



## FINAL MEMORANDUM

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**Date** January 21, 2025

**To** Sean Gallegos, Senior Planner, City of Los Altos

**From** Mimi McNamara, Project Manager  
Kristy Weis, Vice-President and Principal Project Manager

**Subject** Los Altos Library Courtyard Project – CEQA Categorical Exemption Qualification

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### I. Introduction to Categorical Exemptions

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines contain classes of projects that have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment and are, therefore, exempt from the provisions of CEQA. CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 – 15333 constitute the list of categorically exempt projects and contain specific criteria that must be met in order for a project to be found exempt, including CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 Existing Facilities (Class 1) and Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures (Class 3). Additionally, CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 includes a list of exceptions to exemptions, none of which may apply to a project in order for it to qualify for a categorical exemption (i.e., if an exception applies, a project is precluded from being found categorically exempt).

The City of Los Altos, serving as the Lead Agency, has completed this Memorandum of environmental review for the Los Altos Library Courtyard project (“project”) in compliance with CEQA, the CEQA Guidelines (California Code of Regulations Section 15000 et. seq.), and the regulations and policies of the City of Altos. This Memorandum describes the proposed project and provides analysis and evidence to support a determination by the City of Altos that the project would be eligible for a Categorical Exemption under CEQA.

### II. Existing Conditions

The approximately 0.2-acre project site is located at the Los Altos Civic Center north of the existing Los Altos Library. 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 Apricot Orchard, a playground, parking and landscaping areas. The surrounding area is a mix of residential and commercial buildings. The project site is developed with a trellis for the library, patio for the library, and paved pedestrian pathway that connects to other facilities in the Civic Center. The project site's regional location and general vicinity are shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2, respectively. Figure 3 provides an aerial photograph of the project site and the surrounding land uses, as well as the Civic Center boundary.

### III. Background Information

The existing Los Altos Library is a public library that is part of the Santa Clara County Library District.<sup>1</sup> The Los Altos Library is an approximately 28,050 square foot building that includes one community meeting room (with a maximum capacity of 100 people) and a collection of over two million books, movies, and other media. The Los Altos Library and Woodland Library (a branch location of the Los Altos Library) serve the residents of Los Altos.

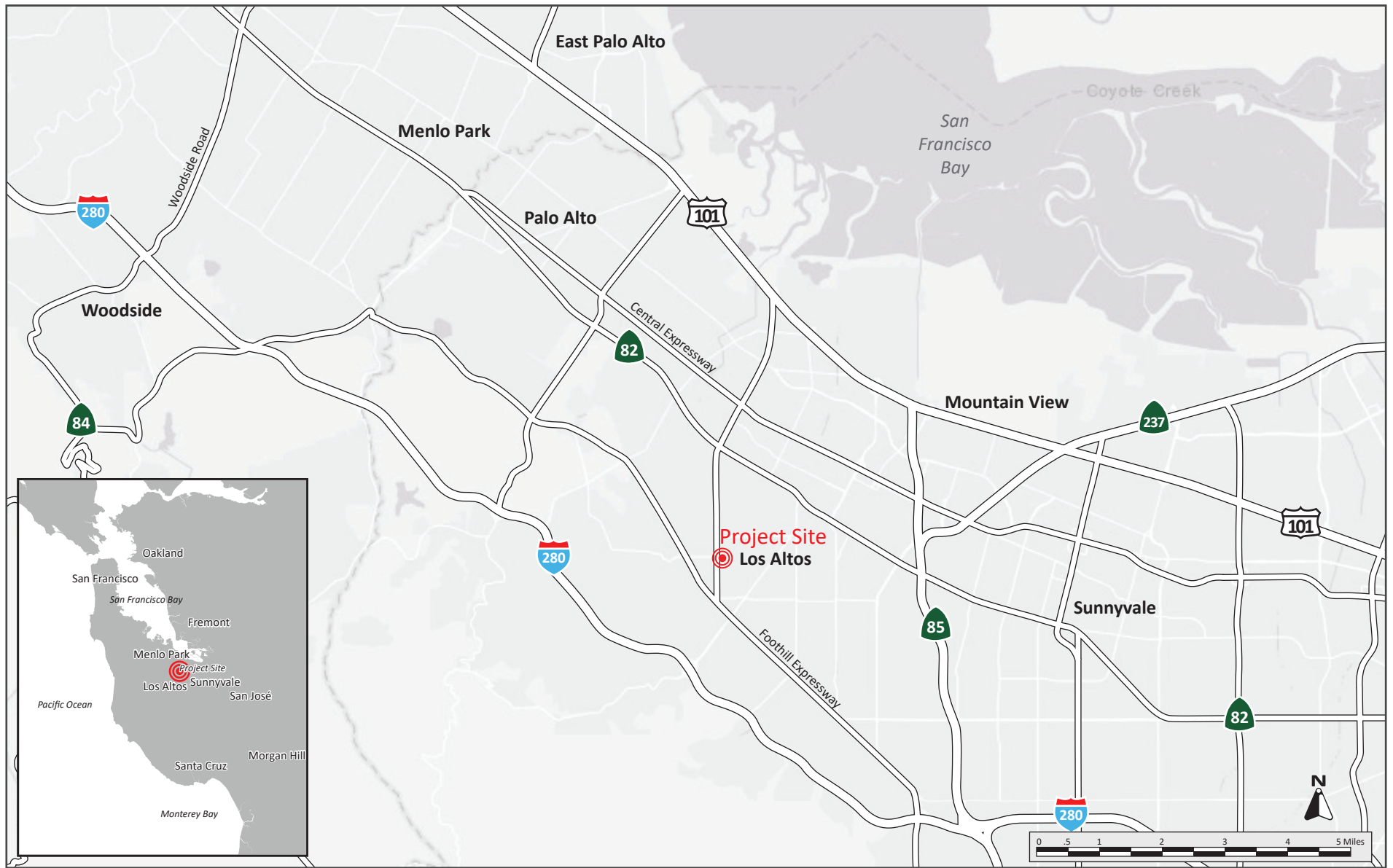
The Los Altos Library currently hosts a variety of events including book clubs, story time, meditation, music performances, life skills classes (e.g., cooking), social events, art classes, and educational programs (e.g., language classes, history lessons, gardening talks, and apricot orchard education). These events take place during the library's normal operating hours. The Los Altos Library operates Monday to Thursday from 10:00 AM to 9:00 PM and Thursday to Sunday from 10:00 AM to 7:00 PM. Parking for the library is provided in a parking lots directly south and east of the library. Operators of the library are looking to continue hosting existing library events with the flexibility to host them outdoors and expand its programming opportunities and partnerships with community groups including the Los Altos History Museum, GreenTown, and Master Gardeners.

### IV. Project Description

The project would remove the existing trellis, patio, and pedestrian pathway located directly north of the existing Los Altos Library and construct an approximately 8,265 square-foot outdoor courtyard. The courtyard would consist of new hardscape and pedestrian pathways, an outdoor multi-purpose seating area including an audio-visual system, and landscaping. The proposed pedestrian pathway would provide connections to City Hall and the existing parking lot to the east. 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. A site plan of the proposed courtyard is shown on Figure 4.

