

DATE: April 29, 2013

AGENDA ITEM # 4

AGENDA REPORT

TO: Historical Commission
FROM: Zachary Dahl, Staff Liaison
SUBJECT: Historic Preservation Award

RECOMMENDATION:

Consider nominations for the 2013 Los Altos Historic Preservation Award

BACKGROUND

The Los Altos Historic Preservation Award was adopted by the City Council in May 2012 with the intent of recognizing individuals, groups, organizations or projects that exemplify the spirit of historic preservation in the City of Los Altos. Nominees should demonstrate a dedication to historic preservation in the City of Los Altos within at least one of the following criteria:

1. Demonstration of pioneering or innovative efforts in historic preservation or education;
2. Conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation;
3. Public Benefit received (educational, beautification, advocacy, etc.); and/or
4. Impact to the City of Los Altos.

The purpose of the award is to 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.

DISCUSSION

A total of three nominations were received by staff: 1) Irene Grenier, nominated by Marie Backs and Wendell Lehr, 2) King Lear, nominated by Roy Lave, 3) Marion and Robert Grimm, nominated by Walter Chapman

The Commission should consider all written evidence and oral testimony from members of the public before voting on the award recipient. Nominees who do not receive the award may be resubmitted for consideration in subsequent years. The award recipient will be recognized with a Mayor's Proclamation at the City Council meeting on May 14, 2013.

Attachments:

- A. Irene Grenier Nomination
- B. King Lear Nomination
- C. Marion and Robert Grimm Nomination

2013 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATION

I AM NOMINATING Irene Grenier for the 2013 Historic Preservation Award.

Irene has been a member of the Los Altos History Museum Association long before it was an association and we were the History House Auxiliary. She has always had an avid interest in our oral history program. She has interviewed a great many of our community members over the years and she began a "Music and Memories" program at History House. She wrote the scripts based on her oral histories of individuals and directed players who would dress as that individual and recite a conversation or thoughts of that individual. There was sing-a-longs or background music that was indicative of the period. These events were held on the porch of the J. Gilbert Smith house with the audience seated near the Hanson Arbor. Irene's husband Barry and her daughter Gabby would video tape the proceedings. She would always bake cookies and serve lemonade.

Irene helped with the refurbishing of the J. Gilbert Smith house when our association decided to furnish it in a 1930's era home. The Grenier's live in an historic house that has been refurbished inside and out. It has been on the Association's Historic House Tour and is listed on the Historical Inventory. I remember when she took plantings and bulbs from her beautiful garden down to the newly constructed gazebo in Lincoln Park and planted them around the perimeter. She has always had a strong interest in Los Altos History and is an informed resource.



City of Los Altos

2013 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATION

I am nominating IRENE GRENIER for the 2013 Historic Preservation Award.

Describe the reasons why the nominee should receive the Historic Preservation Award and how the nominee meets the following criteria:

1. Demonstration of pioneering or innovative efforts in historic preservation or education.
2. Conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation.
3. Public Benefit received (educational, beautification, advocacy, etc.).
4. Impact to the City of Los Altos.

The value of the Oral History program as a source of information about the early days of Los Altos cannot be overstated and much of the credit goes to Irene Grenier. Irene took charge of the program in its early stages, organized and managed its activities which included recruiting volunteers who interviewed early residents, recording their memories on tape, transcribing, correcting and editing the texts for permanent storage. The recorded histories are now available resources for journalists, historians and residents who wish to know more about their city when it was a town. Don McDonald and Wendell Lehr each, in turn, succeeded her as Chairman of the Committee but the groundwork was done by Irene and its activities continue to this day.

If applicable, submit copies of letters of commendation or any other supporting documentation (not required). Attach additional sheets as needed.

