

# UPDATED LANDMARK ASSESSMENT

Historic Ames/Landels Barn  
210 Alta Vista Avenue  
Los Altos, Santa Clara County, California  
(APN #167-34-022, associated with 167-35-002 & 076)



Prepared for:  
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05.20.19



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*Cover image: Detail of North Barn Roof, facing south, April 2019  
(Photograph by Leslie Dill, Archives & Architecture, LLC)*

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This report constitutes an abbreviated update to an existing historic resource evaluation for a small historic agricultural property associated by ownership with the address 210 Alta Vista Ave. and located between Adobe Creek and Foothill Expressway (APN 167-34-022).

The property owner has contracted with Archives & Architecture, LLC, to prepare this report to update the information contained in the City's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI) listing for the property, to note the completed alterations to the property and confirm that the historical significance and historic integrity remains intact. The report and accompanying California Department of Parks & Recreation 523 update forms (DPR523L) are intended to confirm the listing of the property on the HRI and establish that the property could be eligible for a Mills Act contract.

The property that contains the early-twentieth-century barn was recently listed on the Los Altos Heritage Resource Inventory (HRI), identified for its associations with "The Age of Subdivision and Mass Transit" and its family farms, as described in the Los Altos HRI Section II Contexts. The barn was built within the context of the early-twentieth-century land development that closely followed the construction of the Peninsular Railway. It represents associations with the residential farmsteads of early Los Altos. The property, therefore, has significance associated with a pattern of local history or "events..." It also has significance based on its "architecture/design," ... for embodying a twentieth-century gambrel barn design uncommon in the region.

The barn and its setting were also evaluated as eligible for the California Register under Criteria (1) and (3), as they embody the distinctive characteristics of an early-twentieth-Century English Gambrel Barn, and are associated with significant historic patterns of growth of the City of Los Altos, identified in the Context Statement of the City of Los Altos. City of Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory, Section II, Contexts 2, Agriculture 1850 to 1940, as well as the historical influence of transportation on the growth of the city.

The recently completed rehabilitation project included repairs, restoration, and alterations to the barn that were identified in advance as meeting the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties – Rehabilitation Standards* (Standards). A site visit was undertaken by a Qualified Architectural Historian and Historic Architect in April of 2019, and the construction was observed as being consistent with the reviewed design and, therefore, consistent with the Standards. The property maintains its historic integrity and continues to convey an authentic representation of its historic significance. The barn and its setting continue to embody the significance according to California and Los Altos criteria as presented in the 2016 Landmark Assessment and DPR523 forms. The property would be appropriate to consider for a Mills Act Contract.

# INTRODUCTION

## Intent of this Report

The intent of this report is to accompany a Mills Act application. An historical resource evaluation is required by the City of Los Altos to accompany a Mills Act submittal for an HRI-listed property. The report provides an intensive-level historical investigation of the detached accessory structure, along with an evaluation according to State of California and City of Los Altos historic significance criteria. This report is being prepared for review by staff of the Planning Division of the Department of Community Development of the City of Los Altos.

## Policy and Regulatory Background

Los Altos is a community that celebrates its history. This rich past has been incorporated into the fabric of the City and provides a link to the community's heritage and history. The remaining sites and structures of architectural and/or historic significance enhance the community's unique character and contribute to a sense of place.

As outlined in the Los Altos General Plan, it is a goal of the City to preserve and enhance historic and cultural structures and resources within the community. To support that goal, the General Plan identified specific historic preservation policies:

- Ensure that the integrity of historic structures and the parcels on which they are located are preserved through the implementation of applicable design, building, and fire codes.
- The City shall regard demolition of landmark structures and historic structures listed in the Historic Resources Inventory as a last resort. Demolition would be permitted only after the City determines that the resource has lost its integrity, retains no reasonable economic use, that demolition is necessary to protect health, safety and welfare, or that demolition is necessary to precede with a new project where the benefits of the new project outweigh the loss of the historic resource.
- Work with property owners to preserve historic resources within the community.

These goals and policies are implemented through the City's Historical Preservation Ordinance. The primary purpose of the Ordinance is to ensure the protection of irreplaceable historic resources, enhance visual character through architectural compatibility, and encourage appreciation and recognition of the City's past.

