposed project does not propose any modifications to the J. Gilbert Smith House, including any architectural features that suggest a false sense of historical development or the additions of conjectural historical features. Therefore, the proposed project complies with Standard 3.

4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.

Analysis. No changes to the orchard have acquired historic significance in their own right, therefore there are no changes to be retained or preserved. As the project relates to the Civic Center Orchard, it complies with Standard 4.

The proposed project does not require any changes to the J. Gilbert Smith House. Any of the alterations to the house that have acquired significance over time will be retained. Therefore, the proposed project complies with Standard 4.

5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of fine craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.

Analysis. The Civic Center Orchard is comprised solely of trees and no construction techniques or craftsmanship exist on the property. The distinctive layout and organization of the existing trees will be retained. The new work requires the removal of several trees north of the Los Altos Library, none of which are orchard trees, and the addition of a variety of trees and bushes at the perimeter of the new courtyard. While no orchard trees are to be removed, approximately seven potential planting sites will be obstructed. The loss of approximately seven potential planting sites would not change the historic significance of the Civic Center Orchard since all the existing orchard trees will remain and the property will still be understood as an orchard with its historic layout. Overall, the property still retains its distinctive features. Since the Civic Center Orchard will maintain its distinctive features, the project complies with Standard 5.

The proposed project does not alter any distinctive materials, features, finishes, construction techniques, or examples of craftsmanship that characterize the J. Gilbert Smith House. Therefore, the proposed project complies with Standard 5.

6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacements of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture and other visual qualities and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

Analysis. No repairs or replacements of historic features are planned as part of the proposed project at the Civic Center Orchard. While some trees at the northern area of the Los Altos Library will be removed, none are orchard trees. All trees that are part of the Civic Center Orchard will be retained. The proposed project calls for the planting of shrubs and trees around the perimeter of the new courtyard. The project complies with Standard 6, as related to the Civic Center Orchard.

No repairs or replacements of historic features are planned as part of the proposed project at the J. Gilbert Smith House. Therefore, the project complies with Standard 6.

7. Chemical or physical treatments, such as sandblasting, that cause damage to historic materials shall not be used. The surface cleaning of structures, if appropriate, shall be undertaken using the gentlest means possible.

Analysis. Standard 7 is not applicable. The proposed project does not include chemical or physical treatments to either the Civic Center Orchard or the J. Gilbert Smith House.

8. Significant archaeological resources affected by a project shall be protected and preserved. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.

Analysis. Archaeological resources are outside the scope of this assessment. Standard 8 is not applicable.

9. New additions, exterior alterations or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work will 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.

Analysis. The project proposes a new courtyard north of the Los Altos Library and within the Civic Center Orchard, a designated historic resource. The new construction will minimally change the spatial relationships that characterize the Civic Center Orchard, as it will encroach onto the edge of the southern boundary.

While the project does not require the removal of any orchard trees, approximately seven potential planting sites will be obstructed. Over the years since the City purchased the land from the Smith family, the orchard has progressively decreased in size, with the construction of walkways and buildings in the Civic Center. The new work would not prevent the existing orchard communicating its historic function since there have already been a number of interventions, and the orchard essentially exists as it did when the boundaries were defined in the 1991 designation. Although the spatial relationships among the trees within the orchard would minimally change, this is an aspect of the land that is fluid and frequently changes with the removal and replacement of trees. Additionally, the Civic Center Orchard would still be recognized as a historic orchard with or without the approximately seven potential planting sites that would be obstructed. The boundaries of the orchard would not change, and the number of existing trees would remain the same. The new construction would not destroy the historic character or significance of the property. The loss of approximately seven potential planting sites does not affect the overall character or integrity of the orchard, since it will still maintain its ability to communicate its function and use as an orchard.

The new construction, an outdoor courtyard space with modern elements, will be easily identifiable as a new addition to the site. The new courtyard will feature an outdoor multi-purpose area, covered by a pergola. The pergola is approximately ten feet in height and does not overwhelm the scale of the nearby buildings or the orchard. Concrete pedestrian pathways will be placed along the length of the library toward the east parking lot and north toward City Hall, while the courtyard paving will consist of permeable pavement. The courtyard will be enclosed by seven-foot-tall, primarily transparent steel, wood, and glass fencing.