Nominated by: Wendell Lehr Date: April 12, 2013

In order to officially submit a nomination for the 2013 Historic Preservation Award, please submit one copy of all necessary documentation to the Historical Commission staff liaison Zachary Dahl. Materials can be submitted at City Hall, 1 North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022. All nominations must be submitted by **Wednesday, March 21, 2013 at 5:00 pm.**

At the March 25, 2013 meeting, the Historical Commission will be presented with a list of all award nominees, receive documentation and written evidence supporting each nominee and hear oral testimony from members of the public. At the April 22, 2013 meeting, the Historical Commission will hold a vote to determine the recipient of the 2013 Historic Preservation Award. The 2013 Historic Preservation Award winner will be recognized by the City Council with a proclamation at their meeting on May 14, 2013.

2013 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATION FOR KING LEAR

In 2005, King Lear volunteered to raise funds to move and renovate the small house on Marvin Avenue designed by renowned Architect Richard Neutra when the house was offered to the City of Los Altos by the then owner. After the house was moved by the Los Altos Community Foundation as part of the agreement with the City, King also agreed to manage the renovation and the subsequent management of the house as a community meeting place. The renovation preserved most of the significant architectural features of the outside of the building saving as much as the original wood siding and returning it to its natural wood color and replicating the red doors and the silver on the casement windows. Two original windows were preserved and the missing ones were replaced by ones built to original specifications but were made dual pane for energy efficiency. The inside of the house was reconfigured to provide a large meeting room, a catering ready kitchen, and full accessibility. It was necessary to create a meeting space that would generate sufficient revenue to make the project financially viable as there was to be no subsidy for any source. To make the meeting space large enough for attracting group meetings, and the resulting revenue that would make the building financially self-supporting, it was necessary to eliminate interior features that preservation purists wished to maintain. Those features would have left an ill shaped and small meeting room. The result is a wonderful example of adaptive reuse providing a popular meeting place for many nonprofits and the City which is the major user.

To assure as much architectural integrity as possible, King organized a committee of local architects including some of the most well known in the area, as well as Richard Neutra's son, to advise on all aspects of the renovation. King conceived of the concept of using the house not only for a meeting center, but as a local architectural information center with a collection of videos and books emphasizing modern California architecture. With the help of the committee, he created an architectural lecture series which has attracted the best known names in California architecture and those writing about California modern architecture. He has clearly attracted the attention and support of architects and preservationists. He also created a movie series during which he Skypes to a principal or the producer and is planning a summer program in architecture appreciation for the youth in the community.

King's work has given the City its most popular public place to hold meetings, education programs on preservation and architecture, an architectural gem that has put Los Altos on the map as an unusually forward looking community in historic preservation and the subject of admiration as attested to by the attached clippings. The house is an example utilitarian historic preservation accomplished without a dime of public funds.

April 4, 2013

The Neutra House Project

A designated fund at the Los Altos Community Foundation (LACF)

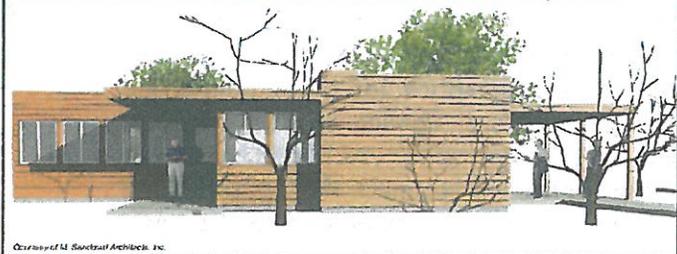
A unique community effort is underway in Los Altos. A group of Los Altos citizens, under the auspices of the Los Altos Community Foundation (LACF), are saving an historic example of mid-century modernist residential design by the famous architect, Richard Neutra (1893-1970). This 750 square foot house, complete with a full kitchen, bathroom, and landscaped grounds, is located at the Hillview Community Center. It is being adapted to be a City/public facility for meetings, classes, receptions and small conferences. An Architectural History Exhibit is being developed to tell the history story on an HDTV display in the conference room. This audio/video system will also serve the needs of conference users. The project is being managed for the City by LACF, using donated funds. Revenue from renting the facility will fund its operation and maintenance at no expense to City taxpayers or donors. The house will be completed and given to the City at the end of 2007.

Honor the Past and Invest in the Future

Jacqueline Johnson and her new house, 1940.