The historic significance criteria are defined in Los Altos Municipal Code Article 12.44 (Historical Preservation) and explained in Section I of the City's Historic Resources Inventory as adopted by the Los Altos City Council in 2011. The policy requires that this review be done by a qualified preservation professional when a project involves a historic resource listed on the Inventory.

## Qualifications

Archives & Architecture, LLC, is a cultural resource management firm located in San Jose, California. The partners of the firm are Leslie A.G. Dill, Historic Architect and Architectural Historian, Franklin Maggi, Architectural Historian and Preservation Planner, and Charlene Duval, Public Historian. The firm was founded in 1989 by the late Glory Anne Laffey, Historian, and has been constituted in its current partnership since 2003.

The principal author of this report was Leslie A.G. Dill, Architect, who consults in the field of historic architecture and architectural history. Ms. Dill has a Master of Architecture with a Program Certificate in Historic Preservation from the University of Virginia, Charlottesville, and is an architect licensed in the State of California. Ms. Dill meets the Secretary of the Interior's qualifications to perform identification, evaluation, registration, and treatment activities within the field of Architectural History and Historic Architecture, in compliance with state and federal environmental laws. She is listed as qualified to do this work within the California Historical Resources Information System (CHRIS). The Northwest Information Center, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, operated under authority of the California State Office of Historic Preservation, maintains a list of Historical Resources Consultants who are qualified to do work in the area. CHRIS utilizes the criteria of the National Park Service outlined in 36 CFR Part 61.

## Historical Evaluation Process<sup>1</sup>

The Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory (HRI) is the official list of historic resources, designated historic landmarks and designated historic districts that are significant at the local level (contribute to the history of Los Altos). If a property is over 50 years old, retains its integrity, and has association with one or more of the criteria of significance, then it is eligible for designation as a Historic Resource.

The Los Altos historic evaluation process has been developed using the criteria outlined in the State and National evaluation practices and is intended to coordinate the areas of integrity, significance, and association between the California Register and the City of Los Altos, in order to avoid conflicting information or interpretations. The evaluation process consists of three steps, which are summarized below.

The first step is to determine whether the property development is over fifty years of age – buildings must, in most cases, be fifty years old or older to be considered historic resources.

The next step is to determine whether the property retains enough original materials and features to convey its value as a historic resource.

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<sup>1</sup> Policies excerpted from City of Los Altos Historical Resource Inventory, 2011.

If a resource meets the age requirement and retains physical integrity, the next step is to determine if the resource is associated with a person or event of importance and therefore has significance with an Event, Person/People, Architecture/Design, and/or Yields Important Information based on national, state or local definition. Once it has been determined whether or not a property qualifies as a historic resource, the final step is to assess how it is associated with an important historic context. This context could be an association with a person, event or pattern of events significant in local, state or national history or themes within these associative values. It could be an association with a notable architect or an important architectural style or method of construction. A building, structure or object could also be important for its ability to provide information about prehistory. If a property is found to have a clear association with an important historic context then it is determined to have significance as a historic resource on a national, state or local level.

## Methodology of This Review

1. The site was first examined in 2016 by Leslie Dill of Archives & Architecture, LLC (A&A). Notes on the architecture and characteristic features of the extant barn and its setting were made. Photographs of the barn and views of the setting were taken at this time.
2. The August 2016 Landmark Assessment report and accompanying State of California Department of Parks & Recreation 523 documentation forms (DPR523 forms) were prepared utilizing research and historical investigation according to the methodology recommended by the National Park Service, as outlined in *Preservation Briefs #17 -Architectural Character: Identifying the Visual Aspects of Historic Buildings as an Aid to Preserving Their Character* (1988), and #35 - *Understanding Old Buildings: The Process of Architectural Investigation* (1994).
3. A project design proposing rehabilitation of the barn and preservation of the setting was prepared by Greg Evard, AIA, Architect. The proposed scope of work was reviewed in advance according to the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties*, to assure that the property would continue to embody its significance after the project and retain its integrity. The project was determined by the City that it would be consistent with the Standards and the City's policies.
4. In April 2019, after the construction was substantially complete, Leslie Dill returned to the property and reviewed the finished project. She photographed the property and wrote updated DPR523 continuation sheets that outlined the conclusions of the project and which confirmed the continued significance of the property according to California and Los Altos criteria.



