



DATE: December 13, 2017

AGENDA ITEM # 4

TO: Parks & Recreation Commission

FROM: Manny A. Hernandez, Staff Liaison

SUBJECT: Receive Halsey House status report

BACKGROUND

The Halsey House is located at 482 University Avenue in what is now the City-owned 6.12 acre Redwood Grove Nature Preserve. It was constructed in 1923 for Theodore Vail Halsey and Emma Wright Halsey. An addition to the house was made in 1928 to accommodate Emma's mother, Myra E. Wright, and later, dozens of redwood trees were transplanted to the site from the Santa Cruz Mountains.

The Halsey House property was purchased by the City of Los Altos in 1974 as a nature preserve and for recreation programs and on May 26, 1981 was designated as a local historic resource by the Los Altos City Council. The Halsey House in Redwood Grove has served as a Nature Center for summer camps, school tours, and interpretive programs. Due to its current state of disrepair, it was closed for public use in spring 2008.

In April 2013, Council approved a capital improvement program project to identify costs to both adaptively reuse the Halsey House to provide for the uses recommended by the Parks and Recreation Commission and to demolish the facility and building of an alternative facility. The CIP project was designated to be funded by outside grants/fundraising. The Friends of Historic Redwood Grove, a community group, raised the funds through private donations in 2015 to have the study performed.

In November 2014, the City of Los Altos issued a Request for Proposals to perform the feasibility study for the renovation and adaptive re-use of the Halsey House or the demolition and construction of a new facility. Work on the study began in spring of 2015. The project goals as identified in the Request for Proposal were as follows:

1. The facility shall be used for recreation programs offered by the City that may include use of the adjacent open areas within the park.
2. At least one ADA accessible restroom shall be accessible from the exterior of the building.
3. When not used for specific recreation programs, a portion of the building may be used for day-time private rental purposes.
4. The historical context of the existing building shall be preserved either through renovation and adaptive re-use, or through construction of a new structure that would similarly add value to the community.



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5. A welcoming approach shall be visible from the existing vehicle bridge over Adobe Creek.
6. User groups of up to 60 people at a time shall be accommodated, with a mix of storage, office, meeting rooms and a space to display period photos and small memorabilia related to the original residential use.
7. A kitchen to prepare meals.
8. The main meeting rooms shall be capable of displaying various media for group or education sessions.
9. A loading/unloading area shall be provided near the building and ADA accessible parking.

The two design alternatives studies share many challenges common to the site. Current roadway access is substandard and does not provide the required access for fire and emergency vehicles or for persons with disabilities. The existing bridge across Adobe Creek has a roadway width of 10'-4" and can only support a dead and live load of 8 tons. The structure is located within an existing floodplain which can be mitigated in different ways in the two alternatives. Additionally, due to the remote site location, security and operation of the facility both pose unique challenges.

Design Scheme A – Adaptive Reuse of the Historic Halsey House

Construction activities are limited to the reconstruction and repair work needed to rehabilitate and repurpose the building for its intended use as a functional building for the Recreation and Community Services Department to administer various seasonal programs and to provide meeting rooms for both public and private functions. The existing courtyard has been retained and the site has been made accessible by adding pedestrian walkways around the building.

In addition, the building would have a new concrete foundation system, exterior stucco finish application, gutters, mechanical, plumbing, electrical systems, fire sprinkler and hydrant protection, and new replacement doors and windows. Along with the building alterations, site and roadway improvements are proposed including the construction of two new buildings, one serving the use as public restrooms (next to the Halsey House) and the second for event and equipment storage. Earthen berms around the exterior of the building would provide flood protection.

All rehabilitation repairs are to be done in the Spanish Eclectic Revival style and are intended to follow recommended treatments and preservation practices outlined in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings. The estimated cost for Design Scheme A is \$3.5M.

Design Scheme B – Demolition and Construction of a New Nature Center

This design scheme proposes demolition of the historic structure to be replaced with a more modern up-to-date public facility. The architectural style and materials to be used are



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intended to be complementary to the project's unique Creekside setting. The new facility provides the City with the chance to have a flexible and functional community facility which could add new opportunities for both recreation and educational programs. The new facility would be constructed above the base flood elevation, limiting the potential of flooding.

Similar site improvements are proposed from Design Scheme A and are expanded upon as required by code for a new facility as opposed to historic renovation. A new bridge is proposed across Adobe Creek and additional parking closer to the facility. Similarly, new exterior restroom and storage are to be constructed. The estimated cost for Design Scheme B is \$4.4M.

Summary

The two alternatives studied were not intended to represent the full array of options available to the City, but to help understand the logistic and financial challenges associated with either renovating the existing facility or demolishing and constructing a new facility. The City could decide to look in to another option not studied as part of this feasibility study or elect to go with a demolition option.

The Feasibility study was presented to the Historical Commission on October 26, 2015, the Parks and Recreation Commission on November 18, 2015 and City Council on December 8, 2015. Council did not take any action at its December 8, 2015 meeting.

The Parks & Recreation Commission is to receive the status report on the Halsey House as an information item.