Overall, the proposed project will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the property, and the new work will be clearly differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic size, scale and proportion, and massing of the Civic Center Orchard and its environment. However, there is some compatibility lacking in terms of materials and features, and the project compliance could be improved through some design considerations.

Concerning the Civic Center Orchard, the project complies with Standard 9, however the recommendations described above could be made to increase the compatibility of the project with the historic resource.

The proposed project will not destroy historic materials, features and spatial relationships that characterize the J. Gilbert Smith House, and the new work closest to the house is approximately 95 feet away and consists of sidewalk modifications, therefore it is removed from having any visual or aesthetic impact on the house. Therefore, the project complies with Standard 9.

10. 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.

Analysis. The project proposes the construction of a courtyard composed of an outdoor multi-purpose area sheltered by a pergola, concrete pedestrian pathways, and various landscaped elements, such as the planting of trees and shrubs. The pergola includes a number of monitors mounted on the 8-foot tall and approximately 33-foot-wide west wall and seating.

The project does not call for the removal of any existing established trees, although approximately seven potential planting sites would be obstructed based on the map overlays. If removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the Civic Center Orchard would be unimpaired, and the potential planting sites would be reestablished. Work on the paving and sidewalk will occur approximately 95 feet away from the J. Gilbert Smith House. No work is proposed for the J. Gilbert Smith House. Therefore, the project complies with Standard 10.

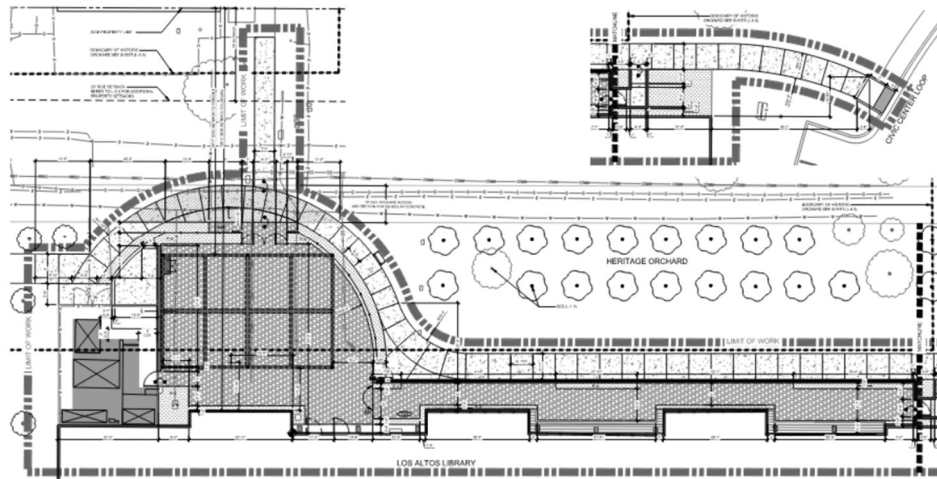


Figure 20. Site plan of the proposed work, revised drawings dated 12/10/2024 (SSA Landscape Architects).

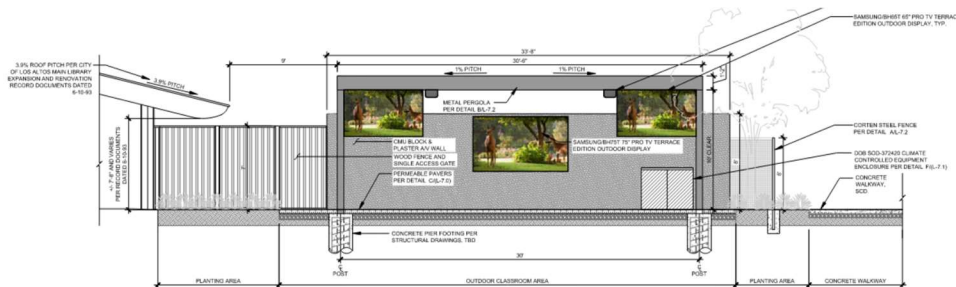


Figure 21. Elevation of the wall at the pergola of the proposed project, revised drawings dated 12/10/2024 (SSA Landscape Architects).