Architecture exhibit and small conference center, 2008



WHY SAVE THE LOS ALTOS NEUTRA HOUSE?

In spite of a national revival for mid-century modern architecture, buildings of this era continue to be torn down and lost for the lack of a sustainable economic model. Our community-funded effort is proving the exception. Our goal is to honor the simple but elegant designs of Neutra and honor his role in local architectural history. Thomas Hines in his book Richard Neutra and the Search for Modern Architecture says that Neutra was "like a beacon of a brave new world." Neutra influenced the designs made popular by Joseph Eichler whose 11,000 homes included some in Los Altos.



Our project has received numerous endorsements including one from the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Santa Clara Valley, which stated: "...we support this architectural exhibit as one that should help educate the public on what architecture is all about and as a very positive outreach toward the promotion of good design. We hope educational programs will be developed for school children and others - class tours, etc. - that will help future generations develop an appreciation for the simple, honest architectural expression so evident in all of Neutra's work."

Kent Mather, Director, for the board.

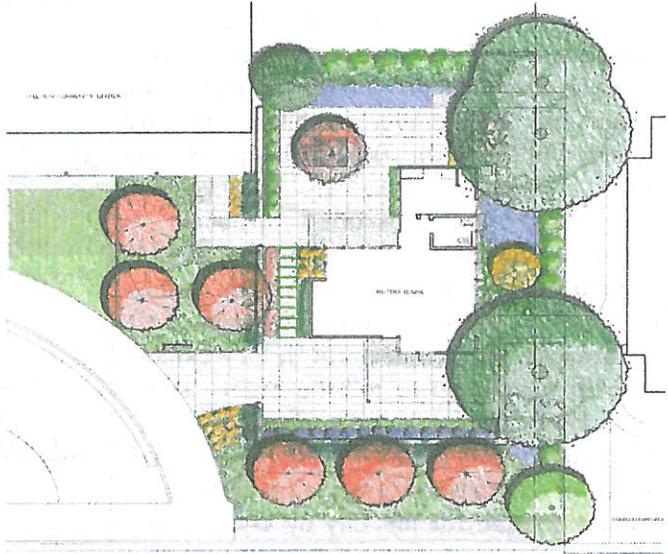
The Johnson house shown here in November 2005, was cut in half and moved to City land. George Limbach, then Chair of the LACF board, and Roy Lave, Executive Director, are supervising.

HISTORY OF THE LOS ALTOS NEUTRA HOUSE

This house represents an important chapter in the history of Los Altos. Richard Neutra designed only ten residential projects in the Bay Area, with just one in Santa Clara County. In 1935 he was commissioned by two poets, Jacqueline Johnson and Clayton Stafford, to design a cluster of three small redwood-clad houses to be located at 184 Marvin Avenue. Neutra referred to this project as "Three Small Houses in an Orchard". The houses were completed in 1939.

THE LANDSCAPE PLAN

We honor the original orchard setting in 1939 with the planting of three fruitless plum trees in front and three on the left side of the entrance, as shown here (in bloom). The entrance is off the front sidewalk at the Hillview Community Center. The original carport will be used as an entry feature. The back yard will provide semi-private outdoor space for those renting the facility. Low-level lighting will be attractive and safe for evening use. Front and rear access paths will connect the house to the Hillview Community Center and to the LACF home, located next door.



ABOUT THE NEUTRA HOUSE FUND

The Neutra House Project is funded through generous gifts and donated services. To date, more than 100 donors have helped bring this vision to reality. Major gifts are at the \$10K, \$25K and \$50K levels. Major gift donors will be honored on a permanent plaque to be displayed in the house. We have just completed the detailed designs and received competitive bids. We find that we have approximately \$400K left to raise for a high quality facility that will last for another 70 years. As we enter the public phase of the capital campaign, we are asking for donations at all levels to complete this community facility. The Neutra House Fund is a donor-advised fund of the Los Altos Community Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax-deductible.

HOW TO GIVE

The LACF is acting as an agent for the City to restore and operate the house at no cost to taxpayers. For information on how to donate, please contact the Neutra House Project in care of the Los Altos Community Foundation, 650.949.5908, or email us at neutra@los-altos.org.