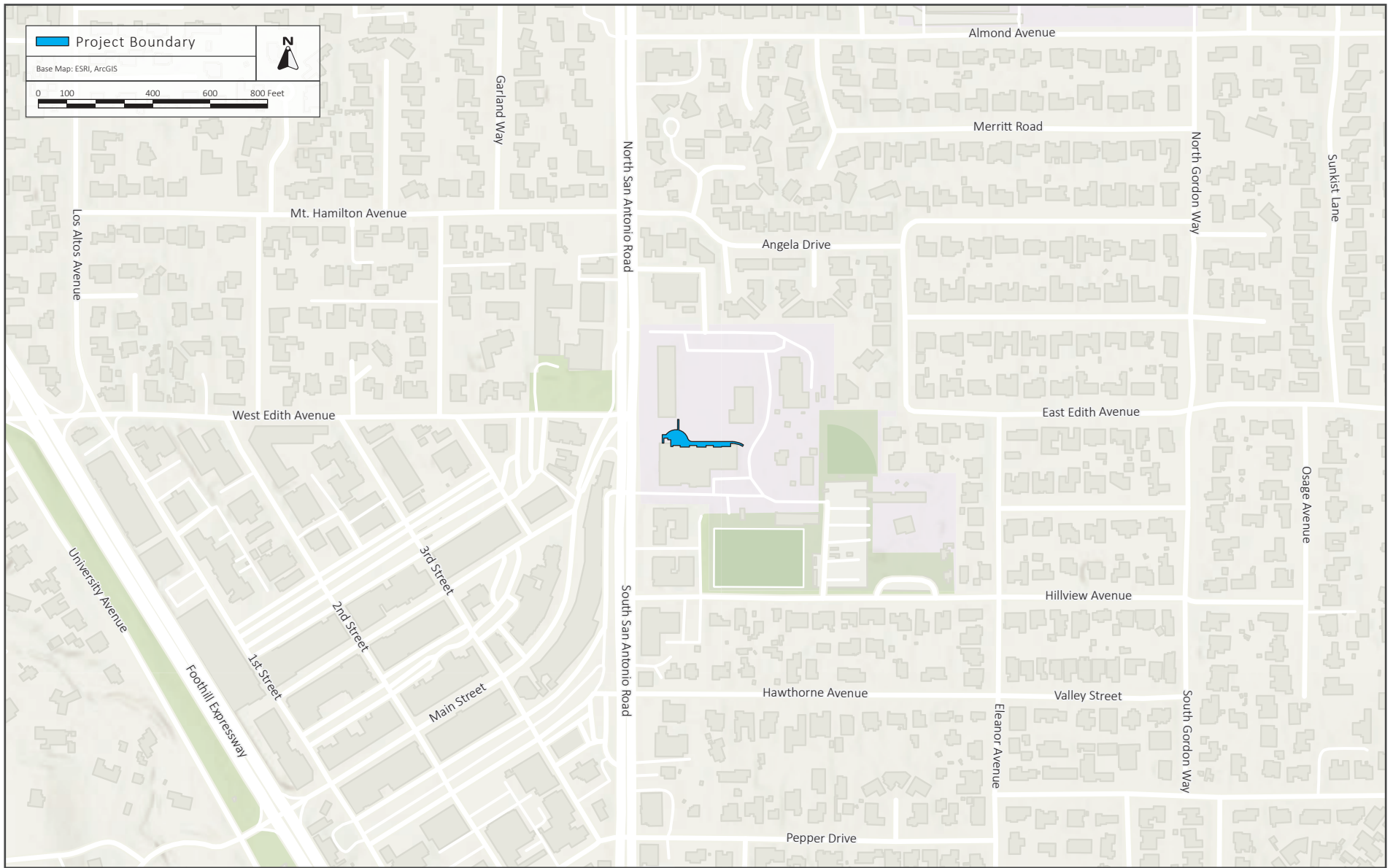
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<sup>1</sup> Santa Clara County Library District. "About Los Altos Library." Accessed July 18, 2024. <https://scclld.org/los-altos-library/#:~:text=The%20Los%20Altos%20Library%20is%20housed%20in%20a%2028%2C050%20sq.&text=A%20Community%20Meeting%20Room%20with,million%20books%2C%20movies%2C%20and%20more.>



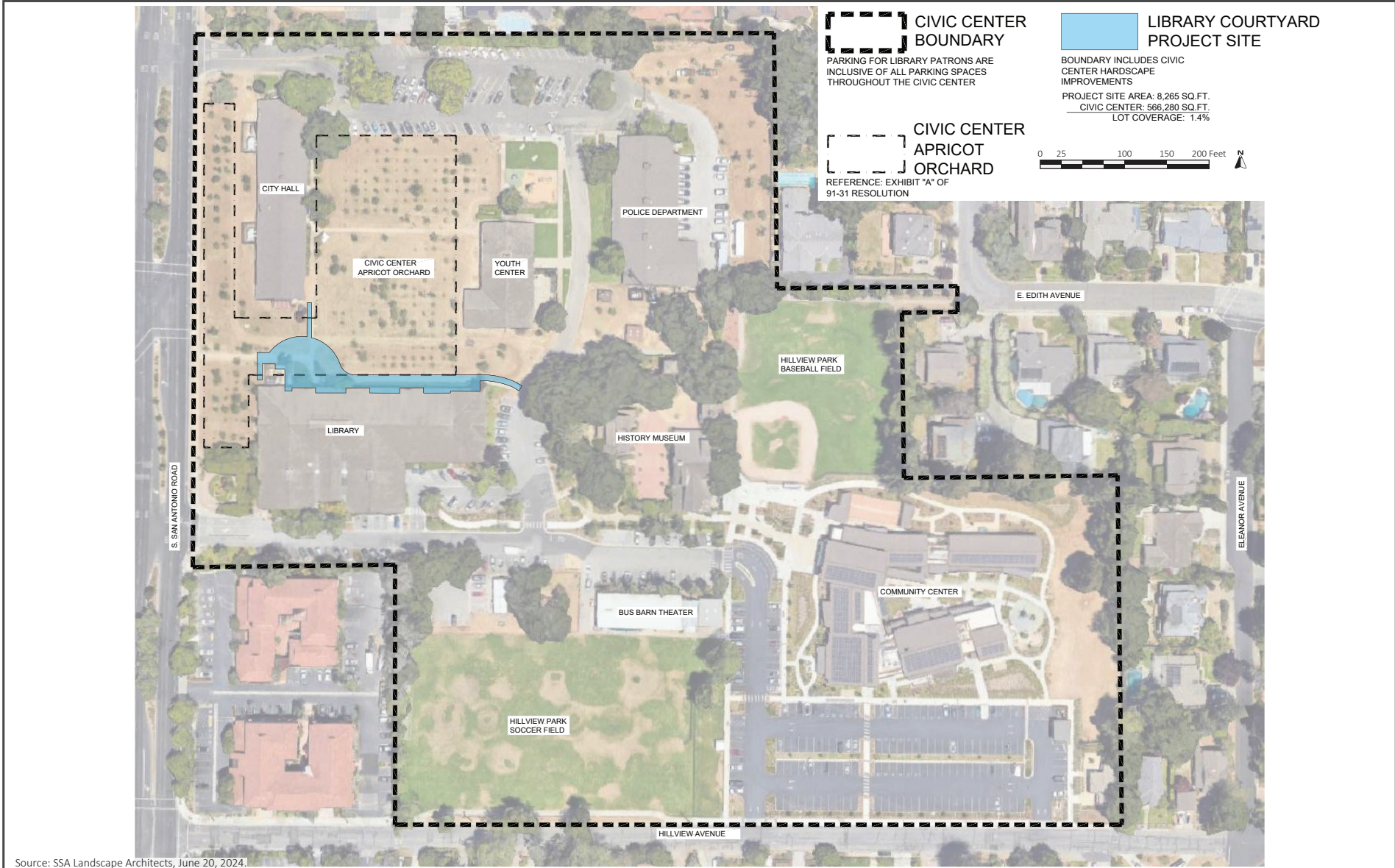
REGIONAL MAP

FIGURE 1



VICINITY MAP

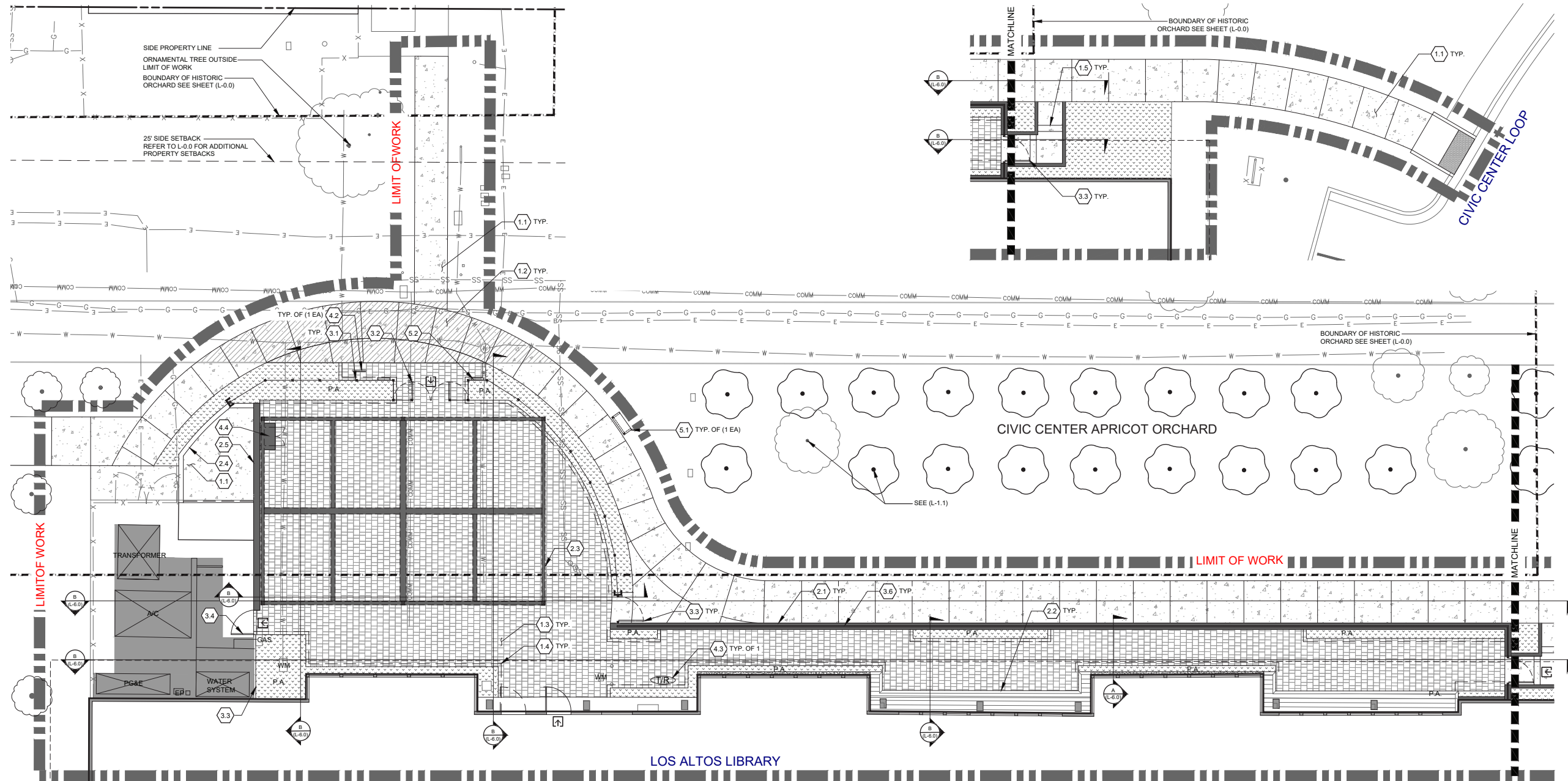
FIGURE 2



Source: SSA Landscape Architects, June 20, 2024.

