



PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE

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From: [Jim Wing](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT AGENDA ITEM 01 METTING DATE 04/25/2023 STUDY SESSION
Date: Thursday, April 20, 2023 2:00:06 PM

Los Altos Mayor Meadows and Distinguished Council Members,

Subject: Council 04/25/2023 Study Session Halsey House

You are stewards of Redwood Grove and need to protect our gem of a nature preserve!

I recommend you choose Option A Demolition of Halsey House. Also include demolition of Caretaker House to minimize impact of park closure during contractor work and cost.

Public Benefit should be the major factor in your decision. Type of Redwood Grove public usage has changed dramatically in past 10 years with majority wanting a “tranquil place to walk and see nature. As a 55-year resident who almost daily walks Redwood Grove, I have seen the following changes:

- Public visitors have increased 10-fold due to native plant restoration, safety, and four entrances [Shoup, University, Fremont, Manresa]. Sometimes on weekends I see over 20 families enjoying safe tranquil walks on trails. Many are drawn by Bay Area Trail Apps that highlight Redwood Grove / Fremont connection to Los Altos Hills trails and beyond. Weekdays 3 to 5 families with strollers and many “work at home” neighbors taking a break and walking dogs.
- Many come to enjoy safe tranquility of walking in a quiet nature preserve. They want to get away from noise in Shoup Park and its Garden House / Patriots Corner event centers.
- Los Altos Hills Public Works has connector pathway project to enhance safety of Fremont trail entrance by using gentile slope of old abandoned Fremont Road. A pathway that I safely used in 1970 / 1980 with my children in stroller. Grass Roots Ecology has just completed native plant restoration along Manresa entrance 1/3-mile trail. This is a popular entrance because University has available street parking.
- Naturescape features like those in Golden Gate Park have been ordered by staff and will be installed soon in Redwood Grove flat areas.

Los Altos will need additional investment to keep Redwood Grove safe. Investments like \$978K to rebuild pedestrian bridge, elevated pathway, and creekbank erosion in 2012.

- Halsey family planted almost 250 Coastal Redwood Trees in early 1920’s. Presently there are 136 Redwood Trees with 16 of them beyond saving from death per Ted Dawson UC Berkeley Department of Forestry criteria. Investment needs to be made for saving remaining trees using good forestry practice developed by lumber companies.
- Eight-ton Fire / Maintenance bridge is starting to have structural problems. This is only bridge that provides emergency access to Halsey House and southern half of Redwood Grove. Fire Department has looked at under bridge structure and will review again this summer during biannual Redwood Grove inspection / procedure update. They have a 6.8ton pump truck that they would like to use for Halsey House and surrounding trees.
- Sidewalk along Adobe Creek adjacent to Halsey House has been undercut by creekbank erosion and now cracked. Small children are now at risk of falling into

creek during high water flows. Sidewalk will soon be at risk of breaking off and falling into creek. This safety problem was reported in 2019 and 2023 to staff and Parks Commission. In 2019 staff said it needed to be fixed, but deferred any action until Halsey House was refurbished.

- Adobe Creek and its flood zone is classified as “ephemeral stream” and is governed by Federal Environmental Regulations. These regulations limit construction June to November “dry months” and designs require Core of Engineers approval. United States Supreme Court held 10/03/2022 oral arguments on Case number 21-454 Sackett v EPA that may increase cost and timing of any Halsey House project.
- Caretaker House needs demolition because of structure rot and electrical power line from Fremont Road supported by tree trunks. Replacement only needs to be a small storage building to be used by Summer Camps and Grassroots Ecology.
- Halsey House is in a 100-year flood plain. In 1976 flood, I stood just uphill of archery hay bale target and saw over one foot of Adobe Creek flood water inside of Halsey House. Cement front porch was covered with water and not visible. We are at risk of another flood like 1976 if Adobe Creek watershed has a fire. Recent CZU fire came with 1/3 mile of jumping over Skyline Road and into Adobe Creek watershed. A watershed that is “ripe” for a fire because of inaccessible dry brush and dead trees.