PROJECT TEAM:

LACF: Coeta Chambers, LACF Board Chair; Roy Lave, Executive Director

Design/Construction:

King Lear, Director
David Knudson
Gary Ross
Lynn Szekely
Stephan Tanczos, General
Thomas Klope, ASLA
Robyn Reed, ASLA

Campaign Committee:

Jonathan Baer
Marion Cooper
Justin Drewes
Lynette Lee Eng
Ken Girdley
Randall Hull
King Lear, Chair
Anna Weldon

Architecture History

Advisory Committee:

Joseph Ehrlich FAIS
Thomas Horan AIA
Russ Quacchia
Carroll Rankin AIA
Mark Sandoval AIA



TRACINGS

AIA Santa Clara Valley

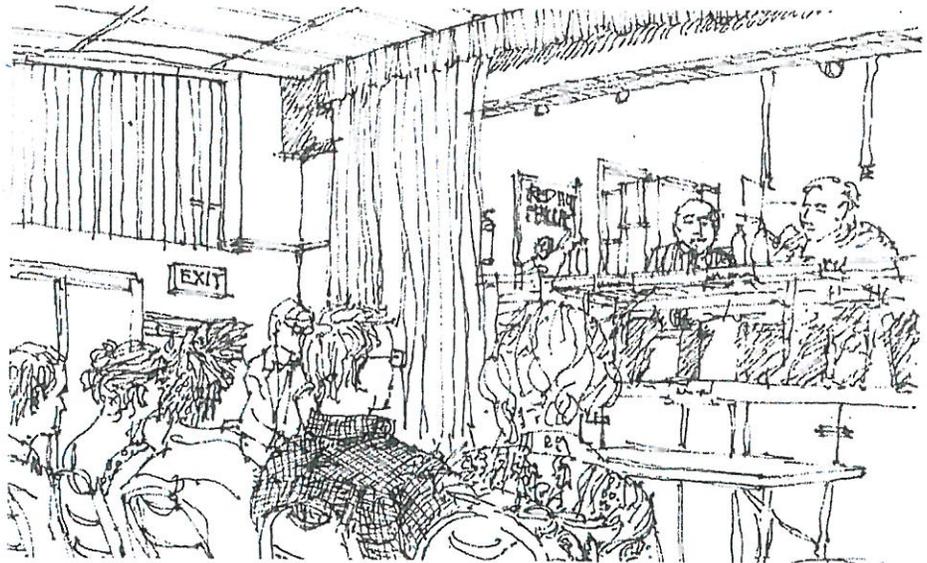
September 2008

AIASCV Inaugurates Neutra House in Los Altos

Sketch by Alan Fritchle, AIA, of Cuschieri Horton Architects

The July 2008 meeting of the AIA Santa Clara Valley Chapter took place on a balmy evening (July 17) at the newly restored Neutra House on Hillview Avenue in downtown Los Altos, with more than 100 members and guests in attendance. A project of the Los Alto Community Foundation, the relocation, restoration and adaptive reuse of this 1939 structure began in earnest in late 2005 with the partial dismantling and moving on flatbed truck of one of the "three small houses in an orchard" designed by world-renowned architect Richard Neutra in the late thirties for a single plot of land several blocks away from the house's current location. The original owners were two poets; each occupied a twin small house, while a third, smaller unit was constructed as a guest house on the same land.

King Lear and Roy Lave, Los Altos Community Foundation project manager and executive director, respectively, were the driving force behind the project. The City of Los Altos approved the use of city land as the new location for the Neutra House, on the conditions that the LACF raise the funds for the construction, and that the facility be financially self-supporting once it was completed and occupied. To meet this last condition, interior modifications were designed which allow the space to function as a small conference facility, with room for meetings of up to 35 people. As much of the original fabric of the house as possible was reused, including structural members and exterior redwood siding. Additional materials were carefully selected for compatibility with the original design. Since the original windows had for the most part been replaced over the years, new steel sash windows were custom-fabricated and installed, fitted for double glazing to meet current energy efficiency requirements. New landscaping was installed which not only retains some of the flavor of the original setting, but expands the interior space into the outside, augmenting the



