



## AGENDA REPORT

**MEETING DATE:** April 23, 2012

**TO:** Historical Commission

**FROM:** Zachary Dahl, Senior Planner

**SUBJECT:** 482 University Avenue – Halsey House

**RECOMMENDATION:** Consider the caretaker residence for inclusion on the Historic Resources Inventory the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory and evaluate the Halsey House for adaptive reuse as a community facility

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### BACKGROUND:

On April 1, 2012, the City Council held their annual joint meeting with the Historical Commission. As part of the 2012-2013 Work Plan, the Council identified the following goal:

1. Complete the following tasks related to Redwood Grove:
  - a. Research the caretaker residence and provide direction on if it has the physical integrity and historic significance to merit inclusion on the Historic Resources Inventory.
  - b. Review and provide direction to Council on if the Halsey House should be adaptively reused to provide the following: (a) two meeting spaces, each to accommodate a group of 25 to 30 people, to meet requirements for the average size of school tours and designed to meet Group E Occupancy requirements for buildings used for children under 18 years of age; (b) public restrooms that are ADA-compliant with exterior access; and (c) a kitchen to enhance program potential.

### DISCUSSION:

As the first step in completing the Commission's goal surrounding Redwood Grove, a tour of the Halsey House was schedule prior to the April meeting. This will give the Commission an opportunity to become familiar with the Halsey House, the Caretaker Residence and the surrounding grounds. In addition to the tour, the attached documentation will provide some additional background on the Halsey House within the Redwood Grove Nature Preserve context, past structural inspections and evaluation work that has been done thus far.

### Attachments:

482 University Avenue DPR 523 Evaluation Form  
Dave Brees Memorandum, April 20, 2009  
Morris & Wenell Architectural Evaluation, May 16, 1980  
Duquette Engineering Structural Inspection, July 14, 2009  
Halsey House Conceptual Floor Plan



State of California The Resources Agency  
 DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**PRIMARY RECORD**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
 HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
 Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_  
 NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

Other Listings \_\_\_\_\_  
 Review Code \_\_\_\_\_ Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Page 1 of 3 \*Resource Name or #: (Assigned by recorder) Halsey House

P1. Other Identifier: 482 University Avenue; HRI #74

\*P2. Location: Not for Publication  Unrestricted

- \*a. County Santa Clara and (P2c, P2e, and P2b or P2d. Attach a Location Map as necessary.)
- \*b. USGS 7.5' Quad \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ T \_\_\_\_\_; R \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ of Sec \_\_\_\_\_; \_\_\_\_\_ B.M.
- c. Address \_\_\_\_\_ City Los Altos Zip \_\_\_\_\_
- d. UTM: (Give more than one for large and/or linear resources) Zone \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ mE/ \_\_\_\_\_ mN
- e. Other Locational Data: (e.g., parcel #, directions to resource, elevation, etc., as appropriate)  
 APN: 175-13-38

\*P3a. **Description:** (Describe resource and its major elements. Include design, materials, condition, alterations, size, setting, and boundaries)  
 Set in the center of Los Altos' Redwood Grove Park, this one-story, wood frame, stucco-clad house has a U-shaped plan and sits on a concrete foundation. Its converging hipped roofs are clad in Spanish clay tile and the concrete front entry porch, at the north corner of the house, is sheltered by a wood frame trellis covered with a translucent corrugated plastic. Some of the window and door openings are covered with plywood boards but the majority of the original wood sash windows and doors appear to be intact. The front entrance consists of two multi-paned doors, each with multi-pane sidelights. Three sets of french doors open onto the concrete patio that stretches along the north elevation. A tripartite window toward the rear of this elevation appears to have been replaced with two fixed-pane and one jalousie window through the remaining multi-pane casements and three-over-one double hungs with ogee lugs are original. A stucco wall with arched, inset wood panel doors encloses the open interior courtyard along the (rear) south elevation. Three-over-one windows with ogee lugs also line the east elevation and a pair of multi-pane doors are set into a recessed entry near the south end of this elevation. (See continuation sheet)

\*P3b. **Resource Attributes:** (List attributes and codes) HP2. Single family property HP13. Community Center

\*P4. **Resources Present:**  Building  Structure  Object  Site  District  Element of District  Other (Isolates, etc.)