Thank you for your consideration! 55-year resident Jim Wing, Milverton Road, Los Altos

From: [Pat Marriot](#)
To: [Public Comment](#)
Subject: PUBLIC COMMENT STUDY SESSION HALSEY HOUSE APRIL 25, 2023
Date: Monday, April 24, 2023 11:03:27 AM

Council Members:

PLEASE stop waffling and wasting time on Halsey House. Just tear it down and plant some more redwood trees.

Today's Daily Post reports Council has discussed this at least 19 times since 2008 and the Historic Commission at least 28 times.

I know some residents have an emotional attachment to it for what it used to be. I know there are issues regarding its historical designation. But it's just a dilapidated old building. It's absolutely not worth spending millions of dollars to fix it up when we have so many other priorities.

Los Altos has not been known for asset maintenance. Let Halsey House serve as a lesson for the future. Consider, for example, the former coffee shop at the \$2.8M triangle in Loyola Corners.

Thanks for listening,

Pat Marriott

Halsey House.

Like many members of the council and public I had several reactions to the recent events.

First however I need to be clear that I do want Halsey House, a city landmark, preserved as a landmark structure, but within that broad framework I am open to adaptive use alternatives that once again make it a valuable and well used part of the Los Altos experience.

Secondly there has been nonsensical talk by some in the community, including unfortunately council member Pete Dailey that somehow the land is unsuitable for the continued existence of Halsey house. We have had massive rain and flooding over the past 4 months without any impact to Halsey house, we have had earthquakes as well since the house was constructed. Any extant conditions can be addressed when the house is repaired. Garden house is at far greater risk of damage than Halsey House.

There have also been efforts by Pete Dailey and others to defend tearing down Halsey house because of the business practices of Theodore Halsey. Using that same logic, we would eliminate Shoup park and the entire city of Los Altos. The building is the reason Redwood Grove exists and by itself has historic and architectural merit. No one is advocating putting up a statue to honor Halsey, but the demolition of a historic building is not an acceptable remedy.

Point 1-Sympathy-all of us in town should be sympathetic to the issue of having a cost estimate that is one half the cost that a contractor is willing to do the work. this issue needs to be reviewed, to understand why and see if the scope of the RFP needs to be modified or other contractors engaged. I am happy to help that effort

2-Reasonability-how can the city require homeowners and businesses which own landmark building to maintain them under penalty when the city has, over the past 20 years, not met its legal obligation. As an owner of a city landmark building, I am appalled and offended by the city trying to weasel out of their responsibility when all others accountable.

3-Shame-how does this city spend and continue to spend tens of thousands of dollars on discretionary projects ahead of an expenditure required by law. The community center, a feasibility study of downtown theater, the dog park all have money allocated. The reality is the park in lieu money is real, it is available and the city council has taken actions which are not consistent with their obligations and the funds that are available for projects such as Halsey House. The city council made a decision and commitment two years ago to mothball the structure. The funds required have increase by approx. 200k- for god sake the community center ran \$12M over the originally proposed budget.

4-Legality-Council member Meadows, Weinberg and Dailey ran on a platform that they wanted to keep the city from lawsuits. The law is very clear on the requirements to maintain a landmark structure. All of you defend the housing element effort, in part because you claim the city must follow the law. Or is only selective laws the city council decides it must follow? Evaluations of Halsey House by professionals have confirmed the integrity of the building as well as the urgent need to stabilize the structure. Nothing has changes since other than the city slow walking the work that needs to be done. If it were your home, it wouldn't take a year and a half to hire a contractor for urgent repairs. Demolition by neglect is illegal.

You have obligation to maintain a landmark structure, not try to use pretenses and CEQA to justify its demolition.

Jonathan Baer