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH OF PROJECT SITE AND LAND USES

FIGURE 3



**SITE IMPROVEMENT SUMMARY**

IMPERVIOUS AREA: 3,080 SQFT  
 PERMEABLE PAVING AREA: 3,575 SQFT  
 PLANTING AREA: 920 SQFT  
 TOTAL: 7,575 SQFT

**GRAPHIC LEGEND**

SYMBOL	ITEM
→	DETAIL REFERENCE
○	SHEET REFERENCE
○	SITE REFERENCE
┌	BEGINNING/ END OF SITE ELEMENT
⊞	ENTRANCE
[Hatched Box]	VEHICULAR CONCRETE PAVING
[Dotted Box]	CONCRETE PAVING
[Grid Box]	PERMEABLE PAVERS
[Box with PA]	PLANTING AREA
---	ORCHARD BOUNDARY

**SITE SCHEDULE**

ITEM	DESCRIPTION
1.0	HARDSCAPE
1.1	CONSTRUCT CONCRETE PAVING
1.2	CONSTRUCT VEHICULAR CONCRETE PAVING
1.3	CONSTRUCT PERMEABLE PAVERS
1.4	CONSTRUCT PERMEABLE PAVER EDGING
1.5	CONSTRUCT STAIRS WITH HANDRAIL
2.0	STRUCTURES
2.1	CONSTRUCT RETAINING WALL - PIP
2.2	CONSTRUCT RETAINING SEATWALL
2.3	CONSTRUCT PERGOLA
2.4	CONSTRUCT SOUND WALL
2.5	CONSTRUCT A/V WALL
3.0	FENCING
3.1	PROVIDE & INSTALL CORTEN FENCE
3.2	PROVIDE & INSTALL DECORATIVE LASER CUT CORTEN GATES
3.3	PROVIDE & INSTALL CUSTOM CORTEN GATE
3.4	PROVIDE & INSTALL WOOD FENCE
3.5	PROVIDE & INSTALL WOOD GATES
3.6	PROVIDE & INSTALL GLASS FENCE
4.0	SITE FURNISHINGS
4.1	NOT USED
4.2	INSTALL RELOCATED SQUIRREL BIKE RACK
4.3	INSTALL TRASH RECEPTACLE
4.4	EQUIPMENT CABINET
5.0	MISCELLANEOUS
5.1	RELOCATED ORCHARD INFORMATION SIGN - DEFERRED SUBMITTAL - NOT PART OF THIS PACKAGE
5.2	DONOR RECOGNITION SIGNAGE - DEFERRED SUBMITTAL - NOT PART OF THIS PACKAGE



Source: SSA Landscape Architects, December 10, 2024.

CONCEPTUAL SITE PLAN

FIGURE 4

The courtyard features (including programming), site access and parking, and construction details are described below.

## Courtyard Features

### Physical Improvements

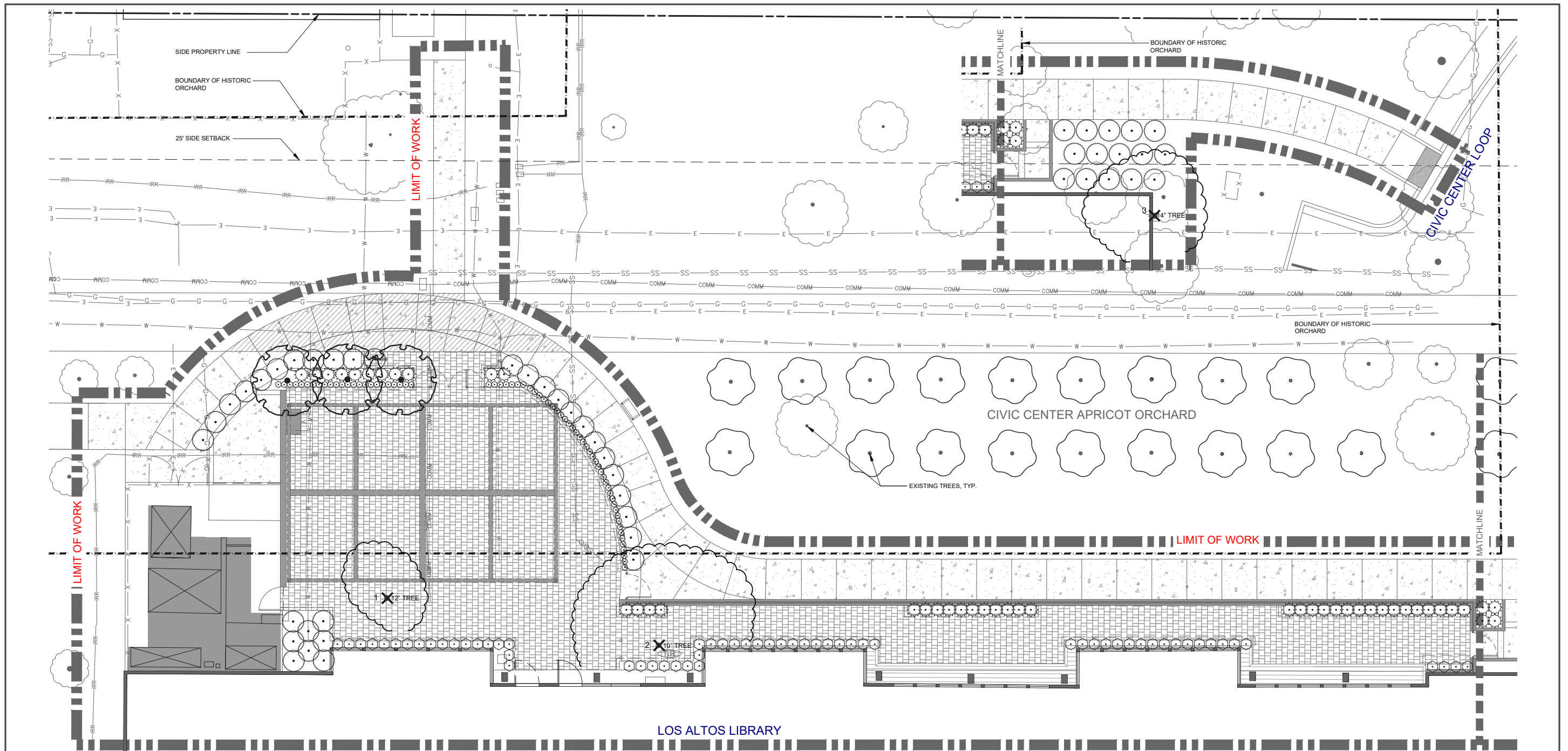
The courtyard would include concrete pedestrian pathways (approximately 3,080 square feet of impervious area) along the length of the courtyard to City Hall to the north and the public parking lot east of the library. Most of the courtyard would consist of permeable pavement (approximately 3,575 square feet). A retaining wall with seating within the eastern portion of the project site would also be constructed. The entire courtyard would be fenced in with a mix of corten (or steel), wood, and glass fencing ranging from approximately five to seven feet tall.

An outdoor multi-purpose seating area would be the courtyard's primary feature and include an approximately 1,412 square foot pergola that would be up to 11.2 feet tall. The area would provide bench seating, sound system, and five outdoor display screens to support existing and future community events. There would be six surface mount speakers (approximately 12-inches tall, 7.5-inches wide, and with a 6.9-inch depth) placed on the pergola with two in the front, middle, and back of the area. The speakers would connect to the one, 75-inch outdoor display screen and four, 65-inch outdoor display screens. All outdoor equipment associated with the outdoor display and sound system would be placed within a climate-controlled equipment enclosure located within the area when not in use. Not all events would require the use of the sound and/or display systems. No mechanical pieces of equipment, such as a heating, ventilation, air conditioning unit, or emergency equipment (like a backup generator) are proposed.

The construction of the project would result in the removal of three ornamental trees adjacent to the northern boundary of the Los Altos Library. No trees within the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would be removed as part of the project. The new landscaping proposed as part of the project would include trees and a variety of shrubs planted along the perimeter of the courtyard. As shown in Figure 5, three new trees would be planted north of the pergola along the proposed corten fence, and approximately 223 new shrubs would be planted throughout the courtyard as part of the project.