P5b. **Description of Photo:**  
Primary Entrance (north corner)  
March 2009

\*P6. **Date Constructed/Age and Source:**  Historic  Prehistoric  
 Both  
c.1923-4  
(Eugenia Hasley Buss, Sanborn Map)

\*P7. **Owner and Address:**  
City of Los Altos  
1 N. San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

\*P8. **Recorded by:**  
Circa: Historic Property Development  
1 Sutter St., Ste. 910  
San Francisco, CA 94104

\*P9. **Date Recorded:** March 2009

\*P10. **Survey Type:** Intensive

\*P11. **Report Citation:**  
Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory Update Report (Circa: Historic Property Development, March 2012).

\*Attachments:  NONE  Location Map  Continuation Sheet  Building, Structure, and Object Record  
 Archaeological Record  District Record  Linear Feature Record  Milling Station Record  Rock Art Record  
 Artifact Record  Photograph Record  Other (List): \_\_\_\_\_

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\*NRHP Status Code CA Reg. 5B

Page 2 of 3 \*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Halsey House

B1. Historic Name: Halsey House (Redwood Grove Park)

B2. Common Name: 482 University Avenue

B3. Original Use: Residence B4. Present Use: Vacant/City Owned

\*B5. Architectural Style: Spanish Eclectic

\*B6. Construction History: (Construction date, alterations, and date of alterations)

Constructed in 1923-24 (according to 2001 interview with Eugenia Halsey Buss). Residence shown on the 1926 Sanborn Map. Minor interior alterations c.1980.

\*B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Original Location: \_\_\_\_\_

\*B8. Related Features:  
Adobe Creek, Redwood Grove Park

B9a. Architect: Unknown b. Builder: Unknown

\*B10. Significance: Theme Association: People; Design Area Los Altos

Period of Significance \_\_\_\_\_ Property Type Residence Applicable Criteria CR/Los Altos

(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

The subject property was constructed in the early 1920s (c.1923-1924) for Theodore Vail and Emma Wright Halsey. The architect and builder are unknown. The property is shown in its current configuration on the 1926 Sanborn map (see above) and the U.S. Federal Census indicates that the couple were residing at the subject property with two of their children, Myra E. and Theodore Vail Jr. in 1930. Theodore V. Halsey was the President of a Telegraph Company in 1930 (Census records) and an executive with the Pacific Telephone Company in San Francisco (Laffey, 1997). According to a 2001 oral history conducted with Eugenia Halsey Buss, another of the Halsey children who grew up in the house, her mother (Emma Wright Halsey) found the location at the request of her father (William Hanford Wright) who desired a summer estate to escape the foggy San Francisco weather. Once there, Emma, with the help of their Japanese gardener, planted dozens of Redwoods transplanted from a relative's property on Summit Road. These redwoods exist today, comprising Los Altos' Redwood Grove Park. Originally, the property consisted of six acres and bordered the Paul Shoup estate to the northeast. After Theodore V. Halsey Sr. died in World War II, Emma Halsey sold the property (c.1945) to the Bessey family for \$25,000. This family built a number of smaller cottages on the property, only one of which exists today. In 1974, the City of Los Altos purchased the property and has used it as a park ever since. (See Continuation Sheet.)

B11. Additional Resource Attributes: (List attributes and codes) \_\_\_\_\_

\*B12. References:

Los Altos Historical Commission: Los Altos HRI (9.28.1997); McAlester, Virginia and Lee. A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002; Redwood Grove Nature Preserve Master Plan, Los Altos (1980); Ch. of Comm. (www.losaltoschamber.org/history\_two\_cities.html); DPR series forms by G. Laffey (1997); Memo: Halsey House Report, Carpenter (17 Feb 2009); Eugenia H. Buss Interview, Carpenter (26 Aug 2001).

B13. Remarks:

Sketch map created by Circa using Google aerial base map.

\*B14. Evaluator: Circa: Historic Property Development

\*Date of Evaluation: July 2011

(This space reserved for official comments.)