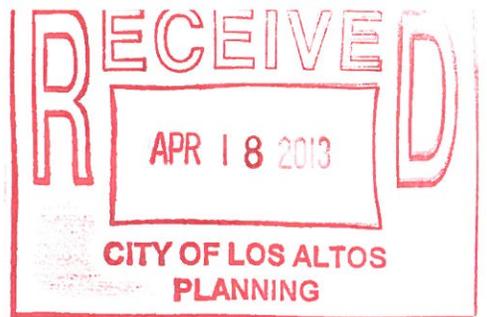
commodiousness and delight of the facility. The house and grounds were the locale of the networking hour for the Chapter meeting. When time came for the meeting proper, attendees migrated into an adjacent city meeting room to participate in the evening's program, which was a lively and thoughtful discussion of the new California Building Code as it pertains to residential projects of all sizes. The discussion was led by a panel of four industry experts, and was adroitly moderated by Peter Duxbury,

AIA, a Los Altos practitioner of, among other things, residential architecture. The four panelists were: Richard Henselka, ICC Certified Code Consultant; Dave Basinger, AIA, ICC Certified Plans Examiner; Keyvan Irannajad, Chief Building Official of the City of Milpitas; and Doug Hohbach, Principal Structural Engineer. The discussion and question and answer period was an informative session with an exchange of various perspectives and insights regarding the code and its interpretation.





City of Los Altos



2013 HISTORIC PRESERVATION AWARD NOMINATION

I am nominating MARION & ROBERT GRIMM for the 2013 Historic Preservation Award.

Describe the reasons why the nominee should receive the Historic Preservation Award and how the nominee meets the following criteria:

1. Demonstration of pioneering or innovative efforts in historic preservation or education.
2. Conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Rehabilitation.
3. Public Benefit received (educational, beautification, advocacy, etc.).
4. Impact to the City of Los Altos.

MARION GRIMM POSTHUMOUSLY AS PRIMARY DRIVING FORCE
OF THE FOUNDING OF THE LOS ALTOS HISTORICAL MUSEUM
ASSOCIATION & ROBERT GRIMM FOR HIS CONTINUING
SUPPORT & SERVICE THROUGHOUT THE YEARS TO ENSURE
THAT LOS ALTOS HISTORY WOULD LIVE ON FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS

If applicable, submit copies of letters of commendation or any other supporting documentation (not required). Attach additional sheets as needed.

Nominated by: WALTER CHAPMAN Date: 4-18-2013

In order to officially submit a nomination for the 2013 Historic Preservation Award, please submit one copy of all necessary documentation to the Historical Commission staff liaison Zachary Dahl. Materials can be submitted at City Hall, 1 North San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022. All nominations must be submitted by **Thursday, April 18, 2013 at 5:00 pm.**

At the April 22, 2013 meeting, the Historical Commission will hold a vote to determine the recipient of the 2013 Historic Preservation Award. The 2013 Historic Preservation Award winner will be recognized by the City Council with a proclamation at their meeting on May 14, 2013.

Historical Preservation Award Nomination

This is to recommend that this year's "Historical Preservation Award" be awarded (posthumously) to Marion Grimm with Bob Grimm accepting on Marion's behalf for her involvement in the creation of the Los Altos Historical Association. As a founding member of the Association and as one of the city's first Historical Commissioners, Marion's tireless and unwavering dedication to preserving the history of Los Altos led directly to the development of the City of Los Altos' first Historical Museum.

The original Historical Museum was located within the Smith House after it was gifted to the City of Los Altos. Before it was converted into the "History House" as we know it today, it served as the depository of the City's Historical Archives for over twenty years. Realizing the limitations of the Smith House to serve as a proper museum, Marion enlisted the help of many supporters, none more dedicated to her endeavors than her husband Bob. Together and with great support from the community, their goal of a full-fledged museum was realized.

For their dedication and efforts, Marion & Bob Grimm should be recognized and honored for their gift to the City of Los Altos: the preservation of the city's history for future generations.