This document is presented in an abbreviated report format. The attached 2016 DPR523 forms and 2019 update forms (DPR523L forms) provide both the background history and the update pages for to the prior historical and architectural documentation.

## Survey Status

The subject parcel at 210 Alta Vista Ave. in the City of Los Altos is presently listed on the City's Inventory as a Historic Resource under Municipal Code Section 12.44.060.

The barn and its triangular parcel were not originally associated with the house addressed at 210 Alta Vista Ave. when the City's first survey of that property was completed in 1997. The barn was acquired later, and its parcel was subsequently documented as a separate property, as it is physically separated by the creek, has a separate history, and no other early associated buildings are extant.

In August and September 2016, the barn property was evaluated by Archives & Architecture, LLC . Provided information included a narrative history of the parcel, an estimated date of construction of the barn, the identification of the owners of the property when the barn was built, character-defining features of the building and setting, some architectural context for the barn design, and an evaluation of significance according to City of Los Altos historic significance criteria and California Register criteria, as well as a historic integrity analysis. The 2016 report and accompanying DPR523 forms concluded that the property was eligible for the City of Los Altos Historic Resource Inventory for its associations with "The Age of Subdivision and Mass Transit" and its family farms. The barn was built within the context of the early-twentieth-century land development that closely followed the construction of the Peninsular Railway. It represents associations with the residential farmsteads of early Los Altos. The property, therefore, has significance associated with a pattern of local history or "events" and also has significance based on its "architecture/design," for embodying a twentieth-century gambrel barn design uncommon in the region. The barn and its setting were also found eligible for the California Register under Criteria (1) and (3), as they embody the distinctive characteristics of an early-twentieth-Century English Gambrel Barn, and are associated with significant historic patterns of growth of the City of Los Altos, as well as the historical influence of transportation on the growth of the city.

This 2019 report is intended to update the evaluation of the property following an extensive rehabilitation and restoration project. The highly deteriorated exterior materials were replaced in-kind or altered within the Standards, the failing structural design was altered with no visible exterior impacts, and the interior was altered for unconditioned residential accessory space.

It is the professional opinion of the consultants that the modifications and additions to the site were designed and constructed in a sensitive way that retained the historic character of the building on the site and preserved the riparian setting. The property did

not lose integrity during the rehabilitation process and retains its significance as an historic resource for the City of Los Altos.

The barn on its triangular parcel, identified as APN 167-34-022, continues to meet the criteria of the City of Los Altos and State of California as a significant historic resource.

## Historical and Architectural Information

DPR523 recording forms, dated 08/24/16, include a technical description of the historic buildings prior to rehabilitation, some historical context and property history, as well as an integrity statement and evaluations, along with digital photographs of the property in 2016. These forms are attached at the end of this report.

Also attached are DPR523L update forms, appended to the 2016 DPR forms and dated 05/15/19, contain updated descriptive information, along with digital photographs of the exterior of the buildings, taken in April 2019.

## References

Dill, Leslie and Franklin Maggi of Archives & Architecture, LLC. State of California Department of Parks & Recreation Form 523. August 24, 2016.

Dill, Leslie and Franklin Maggi of Archives & Architecture, LLC. Landmarks Assessment Report: Historic Ames/Landels Barn. September 6, 2016.

Dill, Leslie of Archives & Architecture, LLC. Secretary of the Interior's Standards Review: Proposed Barn Rehabilitation Project at the Historic Ames/Landels Barn, October 2, 2017.

Dill, Leslie of Archives & Architecture, LLC. Addendum to Secretary of the Interior's Standards Review – Rehabilitation Plan Review. February 28, 2018.

## LOCATIONAL INFORMATION

Street Address: 210 Alta Vista Ave., Los Altos, Santa Clara County, California

APN: 167-34-022; linked by ownership and access to 167-35-002 and 167-35-076.