State of California — The Resources Agency  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION  
**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Primary # \_\_\_\_\_  
HRI # \_\_\_\_\_  
Trinomial \_\_\_\_\_

Page 3 of 3

\*Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) Halsey House (482 University Ave)

\*Recorded by: Circa: Historic Property Development

\*Date July 2011

Continuation  Update

P3a. Description (cont.):

Though access to the interior was not provided, views through exterior windows indicate that most of the original interior elements, including the oak floors, are intact as well. Multi-pane french doors, some with sidelights, and original wood sash windows open to the interior courtyard, which likely still retains its original fountain and decorative tile work. The house is one room wide on each wing and had some interior alterations to the western portion of the building in the late 1970s when it was used as a nature center and community meeting place. A septic system was installed c.1980 and a nearby cottage that had been used as a pottery studio was recently demolished. Some deterioration of the stucco cladding, and likely the framing system, is evident due the grading of the site, which is at foundation level on three sides of the building. Though some windows and doors are covered, most appear to be intact and in fair condition. Overall, the building exhibits a high degree of integrity and appears to be in good to fair condition.

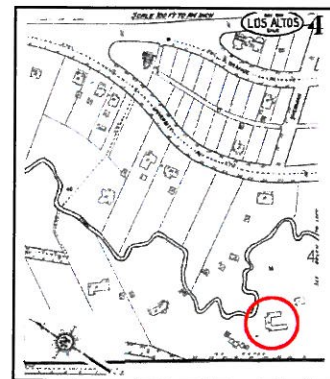
P5a. Photograph or Drawing (cont.):



East elevation



North elevation



1926 Sanborn Map, property circled in red

B10. Significance (cont.)

The residence was once occupied by a caretaker and has been used as a community meeting center and a nature center, but is now vacant. The house was designated as a historical landmark by the Los Altos Council (Res. 81-24) in May 1981. In a 1994 survey, the subject property was noted as being a contributor to the proposed University/Orange Historic District. (Note: This district was considered, but never formally designated as a historic district by the City of Los Altos.)

482 University Avenue, Character Defining Features: one-story form; stucco cladding; hipped roofs clad in Spanish clay tile; concrete front entry porch sheltered by wood frame trellis; original wood sash windows and doors including two multi-paned doors, each with multi-pane sidelights at front entrance, three sets of french doors on north elevation, multi-pane casements, and three-over-one double hungs with ogee lugs; stucco wall with arched, inset wood panel doors enclosing open interior courtyard.

Evaluation:

The property is significant for its association with a notable early Los Altos family and as a good example of the Spanish Eclectic style of architecture popular in California during the early 20th century. It is also significant as a potential contributor to the potential University/Orange Historic District. The residence, surrounded by the Redwoods planted by Emma Wright Halsey over 80 years ago, retains to a large extent its historic character as well as a high degree of integrity of setting, location, materials, design, feeling and workmanship. Therefore, it is listed on the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory as a Historic Resource and is assigned the California Register Status Code 5B: "Locally significant both individually (listed, eligible, or appears eligible) and as a contributor to a district that is locally listed, designated, determined eligible or appears eligible through survey evaluation."





## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** April 20, 2009

**TO:** Redwood Grove Subcommittee Members

**FROM:** Dave Brees, Special Projects Manager

**SUBJECT:** REDWOOD GROVE NATURE CENTER RENOVATION STAFF  
ANALYSIS AND RENOVATION OPTIONS

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This report is intended to provide useful information for the decision making process by identifying options and providing associated cost estimates for the improvements. Fundamental operational questions will need to be addressed prior to the selection of one of the renovation options. These questions include why we need to keep the building and what it will be used for in the future. These questions tie into the vision for the park, its programs, and the scope of this project. Key considerations for the decisions are access for users with disabilities, user parking, program noise and impacts on park neighbors, maintenance, security and other park infrastructure elements such as restrooms, teaching stations, or the Ohlone village.

The information below has been collected by staff with the assistance of professionals in the field. Costs are approximate and will likely change as a result of the refinement of the scope of the project.