Integrity

The Civic Center Orchard retains integrity of location since it has not been moved. It retains its integrity of association and feeling because it has remained an orchard since it was established in the early 20th century, and it still expresses the character and aesthetic of that period. The orchard generally continues to maintain its tree and trunk size, and its spacing, retaining its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Integrity of setting has been somewhat compromised by the construction buildings in the Los Altos Civic Center. Overall, the Civic Center Orchard retains sufficient integrity to communicate its historic significance and its function as an orchard. The orchard retains the same integrity from when it was designated.

The project will not result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of the historic resources at the Civic Center Orchard or J. Gilbert Smith House in Los Altos.

Los Altos Community Design & Historic Resources

The proposed project is weighed against applicable criteria listed under Community Design and Historic Resources Elements 1 and 12, found in the Los Altos General Plan.

CDHR 1: Community Identity and Character

Enhance the City's unique identity and character by:

(2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 12 are not applicable)

- 1) Maintaining the low density, low profile residential character of the community through zoning regulations and design guidelines;
Analysis: The new construction features a courtyard pergola, approximately ten feet high and consists of wood, concrete, and metal fencing; monitors mounted on walls; and concrete and wood seating. Although the project is not residential-oriented, it complies with the low-density profile of the adjacent buildings and Los Altos.

- 3) Preserving trees, especially those designated as heritage and landmark trees;
Analysis: The new construction of the proposed project does not require the removal of trees within the boundaries of the landmark Civic Center Orchard. All existing orchard trees will be preserved, however approximately seven potential planting sites will be obstructed. The approximately seven potential planting sites currently do not have trees that can be preserved. Additionally, the project proposes the removal of three ornamental trees adjacent to the northern area of the Los Altos Library. The new work also incorporates the planting of numerous trees and shrubs at the project site. The addition of new plantings within the Civic Center Orchard boundary will have no impact on the resource since it is reversible. The project complies as no heritage or landmark trees are being removed and the majority of all trees on site are to be preserved.

- 7) Promoting site planning and project design with an emphasis on small town scale and Pedestrian friendly development;
Analysis: The design of the project emphasizes a small-town scale in its one-story height of approximately 10 feet, and its relative proportion to the Los Altos Library building.

- 10) Developing distinguishing gateways to the City representative of its unique characteristics;
Analysis: No city gateway is planned for the proposed project. However, courtyard entry gate will be installed featuring text or visuals recognizing donors of the library and courtyard project.

- 11) Encouraging community events throughout the City; and
Analysis: The proposed courtyard will be used for library programs and community events in Los Altos.

CDHR 12: Preserve Significant Historic Resources

The orchard was established in 1901-1905 and the J. Gilbert Smith House was constructed in 1901-1905. They were both designated as local landmarks in 1981. With the most recent DPR 523 form update completed in July 2024, the Civic Center Orchard still possessed historic integrity and significance. As reviewed above, TreanorHL finds that the overall project is consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and therefore will not impede the preservation of significant historic resources.

Municipal Code Compliance, 12.44.040 and 12.44.140

The orchard is locally listed and meets the *Criteria for designation* in section 12.44.040 because it satisfies the three listed criteria of age, integrity, and significance.

The historical commission is required to review the proposed project in order to obtain a historical alteration permit, per section 12.44.140 – Historical Alteration Permit. Per the analysis above, Treanor finds that:

1. The project complies with all provisions of this chapter; and
2. The project does not adversely affect the physical integrity or the historic significance of the subject property.
3. The project is in compliance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

9. CONCLUSION

Overall, the proposed project complies with the Standards. The Civic Center Orchard trees will be retained, and none will be removed, however approximately seven potential planting sites have been identified as being obscured by the new construction. This loss will not have an effect on the orchard's historic significance or integrity because the seven potential planting sites alone do not communicate the orchard's function or use and their loss will not impede the overall understanding of the resource. With the remaining orchard trees, the orchard conveys its historic significance and character. The proposed project is compliant with the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*. The project is compliant with the applicable criteria listed in the Community Design and Historic Resources Elements 1 and 12. As the project complies with the *Standards*, the project also meets the requirements of Chapter 12.44 Los Altos Code of Ordinances, including 12.44.140 – Historical Alteration Permit.

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