### Programming

The proposed courtyard would be used to host existing events already occurring at the library. It is expected the events hosted in the courtyard would draw in an average of 10 to 50 people. Specialized events are assumed to have a turnout of approximately 100 people. All events would take place during the existing library operating hours. No changes are proposed to the library operating hours. No additional employees would be hired to support the outdoor events proposed.



LOS ALTOS LIBRARY

EXISTING TREES

SYMBOL	DESCRIPTION	TRUNK SIZE
	EXISTING ORCHARD SAPLING	UNDER 3"
	EXISTING ORCHARD TREE	5"
	EXISTING ORNAMENTAL TREE TO BE REMOVED	

PROPOSED TREES

IMAGE	NAME	SIZE AT MATURITY
	CERCIS OCCIDENTALIS	10-18' HT. X 10-18' WIDE

PLANT SCHEDULE

PHOTO	SYMBOL	CODE	BOTANICAL / COMMON NAME	CONT	CANOPY	QTY	WUCOLS
<b>TREES</b>							
	CER	CERCIS OCCIDENTALIS / WESTERN REDBUD	24"BOX	12'	3	VERY LOW	
<b>SHRUBS</b>							
	CA	CAREX PRAEGRACILIS / CALIFORNIA FIELD SEDGE	1 GAL	24" o.c.	62	MODERATE	
	LL	LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA 'ARCTIC FROST' / ARCTIC FROST RUSH	1 GAL	30" o.c.	46	LOW	
	LOM	LOMANDRA LONGIFOLIA 'BREEZE' / BREEZE™ MAT RUSH	1 GAL	45" o.c.	47	LOW	
	S	SISYRINCHIUM BELLUM / BLUE-EYED GRASS	1 GAL	12" o.c.	68	VERY LOW	

Source: SSA Landscape Architects, December 10, 2024.



## Site Access and Parking

The proposed courtyard would be accessible from within the Los Altos Library and from exterior gates along the pedestrian pathways connecting to the site. There would be an entry from the Los Altos Library that would provide direct access to the courtyard. A corten gate would provide access at the most northern point of the courtyard and a wood gate would provide access to the southwestern corner of the site. The last access point would be along the most eastern boundary of the project site. There would be a total of four site access points. Refer to Figure 4 for the site access entry points.

No changes to the existing parking facilities serving the library or larger Civic Center are proposed. The existing, squirrel-shaped bike rack and two other bike racks (three short-term bicycle parking spaces) would be relocated from their locations near the Los Altos Library northern doorway entrance to the western concrete pathway (see Figure 4 for the location).

## Construction

The construction of the courtyard would take approximately nine months with an anticipated start date of late 2025. Construction would include demolition, site preparation, excavation/grading, paving, and structural building (including construction of fence and pergola). It is anticipated that the project would use the following construction equipment: small backhoe, excavator, skid steer loader grader, and electrical hand tools. The project would excavate to a maximum depth of five feet for the pergola post and retaining wall footings. The grading of the site would result in 115 cubic yards of soil being excavated and disposed of at an appropriate facility. While the proposed construction and improvements would encroach into the dirt area of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard, no existing trees within the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would be removed as a result of the project.

Access to the Los Altos Library via its rear entrance would not be possible due to the construction of the proposed courtyard. However, access to the library via the main access doors would continue to be available. Once the project has been constructed, both entrances to the library would be available.

## V. Analysis of Eligibility for Categorical Exemption

Section 21084 of the Public Resources Code requires the CEQA Guidelines to include a list of classes of projects which have been determined not to have a significant effect on the environment, and which shall, therefore, be exempt from the provisions of CEQA. Several classes of projects have been declared to be categorically exempt from the preparation of environmental documents (CEQA Guidelines Section 15300).

A project is eligible for a Categorical Exemption if it: (1) meets the criteria of one of the identified classes and (2) does not meet any of the exceptions to a Categorical Exemption identified in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2. This two-part analysis is provided below.

### Part 1: Categorical Exemption Class Criteria Findings

The project qualifies under two exemption classes – Class 1 and 3, as discussed below.

#### Class 1 – CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 Existing Facilities

Class 1 consists of the operation, repair, maintenance, permitting, leasing, licensing, or minor alteration of existing public or private structures, facilities, mechanical equipment, or topographical features, involving negligible or no expansion of existing or former use. The key consideration is whether the project involves negligible or no expansion. Examples include, but are not limited to, interior or exterior alterations; restoration or rehabilitation of deteriorated or damaged structures to meet current public health and safety standards; or maintenance of existing landscaping, native growth, and water supply reservoirs. An example identified in CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 of a project that would qualify for this exemption is an addition to an existing structure provided that the addition will not result in an increase of more than 10,000 square feet if:

- The project is in an area where all public services and facilities are available to allow for maximum development permissible in the General Plan and
- The area in which the project is located is not environmentally sensitive.

Another example is the demolition and removal of individual small structures such as accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences.

The project meets the criteria for a Class 1 exemption because it includes a minor alteration of an existing public facility (i.e., Los Altos Library) consisting of the replacement of an existing patio with a new courtyard. The proposed courtyard area would be approximately 8,265 square feet, which is below the 10,000 square foot criteria identified in the CEQA Guidelines and mentioned above. The proposed courtyard is also consistent with the General Plan land use designation for the site. The project site is also within an urban area of Los Altos that is currently served by existing public facilities and services (e.g., fire and police department). Additionally, the project would result in the removal of small, accessory structures including the existing trellis, patio, and pedestrian pathway located directly north of the existing Los Altos Library. The project site is also not environmentally

sensitive as discussed later in this memorandum. Based on the above, the project would involve a negligible expansion of the Los Altos Library existing patio.

### Class 3 – CEQA Guidelines Section 15303 New Construction or Conversion of Small Structures

Class 3 consists of construction and location of limited numbers of new, small facilities or structures; installation of small new equipment and facilities in small structures; and the conversion of existing small structures from one use to another where only minor modifications are made in the exterior of the structure. Examples of this exemption include accessory (appurtenant) structures including garages, carports, patios, swimming pools, and fences.

The project meets the criteria for a Class 3 exemption because it is the construction of an accessory courtyard (which is similar to a patio and includes fencing) for the existing Los Altos Library. As mentioned above, the approximately 8,265-square foot proposed courtyard would replace the existing Los Altos Library patio. The proposed courtyard would serve the patrons of the Los Altos Library. For these reasons, the project would meet the exemption criteria for a new construction or conversion of small structures.

## Part 2: Categorical Exemptions Exceptions Findings

The purpose of this section is to document whether any of the exceptions listed in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the project. An analysis of each of these exceptions in reference to the project is provided below.

*(a) Location. Classes 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 are qualified by consideration of where the project is to be located – a project that is ordinarily insignificant in its impact on the environment may in a particularly sensitive environment be significant. Therefore, these classes are considered to apply all instances, except where the project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern where designated, precisely mapped, and officially adopted pursuant to law by federal, state, or local agencies.*

**Applicability:** This exception only applies to Class 3, 4, 5, 6, and 11 categorical exemptions. Therefore, this exception does apply to the project under CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2(a). The project is not located in a particularly sensitive environment. As described in Section II Existing Conditions, the project site is developed with a paved patio underneath a trellis and utilized on a regular basis by library patrons and employees and visitors of the Civic Center. The area surrounding the project site is disturbed and fully developed with buildings and street infrastructure. The project site is not located in environmentally sensitive area where there are hazardous conditions (refer to question e below) or known environmental resources of critical concern (e.g., agriculture and farmland, biological resources, or mineral resources).<sup>2,3</sup> As discussed

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<sup>2</sup> California Department of Conservation. "California Important Farmland Finder." Updated September 29, 2021. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=8ab78d6c403b402786cc231941d1b929>.

<sup>3</sup> City of Los Altos. *Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for The Los Altos General Plan Update*. November 2022. Page 32.

in more detail under question f, the project site is not listed on a National Register of Historic Places, California Register of Historical Resources, or the City's local inventory.<sup>4,5,6,7</sup> A small portion of the northern boundary of the project site overlaps with the boundaries of a City-designated historic landmark, the Civic Center Apricot Orchard, but the project would not result in the removal of any existing apricot trees. As discussed further below in the Section V Part 2: Categorical Exemptions Exceptions Findings, a Secretary of Interior's Standards Compliance Review (Standards Compliance Review) was completed and the analysis found that the project would not result in a significant impact to this historic resource. For these reasons, the project would not result in a significant impact on a particularly sensitive environment due to the project location.