Historic Resource. The Nature Center is located near the center of the City's five-acre Redwood Grove Park. The Center was originally designed as a private residence and has seen many uses over the years. The building is also known as the Halsey House and has been identified by the City Council as a local landmark. The 3,650 square foot facility is approximately 80 years old and the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems have outlived their operational use. Little, if any, maintenance work has been performed on the building for the past several years.

The Halsey House has a current score of 95 on the City's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI). It was given Local Landmark Status by Council action in 1981. The Municipal Code requires owners of historic resource properties to perform certain duties to preserve and protect the building. These code sections are included as Attachment A. At a minimum, if the structure is to remain, it will need to be decommissioned to prevent their decay or destruction.

The structure's HRI score is currently under review. The results of this re-evaluation may have considerable impact on the range of options available for future modification to the building. Should the score remain high (85 points or higher qualifies for Local Landmark Status), it could lead the Subcommittee in the direction of building preservation. A significant reduction in the HRI score would allow for a wider variety of options, including possibly removal or replacement of the building.

Fire Code. Since the building will be used for educational programs involving children, it has an E Occupancy rating. This rating is used to determine the systems required for the building's operations. It is assumed the program capacity will not exceed 50 persons inside at one time. Additional system improvements will be required should it be desired to accommodate more than 50 people in the building. E Occupancy requirements include:

- Fire alarm system installed throughout the building.
- Illuminated exit signs.
- A minimum of two exits with one being accessible.
- Exit door hardware openable from the inside without a key or special knowledge or effort.
- Room capacity is based upon 20 square feet per person.

Environmental Concerns. The Nature Center and Staff House buildings were evaluated by environmental health professionals. Tests were conducted on both the Nature Center and the Staff House. Bulk samplings, surface tests, and fungal air samplings were collected. Moisture tests were also conducted. Below is a brief summary of the results found.

- Asbestos – Found in various floor tiles, floor tile mastic, acoustical ceiling tiles, pipe insulation, sink undercoating, dry wall and drywall joint compound, and roof penetrations.
- Lead –Detected in the paint (exterior & interior), window glaze, and kitchen ceramic tiles.
- Mold –Evidence of water damage in the Nature Center building especially in the rear wing. Evidence includes plaster collapse in ceilings, dirt above stucco line in several locations surrounding the foundation, strong sense of odor in the carpeted rooms, carpet water stains in rear room. Infrared thermograph testing was conducted and elevated readings were found in several exterior walls. Visible mold was present in the southwest corner of the storage room.
- Animal/Rodent Feces – Evidence of animal & rodent feces present in the attic, t-bar ceilings in the front two rooms, and under the house.

Building Code. Since many of the building systems are either original or have been modified by individuals throughout the years, most are in need of replacement. The structure was originally intended for use as a residence and therefore significant improvements will be required to be able to operate as a public facility. Below are the major items identified by initial inspection. A comprehensive analysis including exploratory investigations will likely reveal additional renovation needs.

- Electrical - Ground & bond main panel
  - Raise weatherhead
  - Replace knob & tube wiring
  - Ground all outlets
  - Replace interior lighting
  - Install new exterior lighting
- Mechanical – Install new HVAC system
  - Install & plumb new hot water heater to building
  - Remodel restroom to meet ADA requirements



- Structural - Replace doors & thresholds utilizing tempered glass
  - Replaster/sheet rock walls & ceilings in rear wing
  - Repair cracked foundation in rear room
  - Install new windows to meet Title 24 energy efficiency requirements
  - Address possible wood rot in floor joists, subfloor, and cripple walls
  
- Painting - Encapsulate or remove lead paint throughout the building
  - New paint exterior
  - New paint interior

We have developed five renovation options for consideration. Each option has costs and considerations associated with it. Determination of short term or long term goals should be taken into account in deciding the most appropriate option to pursue.

Option 1 - Renovate the entire Nature Center building

Cost: \$1.5-2 million

Considerations: This option provides for the complete renovation of the Nature Center. New mechanical, electrical, and operating systems would be installed throughout the building. All environmental issues would be addressed. Access and program needs would be addressed. The cost estimate may be modified significantly as a result of a comprehensive analysis and exploratory investigation. Based on square footage, the building occupancy would be 180 people.