Universal Transverse Mercator (UTM): Zone 10S; 577562 mE/ 4138002mN

Coordinates: Lat. 37.38582°, Long. -122.12407°

USGS Map: 7.5' Mountain View Quad, 1997 T. 6S.; R. 2W.; Mount Diablo Base Meridian

The subject property is located in a suburban residential neighborhood north of downtown Los Altos. The property includes a barn and is located between Adobe Creek and Foothill Expressway.



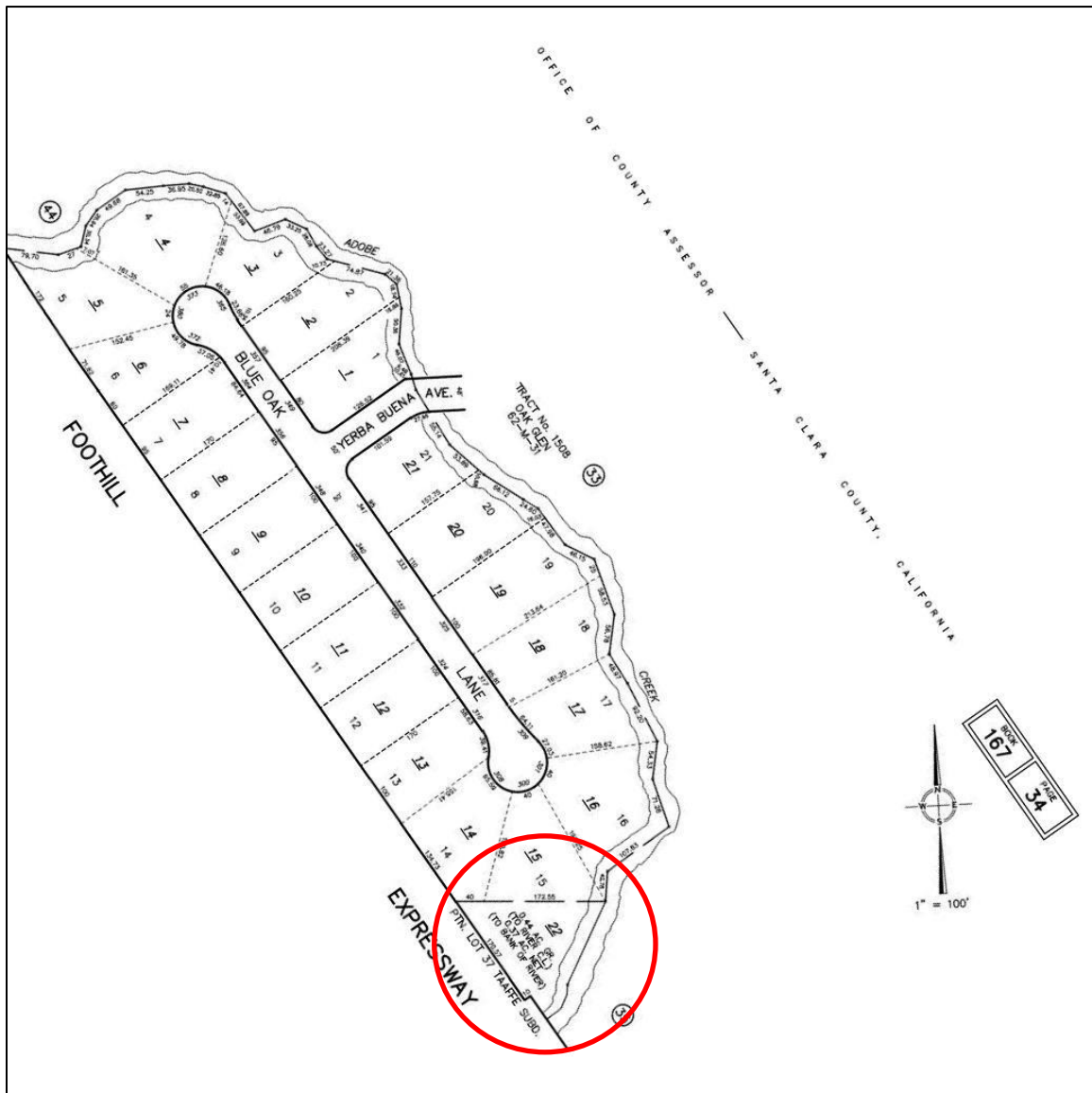
### Location Map



USGS

ACME MAPPER 2.1

### Assessor's Parcel Map



Assessor's Parcel Map 167-34

## DOCUMENTATION

### Historical Context

There is no updated historical context or narrative associated with the property. The background context remains the same as reported in 2016.