*(b) Cumulative Impact. All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant.*

**Applicability:** For this analysis, cumulative impacts are considered for successive projects that modify an existing public government building (as they are the same project type as the proposed project) in the same place (i.e., within the Civic Center boundary as shown in Figure 3). The following list represents all projects occurring within the Civic Center boundary that are public government building modifications:

- **Los Altos City Hall Expansion at Youth Center Building** – This approved project consists of interior and exterior building alterations to the existing Youth Center Building to convert the building into new office space for City Hall Staff.<sup>8</sup> Modifications include interior reconfiguration, electrical, plumbing, mechanical, lighting and telecom system modifications, tie-in to the new emergency operations center, exterior patios and access paths, and associated underground utilities.<sup>9</sup> This project is currently under construction.
- **Los Altos Community Center Emergency Operations Center** – This approved project would include an emergency operations center (EOC) for emergency and natural disasters into the existing one-story Los Altos Community Center. This project includes the installation of radio and satellite equipment; replacement of existing HVAC system equipment with a new

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<sup>4</sup> National Park Service. "National Register Database and Research - Spreadsheet." Last Modified July 10, 2024. Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/nationalregister/database-research.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> California State Parks. "California Historical Resources – Search by County." Accessed January 2, 2025. <https://ohp.parks.ca.gov/ListedResources/?view=county&criteria=43>

<sup>6</sup> City of Los Altos. *Historic Resources Inventory – Section III Historic Landmarks*. Updated November 2013. [https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/historical\\_commission/page/43354/hri\\_sec\\_iii\\_landmarks\\_3.8\\_22.pdf](https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/historical_commission/page/43354/hri_sec_iii_landmarks_3.8_22.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> City of Los Altos. *Historic Resources Inventory – Section IV Historic Resources Inventory*. Updated March 2023. [https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/historical\\_commission/page/43354/hri\\_sec\\_iv\\_historic\\_resources\\_3.15.23.pdf](https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/historical_commission/page/43354/hri_sec_iv_historic_resources_3.15.23.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> City of Los Altos. *Los Altos City Hall Office Expansion at Youth Center Building Notice of Exemption*. March 20, 2024. Accessed August 26, 2024. [https://files.ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/297487-1/attachment/DGPMUND44QxRTy\\_IIOy9ksen2qhn158RcNetQfFM2B82Alh0G-QRmmK4UyxKAYB9Eiyf6HylzXDuuD50](https://files.ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/297487-1/attachment/DGPMUND44QxRTy_IIOy9ksen2qhn158RcNetQfFM2B82Alh0G-QRmmK4UyxKAYB9Eiyf6HylzXDuuD50)

<sup>9</sup> City of Los Altos. "Notice to Contractors Los Altos City Hall Expansion at Youth Center Building Project CF-01044". December 21, 2023. Accessed August 26, 2024. [https://bids.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/notice\\_to\\_contractors\\_39.pdf](https://bids.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/notice_to_contractors_39.pdf)

system; and installation of an emergency back-up generator adjacent to the Bus Barn Theater.<sup>10</sup> This project is currently under construction.

The construction of both projects listed above would be completed in mid-2025. The two listed projects are also located in different areas of the Civic Center boundaries and, thus, would impact different sensitive receptors (e.g., residents). Since construction of the Youth Center Building and Community Center Emergency Operations Center would (1) end prior to construction of the project and (2) would occur in different locations, no singular sensitive receptor would be exposed to successive construction impacts, such as air quality or noise impacts. Additionally, the cumulative impacts of the above two projects and the proposed project would be less than significant due to each project's conformance with applicable laws, regulations, and standard requirements (including Regional Water Quality Control Board Construction General Permit water quality requirements, Migratory Bird Treaty Act, and Bay Area Air Quality Management District dust control measures) that are in place to ensure the effects of individual projects are not cumulatively significant. Furthermore, the proposed courtyard project would not include any unusual construction methods (e.g., longer construction hours, vibratory drilling, or numerous haul truck trips) that would have a significant impact on the environment.

In addition, the City of Los Altos is currently requesting proposals for remodeling design services for the Los Altos Library.<sup>11</sup> The scope and details on the remodeling of the Los Altos Library is currently unknown but anticipated to be limited to interior improvements. Due to this remodeling being in the early design phase, this potential project is speculative and not included in the cumulative impact. Furthermore, any renovation or improvements proposed for the Los Altos Library would be subject to a separate review process, which would evaluate cumulative impacts with respect to the proposed project. The separate review process would identify feasible measures required to reduce potential cumulative impacts, if any are identified.

Based on the above discussions, the proposed project and successive projects of the same type as the project within Civic Center area would not result in a significant cumulative impact. For these reasons, Exception (b) is not applicable to this project.

*(c) Significant Effect. A categorical exemption shall not be used for an activity where there is a reasonable possibility that the activity will have a significant effect on the environment due to unusual circumstances.*

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<sup>10</sup> City of Los Altos. *NOE Justification – Los Altos Emergency Operations Center Project*. February 28, 2023. Accessed August 26, 2024. [https://files.ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/285597-1/attachment/N71GnviiO6-5MvDtHXf5AZVEE17wXvMuZfkvOP0v7dw\\_ZuqYOz8\\_sKDjxP6Wv4OwQVlt8uAuKNnJGDj\\_0](https://files.ceqanet.opr.ca.gov/285597-1/attachment/N71GnviiO6-5MvDtHXf5AZVEE17wXvMuZfkvOP0v7dw_ZuqYOz8_sKDjxP6Wv4OwQVlt8uAuKNnJGDj_0).

<sup>11</sup> City of Los Altos. "Request for Proposal – Design Services for Los Altos Main Library Improvements." July 17, 2024. Accessed August 26, 2024. [https://bids.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/rfp\\_los\\_altos\\_main\\_library\\_improvement\\_cover\\_letter\\_7-17-24\\_final.pdf](https://bids.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/rfp_los_altos_main_library_improvement_cover_letter_7-17-24_final.pdf).

**Applicability:** The project is consistent with the adopted land use (i.e., Public and Institutional) and zoning designation (i.e., Public and Community Facilities) for the project site.<sup>12,13</sup> The proposed project and project site do not contain any features that are unique or unusual for a courtyard, or other kind of similar ancillary structure, that would be part of an existing facility, such as the Los Altos Library. The construction of the project would not be atypical and include construction activities, duration, and equipment that would be expected of other similar minor construction projects. In addition, an analysis of environmental factors where unusual circumstances (unique to the project) could be identified is included below. These environmental factors include air quality, geologic hazards, and biological resources.

### Air Quality

The construction of the proposed project would last for approximately nine months and require the demolition of existing structures, excavation, grading, and the hauling of soil and debris. To reduce the potential effects on air quality resulting from construction activities, the project would implement standard Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) best management practices to limit the amount of fugitive dust generated by the vehicles and equipment on-site. These standard measures to reduce fugitive dust are applicable for all projects in the region. Compliance with the proposed construction measures would be ensured through a City Standard Condition of Approval.

### *Standard Condition of Approval*

The applicant shall require all construction contractors to implement the basic construction mitigation measures recommended by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) to reduce fugitive dust emissions. Emission reduction measures shall include, at a minimum, the following measures:

- (a) All exposed surfaces (e.g., staging areas, soil piles, and graded areas) shall be watered two times per day;
- (b) All haul trucks transporting soil, sand, or other loose material off-site shall be covered;
- (c) All visible mud or dirt track-out onto adjacent public roads shall be removed using wet power vacuum street sweepers at least once per day. The use of dry power sweeping is prohibited;
- (d) All sidewalks to be paved shall be completed as soon as possible. Building pads shall be laid as soon as possible after grading unless seeding or soil binders are used;
- (e) All excavation, grading, and/or demolition activities shall be suspended when average wind speeds exceed 20 mph.

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<sup>12</sup> City of Los Altos. "City of Los Altos Land Use Map." October 26, 2019. Accessed January 2, 2025. [https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community\\_development/page/39021/los\\_altos-land\\_use\\_final\\_w\\_labels-24x36-20181026.pdf](https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/39021/los_altos-land_use_final_w_labels-24x36-20181026.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> City of Los Altos. "City of Los Altos Zoning Map." October 26, 2018. Accessed January 2, 2025. [https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community\\_development/page/39021/los\\_altos-zoning\\_final\\_w\\_labels-24x36-20181026.pdf](https://www.losaltosca.gov/sites/default/files/fileattachments/community_development/page/39021/los_altos-zoning_final_w_labels-24x36-20181026.pdf).

- (f) All trucks and equipment, including their tires, shall be washed off prior to leaving the site.
- (g) Idling times shall be minimized either by shutting equipment off when not in use or reducing the maximum idling time to five minutes (as required by the California airborne toxics control measures Title 13, Section 2485, of the California Code of Regulations). Clear signage shall be provided for construction workers at all access points; and
- (h) All construction equipment shall be maintained and properly tuned in accordance with manufacturer's specifications. All equipment shall be checked by a certified mechanic and determined to be running in proper condition prior to operation.
- (i) Publicly visible signs shall be posted with the telephone number and name of the person to contact at the lead agency regarding dust complaints. This person shall respond and take corrective action within 48 hours. The Air District's General Air Pollution Complaints number shall also be visible to ensure compliance with applicable regulations.

With implementation of the above standard condition of approval, the project would reduce the potential air quality effects generated during construction by controlling and reducing the opportunities for fugitive dust emissions, which are the typically the result of earth moving activities, from being released into the air.