Option 2 – Renovate the Nature Center to allow for use of the front room.

Cost: \$115,000

Considerations: Renovation work would include new doors, windows, fire exit access, electrical & lighting upgrades to the main panel and front room via exposed conduit, fire alarm, painting of interior room & exterior, environmental testing and wing decommissioning. Hillside grading and landscaping not included in the initial cost estimate. This option assumes restroom facilities would continue to be provided via a port-a-pottie service. The cost estimate is subject to increase should building conditions dictate (i.e. extensive dry rot around door thresholds). Maximum 43 person capacity.

Option 3 – Demolish/Decommission Nature Center and renovate Staff House

Cost: \$225,000

Considerations: Requires Historical Commission Recommendation and City Council action for demolition. Decommissioning cost for the Nature Center is dependant upon estimated length of closure - the longer the closure the more extensive (& expensive) the preservation effort. Staff house would need to be modified to accommodate ADA access, new roof, restrooms and address environmental issues. Living room and front bedroom would be combined to accommodate a maximum of 25 people.

Option 4 – Demolish the Nature Center and replace the facility

Cost: \$500,000

Considerations: Requires Historical Commission Recommendation and City Council action. Replacement facility cost estimate is based upon similar structure located at Pearson Arastradero Preserve in Palo Alto. The Center has a 32 person capacity.

Option 5 – Demolish the Nature Center and restore the area to a natural environment

Cost: \$40,000

Considerations: Requires Historical Commission Recommendation and City Council action.

The next steps of the project will be determined by the renovation and/or demolition option approved. Based on cost estimates received, a comprehensive building analysis and exploratory investigation is \$10,000 to \$35,000 depending on the extent of the structural analysis and testing desired. Additional costs will be associated with renovation design plans subject to the option selected. Once a final option is identified, a Capital Improvement Project should be developed and Council approval secured.

301 West Locust Street  
Lodi, California 95240  
Phone (209) 369-8258

ARCHITECTURAL EVALUATION  
OF FIVE STRUCTURES LOCATED IN  
REDWOOD GROVE PARK, LOS ALTOS, CALIFORNIA

May 16, 1980

On May 6, 1980 Robert Morris of MORRIS & WENELL Architects and Planners Inc. made a site inspection of the above site. The purpose of the site visit was to obtain an architect's opinion of the condition of the existing structures located on the site and render an opinion of their existing condition for possible continual use.

Structure No. 1 is located approximately 100 yards from the entrance of the park. This facility is a wood-framed residence, with trussed rafters, a wood crawl space with a concrete foundation, asphalt shingled roof and is approximately 1,000 square feet in area and poorly maintained. The existing window sash, wood siding and structure appear to be in sound condition. Some sash is of wood, some is of metal. The overall structural condition of the house appears to be adequate, however, at the east corner the drainage is very poor (i.e. ground water has had contact with the wood for a continued period of time). Traditionally, this would indicate dry rot at the sill line. At the west side of the structure, the foundation and crawl space are visible and appear to be in good condition. Access to the interior of the structure was not available, therefore, no opinion can be expressed concerning the plumbing, wiring or interior condition. Aesthetically the building has a very pleasing form. If it were to be repainted, reroofed with shakes and the exterior relandscaped, it could be an asset to the property.

DRY ROT  
ROOF

Building No. 2 is located approximately in the center of the site. This facility was the main residence of the estate. The structure is approximately 3,400 square feet in size, stucco exterior, wood-frame with crawl space and concrete foundation. The roof is Spanish-style clay tile. The house appears to be approximately forty to fifty years old. The yard on the west side of the house slopes towards the foundation and in some instances, earth is directly adjacent to the foundation plates. I would expect there is a considerable amount of dry rot and possible termite infestation on this side. If any reconstruction work is to be done on this structure, regrading for proper drainage would be the first item I would recommend.