## Updated Description of the Property

*The following is reprinted from the 2019 DPR523 Update:*

The Ames/Landels Barn is a relatively rare local example of a gambrel-roofed barn built in the first half of the twentieth century. The two-story structure features distinctive board-and-batten siding, a prow-shaped hay hood, skip-roof sheathing, and other intact historic elements. The barn is relatively small, indicating equestrian use similar to a stable, with no space for carriages or for other large animals. It has been rehabilitated for residential accessory uses.

The Ames/Landels Barn setting has been preserved. The site continues to be a triangular parcel between Adobe Creek and Foothill Expressway, accessible by a footbridge that spans Adobe Creek from the rear (west) of the currently associated residential parcel. Having been protected during construction, the immediate setting has been preserved with its character-defining naturalistic appearance, featuring mature live oak trees and sparse local undergrowth, interspersed with open ground mulched with naturally occurring oak leaves. The setting feels essentially unchanged since the aerial photos almost 70 years ago. Identified in the 2016 documentation, a segment of wood corral gate and fencing have been restored.

The barn's compact gambrel-roof form, unpainted wood siding and wood shingle roofing have been preserved or replaced in-kind. The barn has a rectangular footprint, oriented generally north-south. The original split-level interior floor has been leveled. The building continues to have the exterior appearance of a balloon-framed structure; however, the structure now includes concealed steel elements and a loft at the hay door, rather than a full second story occupying the roof volume or attic space. The characteristic interior built-up roof trusses have been repaired or restored in-kind. The roof's shallow eaves with exposed rafter tails and skip sheathing have been preserved or restored in-kind. The outer eaves feature a fascia board, and the roof is covered with new wood shingles. The exterior walls continue to be clad in vertical, unpainted redwood board-and-batten siding. A horizontal seam on each end of the building demonstrates the use of a consistent length board around the perimeter, topped by trimmed upper boards at the gambrel ends. There are no trim boards at the walls (e.g., no corner boards or upper wall frieze boards). These character-defining features are in keeping with the original design, materials, artisanship, of the historic building.

The north elevation of the building, facing a formerly fenced area of the parcel, has restored board-and-batten siding. The façade is accented by the restored angular extension of the roof into a hay hood. Its outer point rests on a repaired angle brace that also supports the hoist. At the second story, centered below the hoist, is the original paired hay door with strap hinges. The door is built up of flat boards without battens. Below the hay door, offset slightly to the west and raised because of the interior floor level, is the preserved door of similar board construction and strap hinges. There were a pair of seemingly original symmetrical window openings at the second floor. Before the



rehabilitation project, these did not include original sash; new 3 x 4 multi-lite wood, casement windows have been installed. A single window at the first floor, near the east corner, was boarded up and now has been outfitted with a 3 x 4 multi-lite wood, casement that matches the upper windows.

The west elevation, facing the railway originally and now facing Foothill Expressway, features three slightly altered door openings at the first floor. Apparently these openings were originally Dutch doors for horse stalls and previously altered to be used as windows. The new Dutch doors have been placed, slightly raised to a new floor level, at the original opening locations. They replicate the pattern of the original board-and-batten doors and include strap hinges that further restore the historic design. This wall was bowing in 2016; and the new structural system and the replacement board-and-batten siding have returned the wall to plumb.

The south elevation has been restored in kind. It continues to have only a single opening at the center of the upper gambrel, above the seam in the wall boards. Although altered to provide weather protection, the opening continues to feature a screen of turned, painted balusters. This design feature is clearly not original. There is physical evidence that there was a lean-to addition at the first floor of this wall; this addition has been removed and the replacement siding no longer illustrates this alteration.