### Geologic Hazards

The project site is not located in a state or county recognized landslide or liquefaction hazard zone, and there are no unusual geologic or seismic characteristics that might create a hazard to future site users.<sup>14,15</sup> While the project site is not located in a geologically hazardous zone, the entire San Francisco Bay Area is subject to seismic related geologic activity, which is typical for this region. Similar to other developments proposed in Los Altos, the project would conform to the standard engineering, building practices, and techniques specified in the California Building Code to reduce potential geological impacts.

### Biological Resources

Due to the developed and disturbed nature of the project site, there is no habitat suitable for locally occurring special-status plant or animal species. Also, human activity in the area is high, resulting in a low likelihood that wildlife species sensitive to human disturbance would be present on or adjacent to the project site. Although the project site does not have valuable habitat for endangered, rare, or threatened species, the project site and surrounding area contain trees, which could serve as habitat for nesting birds, a common wildlife species to be present in urban environments.

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<sup>14</sup> Santa Clara County. "Santa Clara County Geologic Hazard Zones Map." Map. October 26, 2012.  
[https://stgenpln.blob.core.windows.net/document/GEO\\_GeohazardATLAS.pdf](https://stgenpln.blob.core.windows.net/document/GEO_GeohazardATLAS.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> California Geological Survey. "Earthquake Zones of Required Investigation." Map. Accessed August 6, 2024.  
<https://maps.conservation.ca.gov/cgs/EQZApp/app/>.

Nesting birds are protected under provisions of the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) and California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) Code Sections 3503, 3503.5, and 2800.10. Additionally, Section 3503, 3503.5, and 3513 of the CDFW code prohibit take of all birds and their active nests, including raptors and other migratory nongame birds (as listed under the MBTA). As mentioned above, the project would result in the removal of three ornamental trees. Tree removals (neither of which are historic trees) would be undertaken pursuant to applicable City permits and requirements (i.e., tree removal permit pursuant to Section 11.08.070 of the City's Municipal Code). To comply with these existing federal and state regulations, the project includes the completion of a nesting bird survey prior to construction of the project to avoid potential impacts to birds protected under the MBTA and CDFW. Compliance with the proposed pre-construction measures would be ensured through the City's Standard Condition of Approval.

### *Standard Condition of Approval*

The following measures shall be implemented to avoid potential impacts to birds protected under the MBTA and CDFW:

- **Pre-construction Nesting Bird Survey:** To the extent practicable, vegetation removal and construction activities shall be performed from September 1 through January 31 to avoid the general nesting period for birds. If construction or vegetation removal cannot be performed during this period, pre-construction surveys will be performed no more than two days prior to construction activities to locate any active nests as follows:
  - The applicant shall be responsible for the retention of a qualified biologist to conduct a survey of the project site and surrounding 500 feet for active nests—with particular emphasis on nests of migratory birds—if construction (including site preparation) will begin during the bird nesting season, from February 1 through August 31. If active nests are observed on either the project site or the surrounding area, the applicant, in coordination with the appropriate City staff, shall establish no-disturbance buffer zones around the nests, with the size to be determined in consultation with the California Department of Fish and Wildlife (usually 100 feet for perching birds and 300 feet for raptors). The no-disturbance buffer shall remain in place until the biologist determines the nest is no longer active or the nesting season ends. The project applicant shall submit a report indicating the results of the nesting survey and any designated buffer zones to the Development Services Director or the Director's designee for review and approval prior to the issuance of any demolition, tree removal, or grading permit, whichever occurs earliest. If construction ceases for seven days or more and then resumes during the nesting season, an additional survey performed by a qualified biologist prior to construction resuming shall be completed to avoid impacts on active bird nests that may be present. The results of the additional nesting survey shall be submitted via a report to the Development Services Director or the Director's designee for review and approval prior to the restart of construction activities.



Implementation of the above standard condition of approval would reduce potential impacts to nesting birds if they were to occupy the site during project construction by (1) avoiding the construction the nesting season (of February 1 through August 31, inclusive) or (2) requiring pre-construction surveys and establishment of buffers for active nest if avoidance is infeasible. Furthermore, the removal of a limited number of existing trees to accommodate new development is not unusual for developments proposed in Los Altos. The three trees would be replaced with three, new 24-inch box trees to be planted north of the pergola along the corten fence along with additional landscaped areas (see Figure 5 for the landscaping plan). All existing trees within the Civic Center Apricot Orchard surrounding the project site would remain as is and would not be removed.

Overall, the construction and operation of the project would comply with applicable local, state, and federal regulations, as necessary, and standard conditions of approval would be imposed, consistent with conditions imposed on other development projects in the Los Altos. The proposed courtyard development would not include any unusual operational features or characteristics that would have a significant impact on the environment. No exception to the exemption applies under 15300.2(c).

*(d) Scenic Highways. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may result in damage to scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, historic buildings, rock outcroppings, or similar resources, within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway. This does not apply to improvements which are required as mitigation by an adopted negative declaration or certified EIR.*

**Applicability:** There are no officially designated state scenic highways in the project area. The nearest officially designated state highway is Interstate 280, located approximately five miles northwest of the project site, and it is not visible from the project site.<sup>16</sup> Nor is the project site visible from Interstate 280. The project would not damage scenic resources within a highway officially designated as a state scenic highway, and no exception to the exemption applies under 15300.2(d).

*(e) Hazardous Waste Sites. A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project located on a site which is included on any list compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code.*

**Applicability:** The project site is not included on any lists compiled pursuant to Section 65962.5 of the Government Code; therefore, no exception to the exemption applies under 15300.2(e).<sup>17,18,19</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> California Department of Transportation. "California State Scenic Highway System Map." Accessed June 19, 2024. <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>.

<sup>17</sup> California Environmental Protection Agency. "Cortese List Data Resources." Accessed June 19, 2024. <https://calepa.ca.gov/sitecleanup/corteselist/>.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Toxic Substances Control. "EnviroStor." Accessed June 19, 2024. <https://www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov/public/>

<sup>19</sup> State Water Resources Control Board. "GeoTracker." Accessed June 19, 2024. <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>

(f) *Historical Resources.* A categorical exemption shall not be used for a project which may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource.

**Applicability:** Existing historic resources in proximity to the project site are the Civic Center Apricot Orchard and the J. Gilbert Smith House. As previously mentioned, a section of the northern boundaries of the courtyard project overlaps with the Civic Center Apricot Orchard southern boundaries and approximately 100 feet west of the J. Gilbert Smith Home from its closest boundary. The J. Gilbert Smith Home is not immediately adjacent to the project site nor does it share any immediate space with the site. A Standards Compliance Review, or historic resources evaluation, was prepared by the City’s consulting historian, TreanorHL, in January 2025 to evaluate if the proposed project would cause a substantial adverse change in the historical significance of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard and J. Gilbert Smith House. It is included in this Environmental Memo as Appendix A. Background information and a brief description of these two historic resources are provided below.

J. Gilbert Smith arrived in what would be the City of Los Altos (founded in 1912) in 1901 from Oregon. When he settled into the area, J. Gilbert Smith purchased approximately 10 acres of land near San Antonio Road and Edith Avenue for the purpose of building a residence and establishing an orchard. With his wife, Margaret Hill, J. Gilbert Smith cultivated and maintained an apricot orchard until 1954. At one point, the orchard was approximately 15 acres large.

In 1954, the City of Los Altos offered to buy the 10 acres of J. Gilbert Smith’s orchard to develop the future Civic Center. J. Gilbert Smith sold the land to the City with two main stipulations: (1) the City would establish a history museum on the site and (2) the remaining apricots trees on the property needed to be maintained and replaced as needed. The City followed the conditions imposed by J. Gilbert Smith by turning his residence into a museum and maintaining the remaining orchard land with apricot trees.<sup>20</sup>

- **Civic Center Apricot Orchard** – The apricot trees within the Civic Center Apricot Orchard were first planted by J. Gilbert Smith, one of the first Los Altos residents to establish a fruit orchard in Los Altos in the early 1900s. The orchard is historically important to the City since the Civic Center Apricot Orchard is the last remaining orchard in Los Altos and the orchard also holds significance for being planted by early Los Altos resident, J. Gilbert Smith.<sup>21</sup>

The City of Los Altos designated the orchard as a City Landmark in 1981 per Resolution No. 81-23, and the boundaries of the orchard were modified by the City in 1991 under Resolution No. 91-31. The 1991 orchard boundaries and total area have not changed and is the same today.

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<sup>20</sup> Circa: Historic Property Development. *State of California Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record for J. Gilbert Smith House*. Recorded July 2011. Page 2.

<sup>21</sup> TreanorHL. *Los Altos Library Courtyard Project. Los Altos, California Standards Compliance Review*. January 2025. Page 9.

- **J. Gilbert Smith House** – The J. Gilbert Smith House 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 Antonio Road to the west. The building shares the block with the Los Altos Library, Los Altos Police Department, Los Altos Youth Center, Los Altos City Hall, Los Altos Community Center, Hillview Baseball Field, and some residential buildings approximately 360 feet east of the J. Gilbert Smith House.

The J. Gilbert Smith House is a two-story, wood-frame, shingled farmhouse constructed between 1901 and 1905. The main façade of the residence faces west with a wrap-around porch in front of the wooden entrance door. On the front and back of the residence are dormers, or structured vertical windows, that protrude from the roof. On the southern portion of the house is a shallow one-story staircase that leads to the second floor. The entire residence has a rustic design that is still evident today. Overall, the residence still maintains its original plan, style, and form, although minor alterations have occurred through the years as the residence has been converted into a museum for the public.<sup>22</sup>

The J. Gilbert Smith House has significance due its association with early Los Altos resident, J. Gilbert Smith. The residence was designated a historical landmark by the City of Los Altos per Resolution No. 81-23 in 1981. The historical designation included the historic house, the surrounding garden, and the apricot orchard, also known as the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. In August 1987, the house was also designated as a California Point of Historical Interest.

Analysis of the project’s impact on the Civic Center Apricot Orchard and J. Gilbert Smith House is provided below in terms of its consistency with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation and Los Altos Community Design & Historic Resources portion of the City’s adopted General Plan.

### Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation

For the purposes of this analysis, a project that conforms with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation would be considered not to cause a significant impact on historic resources. In this context, 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.<sup>23</sup> There are 10 standards for the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation (Standards) that are used as thresholds in this analysis.

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<sup>22</sup> Circa: Historic Property Development. *State of California Department of Parks and Recreation Primary Record for J. Gilbert Smith House*. Recorded July 2011. Page 2.

<sup>23</sup> TreanorHL. *Los Altos Library Courtyard Project. Los Altos, California Standards Compliance Review*. January 2025. Page 20.

## Civic Center Apricot Orchard

The 10 Standards and analyses as it pertains to Civic Center Apricot Orchard are provided in the table below. In summary, based on the information in Table 1 and Appendix A, the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would continue to be able to convey its historical value since the project would conform with the Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation criteria.

**Table 1: Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation Analysis for the Civic Center Apricot Orchard**

<b>Secretary of Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation</b>	<b>Civic Center Apricot Orchard Analysis</b>
<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Standard 1 Analysis:</b> The project would result in the construction and operation of a courtyard that would serve the existing Los Altos Library. The proposed courtyard would be directly south of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard and impede on the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard (which consists of a dirt area that is unplanted). Based on the general, historic planting pattern, this dirt area that the project would impede upon could accommodate approximately seven orchard trees.<sup>24</sup> However, no trees currently exists within this dirt area and no existing apricot trees would be removed to accommodate the courtyard. Three ornamental trees (not orchard trees) located at the rear entrance of the library and at the end of the pedestrian pathway leading to the existing parking lot (refer to Figure 4 for the exact tree locations) would be removed and replaced with three new trees. The proposed change to the project site would not alter the defining characteristic of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard or conceal the orchard’s historic purpose since the orchard would remain intact. The obstruction of seven potential planting sites would also not alter the historic purpose of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard since the historic significance of the orchard is based on the existing trees planted (and the Resolution No. 91-31 boundaries) not the potential for new trees. The Civic Center Apricot Orchard would continue to maintain its historic use as an apricot orchard since the project would not remove any existing orchard trees. Therefore, the project would comply with Standard 1 as related to the Civic Center Apricot Orchard.</p>
<p>2. The historic character of a property shall be treated and preserved. The removal of historic materials or</p>	<p><b>Standard 2 Analysis:</b> The defining feature of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard that gives the resource its</p>

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. Page 15.

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**Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation**

alteration of features and spaces that characterize a property shall be avoided.

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**Civic Center Apricot Orchard Analysis**

historic character are the existing apricot trees. As stated above, the project would encroach into the southern boundary edge of an unplanted area of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. While the encroachment would obstruct the potential planting of seven trees, no existing apricot trees are within this area currently and no existing apricot trees within the Civic Center Apricot Orchard boundary would be removed as a result of the project. Therefore, the obstruction would not constitute the removal of trees and the character-defining feature of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would remain intact during project construction and operation. The encroachment on the southern edge of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard's boundary would not affect the orchard's historic character since this historic resource would still communicate its use and function as an orchard via the existing trees. Therefore, the project would comply with Standard 2 as related to the Civic Center Apricot Orchard.

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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.

**Standard 3 Analysis:** The proposed courtyard would be located along and partially within the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. As described in Section IV Project Description, the project would construct a courtyard (adjacent to the northern boundary of the Los Altos Library) consisting of new hardscape (including pedestrian pathways), a multi-purpose seating area, an audio-visual system for the multi-purpose seating area, and landscaping. The courtyard would include new permeable paved area along with new landscaping along the boundaries of the courtyard. The pergola for the multi-purpose seating area would be wood while the fencing around the courtyard would be a mix of metal, wood, and glass. None of the proposed improvements would add architectural features or elements that give a false historic appearance and alter the historical development of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. Additionally, the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would still be recognizable as an orchard because no existing apricot trees would be removed and the obstruction of the current dirt area along the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard boundary (that could potentially be planted with seven trees) does not define the orchard. Therefore, the authenticity of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would remain and the project

Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation	Civic Center Apricot Orchard Analysis
	would comply with Standard 3 as related to the Civic Center Apricot Orchard.
<p>4. Most properties change over time; those changes that have acquired historic significance in their own right shall be retained and preserved.</p>	<p><b>Standard 4 Analysis:</b> The Civic Center Apricot Orchard boundaries were last changed in 1991 as shown in Figure 3. While the project would encroach into the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard, the slight overlap would not require tree removal nor would it diminish the historic significance of the 1991 Civic Center Apricot Orchard boundaries. In addition, the obstruction of the dirt area (which could potentially be planted with seven trees) would not change the historic significance of the Civic Center Orchard since: (1) all existing orchard trees would remain and (2) the orchard has decreased in size since its purchase by the City in 1954 with the construction of buildings and walkways and the 1991 boundary modification. Even with the historic decrease in the orchard boundary, the land still communicates the orchard use. The Civic Center Apricot Orchard that exists today would retain and continue to preserve its historic significance. There have been no other changes to the orchard that have acquired historic significance in their own rate that require retention or preservation. Therefore, the project would comply with Standard 4 because the historical boundary change that occurred under Resolution No. 91-31 would remain as is with implementation of the project.</p>
<p>5. Distinctive features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of fine craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved</p>	<p><b>Standard 5 Analysis:</b> The Civic Center Apricot Orchard does not demonstrate any distinct construction techniques or craftsmanship since the orchard is composed of only apricot trees. The removal of the three ornamental trees and the library's existing trellis, patio, and paved pedestrian pathway adjacent to the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would also not be impactful since they are not examples of fine craftsmanship. Therefore, the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would maintain its existing, distinctive apricot trees, the project would comply with Standard 5.</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p><b>Standard 6 Analysis:</b> The project does not propose to repair or replace any features of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard as no existing apricot trees would be removed. All existing apricot trees would remain as is with the proposed project. Therefore, the project would comply with Standard 6.</p>

Replacement of missing features shall be substantiated by documentary, physical, or pictorial evidence.

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.

**Standard 7 Analysis:** Standard 7 is not applicable. The project does not include chemical or physical treatments to the Civic Center Apricot Orchard.

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

**Standard 8 Analysis:** Los Altos has archaeological heritage and historic resources dated from the early 1900s. The area of Los Altos was also home to the Ohlone and Muwekma Indian tribes, who lived near creekside locations within the city boundaries.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, previously unknown subsurface resources could potentially be unearthed during project construction. As described in Section IV Project Description, the project would include ground disturbing activities such as excavating to a depth of five feet. While the likelihood of encountering buried cultural resources would be lower with the shallow depth of excavation proposed, the project would be required to implement the following standard condition of approval to avoid impacts to unknown subsurface resources.

*Standard Condition of Approval*

The following standard measure would be implemented as part of the project to avoid impacts to unknown subsurface resources:

- **Discovery of Archaeological Resources:** If prehistoric or historic-period cultural materials are unearthed during ground-disturbing activities, then all construction work within 100 feet of the find shall be halted and the Development Services Director or the Director's designee shall be notified. The project applicant shall contract with a qualified archaeologist and Native American representative that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area as described in Public Resources Code Section 21080.3 to examine the find. Prehistoric materials might include, but are

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<sup>25</sup> City of Los Altos. *Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration for The Los Altos General Plan Update*. November 2002. Page 20.

limited to, obsidian and chert-flaked stone tools (e.g., projectile points, knives, scrapers) or tool-making debris; culturally darkened soil ("midden") containing heat-affected rocks and artifacts; stone milling equipment (e.g., mortars, pestles, handstones, or milling slabs); and battered-stone tools, such as hammerstones and pitted stones. Historic-period materials might include stone, concrete, or adobe footings and walls; filled wells or privies; and deposits of metal, glass, and/or ceramic refuse. If the find is determined to be potentially significant, the archaeologist, in consultation with the Native American representative, shall develop a treatment plan that could include, but not limited to, site avoidance, capping, or data recovery. A report of findings documenting any data recovery shall be submitted to the Development Services Director or the Director's designee and the Northwest Information Center (if applicable). Project personnel shall not collect or move any cultural materials.