The east elevation, facing the creek, has been altered by the removal of three very large, non-original square, fixed windows at the first floor and the installation of a set of industrial steel French doors. They feature a pair of operable center doors and a pair of flanking fixed windows. The design includes cut corners, influenced by the previous non-original installation. North of the new glazed opening, one previously boarded-up window opening and one small accent window have been replaced by a single 3x4 multi-lite wood, casement window. The structural bowing has been repaired structurally and the new board-and-batten siding is plumb.

## Revised Integrity and Character-Defining Features

Integrity is a critical component of the City of Los Altos evaluation process. According to the Office of Historic Preservation Technical Assistance Series #6

*Integrity is the authenticity of a historical resource's physical identity evidenced by the survival of characteristics that existed during the resource's period of significance. Historical resources eligible for listing in the California Register must meet one of the criteria of significance described above and retain enough of their historic character or appearance to be recognizable as historical resources and to convey the reasons for their significance. Historical resources that have been rehabilitated or restored may be evaluated for listing. Integrity is evaluated with regard to the retention of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It must also be judged with reference to the particular criteria under which a resource is proposed for eligibility. Alterations over time to a resource or historic changes in its use may themselves have historical, cultural, or architectural significance.*

After rehabilitation, the property continues to maintain its historic integrity per the National Register's **seven** aspects of integrity. The barn maintains its original **location** within the former farmstead of the Ames/Landels family. It remains centered in a small triangle of land originally formed between the peninsular railway and Adobe Creek, and now between Foothill Expressway and the creek. It sits in a preserved immediate **setting**, surrounded by a grove of mature oak trees and bounded by the natural riparian habitat along Adobe Creek. Although some of the barn's exterior has been altered by the installation of new windows in original openings and by the installation of differentiated French doors at a previously altered wall, the building has obvious visual integrity with its vernacular English Gambrel Barn **design**. The preservation or replacement-in-kind of its character-defining features, as well as the preservation of the visual aspects of its historic structure, represent the era's **workmanship** and use of **materials**. It's original character-defining materials have been preserved or replaced in-kind, including its roof form, hay hood and angle brace, skip roof sheathing, board-and-batten siding, board doors with strap hinges, window sizes and locations, and second story loft within the roof. The small barn continues to embody **feelings** of a rural twentieth-century family farm and continue to illustrate the property's **associations** with the Ames/Landels family and patterns of early Los Altos development.

The City of Los Altos uses five criteria for its determination of historical integrity: design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling. These are a subset of the National Register criteria as presented above. The property maintains its historic integrity within the City of Los Altos.

## CURRENT PHOTOGRAPHS

Please refer to the attached DPR523L Update sheets for the updated photographs.

## UPDATED EVALUATION

The evaluation is unchanged from the 2016 Historical Evaluation.

The property that contains the early-twentieth-century barn has been listed on the Los Altos Heritage Resource Inventory (HRI), identified for its associations with "The Age of Subdivision and Mass Transit" and its family farms, as described in the Los Altos HRI Section II Contexts. The barn was built within the context of the early-twentieth-century land development that closely followed the construction of the Peninsular Railway. It represents associations with the residential farmsteads of early Los Altos. The property, therefore, has significance associated with a pattern of local history or "events," per 12.44.040.C.1. It also has significance based on its "architecture/design" per 12.44.040.C.3, for embodying a twentieth-century gambrel barn design uncommon in the region.

The barn and its setting were also evaluated as eligible for the California Register under Criteria (1) and (3), as they embody the distinctive characteristics of an early-twentieth-Century English Gambrel Barn, and are associated with significant historic patterns of growth of the City of Los Altos, identified in the Context Statement of the City of Los Altos. City of Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory, Section II, Contexts 2, Agriculture 1850 to 1940, as well as the historical influence of transportation on the growth of the city.

## **CONCLUSION**

Prior to rehabilitation, the historic Ames/Landels Barn was evaluated as significant to the City and the State for its historic associations and design characteristics. After rehabilitation, the property retains its historic integrity and remains a significant historic resource. The property would be appropriate to consider for a Mills Act Contract.