With implementation of the above standard condition of approval, the project would reduce the cultural resource impacts during construction to a less than significant level by stopping construction and preparing and implementing a research design and treatment plan if any archaeological resources are found thereby protecting the resource .

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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.

**Standard 9 Analysis:** As previously mentioned, the addition of the proposed courtyard project would result in a slight encroachment into the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. Although the spatial relationships among the trees within the orchard would change (especially with the obstruction of the limited dirt area on the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard), the orchard is a fluid historic resource that frequently changes with the removal and replacement of trees. The obstruction of the dirt area within the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard (which could potentially be used for about seven future tree planting sites) also would not destroy historic

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materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the Civic Center Apricot Orchard because this resource does not currently rely on this dirt area or its potential planting sites to convey the historic nature of the orchard. Furthermore, no existing apricot trees would be removed, which are the main historic feature of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. The Civic Center Apricot Orchard would still be able to visually communicate its historical function as an orchard post-construction of the project.

While the project would be distinct and easily identifiable as a new addition to the area due to the modern elements proposed (such as the new hardscape and multi-purpose seating area with an audio-visual system), the new courtyard would be compatible with the scale and proportion of the surrounding development. The pergola would be approximately 11.2 feet tall, similar to the height of the Los Altos Library and Los Altos City Hall, which is within the Civic Center boundaries. The concrete pedestrian pathways that would lead to City Hall or the east parking lot would be similar to the existing pathways on-site. The size and scale of the courtyard would not overwhelm the Civic Center Apricot Orchard either because the courtyard would be of similar height as the existing buildings surrounding the orchard and the orchard's defining feature (the apricot trees) would all remain. Therefore, the project would not diminish or destroy the historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the Civic Center Apricot Orchard as the project would be compatible with the historic size, scale and proportion, and massing of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard and its environment.

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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

**Standard 10 Analysis:** The project includes the construction and operation of a courtyard with an multi-purpose seating area sheltered by a pergola. The outdoor multi-purpose seating area would include bench seating and have an audio-visual system with six speakers and five screen monitors mounted to the top of the pergola. New hardscape and landscaping elements would also be constructed. If all features of the project were to be removed in the future, the Civic Center Apricot Orchard would be unimpaired. Additionally, the dirt area within the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot

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Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation	Civic Center Apricot Orchard Analysis
	Orchard that would be obstructed by the project would revert back to its existing, exposed condition if the project improvements were removed in the future. Removal of the proposed courtyard would not harm the form or integrity of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard since removal of the project would not require removal of any existing apricot trees. Therefore, the project would comply with Standard 10.

J. Gilbert Smith House

The J. Gilbert Smith House would be maintained and remain as is since the courtyard project would not encroach into any portion of the residence or change the existing residence. There would be no repairs, additions, or treatments (chemical or physical) to the J. Gilbert Smith House as a result of the project. The historic materials, features, and spatial relationship that characterize the J. Gilbert Smith House would remain intact due to the lack of project interference. Therefore, the project complies with all 10 standards under the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as they relate to the J. Gilbert Smith House.

Los Altos Community Design & Historic Resources

In addition to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the project was compared to criteria from the Los Altos Community Design and Historic Resources (CDHR) portion of the Los Altos General Plan. Criteria 1, 3, 7, 10, 11, and 12 from Community Design and Historic Resources Element 1 (Community Identity and Character) and Community Design and Historic Resources Element 12 (Preserve Significant Historic Resources) were applied to the project. Criteria 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9 under Element 1 are not applicable to the project.

**Table 2: Project Consistency with Applicable Los Altos Community Design & Historic Resources Elements and Criteria**

Los Altos CDHR Elements and Criteria	Analysis
<b>CDHR 1: Community Identity and Character*</b>	
1) Maintaining the low density, low profile residential character of the community through zoning regulations and design guidelines;	<b>Criteria 1 Analysis:</b> The project is not a residential project but the criteria is applied to compare the project to the surrounding buildings. The pergola that would be part of the project would have a maximum height of approximately 11.2 feet. The fencing surrounding the courtyard would be a mix of wood, metal, and glass with the fence being a maximum height of seven feet. Both the pergola and fencing would have low profiles that would be similar to the surrounding single-story buildings

Los Altos CDHR Elements and Criteria	Analysis
3) Preserving trees, especially those designated as heritage and landmark trees;	(e.g., Los Altos Library and City Hall) and not change the character of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard, J. Gilbert Smith House, and larger Civic Center. Therefore, the project would comply with this criteria.
7) Promoting site planning and project design with an emphasis on small town scale and	<b>Criteria 3 Analysis:</b> The project would not remove any Civic Center Apricot Orchard apricot trees and all apricot trees, which are designated heritage trees <sup>26</sup> , would be preserved (i.e., not impacted by the project). While a limited dirt area within the southern boundary of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard which could be seven potential apricot tree planting sites will be obstructed due to the construction of the project, no trees currently exist in the dirt area. The project would remove three ornamental trees and plant three new replacement trees. Therefore, the project would comply with this criteria.
10) Developing distinguishing gateways to the City representative of its unique characteristics;	<b>Criteria 7 Analysis:</b> As mentioned above in Criteria 1 Analysis, the scale of the project is similar to the Los Altos Library building and would not be taller than the surrounding buildings within the Civic Center. Therefore, the existing small town scale and feel would be maintained with the courtyard project. Furthermore, the courtyard project would maintain the pedestrian pathways connecting to sidewalk adjacent to South San Antonio Road and provide connection to City Hall and the east parking lot. Therefore, the project would comply with this criteria.
11) Encouraging community events throughout the City	<b>Criteria 10 Analysis:</b> The term gateway is referring to the primary entrances into Los Altos from other cities and towns and how the City would like attractive gateways at the primary entrances to the City to distinguish Los Altos from its neighboring cities. <sup>27</sup> The project is not located at a city entryway. <sup>28</sup> Therefore, the project would comply with this criteria.
11) Encouraging community events throughout the City	<b>Criteria 11 Analysis:</b> As mentioned in Section IV Project Description, the proposed courtyard would

<sup>26</sup> Per the Los Altos Municipal Code Chapter 11.08.020, Heritage tree means any tree so designated by the historical commission, based on the finding that the tree has character, interest, or value as part of the development of, and/or exemplification of, the cultural, educational, economic, agricultural, social, indigenous, or historical heritage of the city.

<sup>27</sup> City of Los Altos. "Community Design & Historic Resources Element," *Los Altos General Plan 2002-2020*. November 2022. Page 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. Figure CDHR-1.

Los Altos CDHR Elements and Criteria	Analysis
	<p>support the existing events occurring at the Los Altos Library, including book clubs, music performances, and educational programs, in addition to allowing for expansion of the Library's programming opportunities and partnerships with community groups including the Los Altos History Museum, GreenTown, and Master Gardeners. Therefore, the project would continue to encourage community events for the public to attend. The project would comply with this criteria.</p>
<b>CDHR 12: Preserve Significant Historic Resources</b>	
<p>Assess development proposals for potential impacts to significant historic resources pursuant to Section 15064.5 of the CEQA Guidelines. For structures that potentially have historic significance, require a study conducted by a professional archaeologist or historian to determine the actual significance of the structure and potential impacts of the proposed development. Require modification of projects to avoid significant impacts, or require mitigation measures. Protect historical buildings and sites to the extent possible, including modifications to Uniform Code requirements for historic structures.</p>	<p><b>Element 12 Analysis:</b> The Civic Center Apricot Orchard and J. Gilbert Smith House were both designated as local historical landmarks in 1981 by the City of Los Altos and are historic resources. Both resources have been recorded on Department of Parks and Recreation 523 forms as historic resources. There are no other designated historic resources in proximity to the project site.</p> <p>As discussed in Table 1 above, and in more detail in Appendix A, the project would not change, alter, or remove any historical features of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard. The J. Gilbert House would also remain unchanged without alterations due to the distance between the project and the residence. As a result, the J. Gilbert Smith House would retain its historic integrity and significance. Therefore, the project would be consistent with all the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and comply with the applicable criteria of the Community Design and Historic Resources Element of the Los Altos General Plan.</p>
<p>CDHR = Community Design &amp; Historic Resources  Note: *CDHR 1 criteria 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 12 are not applicable</p>	

Based on the above discussion, the project would not result in a substantial adverse change in the historic significance of the Civic Center Apricot Orchard or J. Gilbert Smith House, and the project would not impede on the preservation of these historic resources. Therefore, no exception to the exemption applies under 15300.2(f).

## VI. Conclusion

As documented in Section V Analysis of Eligibility for Categorical Exemption, with the incorporation of the City's standard conditions of approval, none of the exceptions contained in CEQA Guidelines Section 15300.2 apply to the project and the project is consistent with the criteria in CEQA Guidelines Sections 15301 and 15303. The project, therefore, qualifies as exempt from the provisions of CEQA under Class 1 and 3 of the CEQA Guidelines.

## APPENDIX

Appendix A: Secretary of Interior's Standards Compliance Review Report