DRY ROT  
TERMITES

Inspection of the crawl space indicated a well-designed foundation system. Inspection of the attic space indicated a relatively good roof framing system, this is extremely important due to the heavy loads imposed by the clay tile roofing. The roofing itself is in very good condition, with the exception of limited areas that could use additional mortaring and minor repairing. The western portion of the facility is currently being used as a community meeting facility and has been remodelled with a mish-mash of different techniques. I was able to make a limited inspection of the electrical wiring. What I did see was an antiquated knob and tube system. The plumbing appears to be in average working condition. We were informed that a new septic system has been recently installed. The heating system within the facility is a combination of gas wall heaters and gas floor furnaces. The bulk of the residence has oak flooring that is in reasonably good condition and would just need resanding and sealant if it were to be reconditioned. In summary, the structure is old, however, it has had reasonably good maintenance and in my opinion is worthy of reconstruction or restoration.

S  
OLD WIRING

Buildings 3, 4, and 5 are three wood-framed, flat roof structures with built-up roofs. Each is approximately 750 square feet. Each facility is wood sided and all appeared to be in relatively good condition. Once again, as the other facilities, drainage adjacent to the units appears to be the single greatest problem, with the southernmost unit in the greatest need of site repair. The residences were not available for interior inspection, but basically appeared to be in better condition than Structures 1 and 2.

#### SUMMARY OF STRUCTURES 1 - 5

It is my opinion that all facilities are in good enough condition to justify reconstruction rather than demolition. As I have indicated above, immediate site drainage correction should be the first order of work to relieve any future water damage. Secondly, the roofs should be repaired as necessary to prevent any leakage. Further recommendations for each unit can be made when some idea of a budget is established.

KEEP

One significant point should be considered before any construction or design is commenced and that is the impact of Section 104 of the Uniform Building Code, 1976 edition. This section refers to additions, alterations, and repairs to existing structures and essentially establishes the requirements on bringing the facility up to code. I have enclosed a copy of this section.

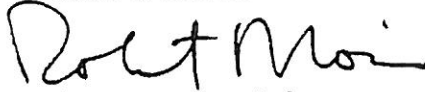
UP TO CODE

Architectural Evaluation  
May 16, 1980  
Page 3

If additional information is required, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Sincerely,

MORRIS & WENELL



Robert Morris, R.A.  
President

RM:rf

Attachments



July 14, 2009

City of Los Altos  
1 North San Antonio Road  
Los Altos, CA 94022

Attention: Dave Brees

Subject: Halsey House at 482 University Ave.



4340 Stevens Creek Blvd.  
Suite 200  
San Jose, CA 95129

Phone: (408) 615-9200  
Fax: (408) 615-9900

Duquette Engineering has made a visit to the subject property on July 10, 2009 in order to provide visual inspection of the existing structure. After careful inspection, we have concluded that there is no damage to the existing structure of the building that is a life safety issue.

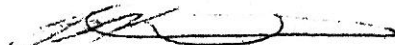
The roof structure and ceiling are generally in good condition except for several tiles on the roof that is in need of replacement and some minor cracks and holes in the ceiling that needs to be patch. The existing floor framing of the structure is also in good condition. There are minor cracks at the two foundation corners in the rear west wing section of the house along line 14. There is also a large notch in the foundation at the mid section of the west wing section of the house along line C. We recommend that the cracks at the foundation corners be epoxy and patch the large notch with new concrete.

The east wing crawl space of the house is very shallow and is impossible for a person to crawl through. We recommend that the soil be excavated to meet minimum current code requirement (a minimum of 18" clearance between the soil surface and floor girder). There is no crawl space access to the newer addition of the house. The rough framing on the plans are just an assumption. In order to provide structural observation and a more accurate detail of the existing framing condition, a crawl space access hole is needed.

Duquette Engineering also noticed that the rear section of the property is situated in a high slope zone. The property is at the low point of the slope, thus water can run into the foundation through the existing vent holes. There are noticeable water damages to the paint of the exterior wall. We recommend that concrete retaining wall be place in the rear section of the house to prevent damage to the existing foundation. There is also small crack line at the corner of the rear concrete wall and the west wing section of the house (at the intersection of line D and line 14). We recommend that the crack be epoxy.

If there are any questions or additional information is required please contact us.

Sincerely,




Steven P. Duquette SE  
President

# Emergency - Evacuation Plan

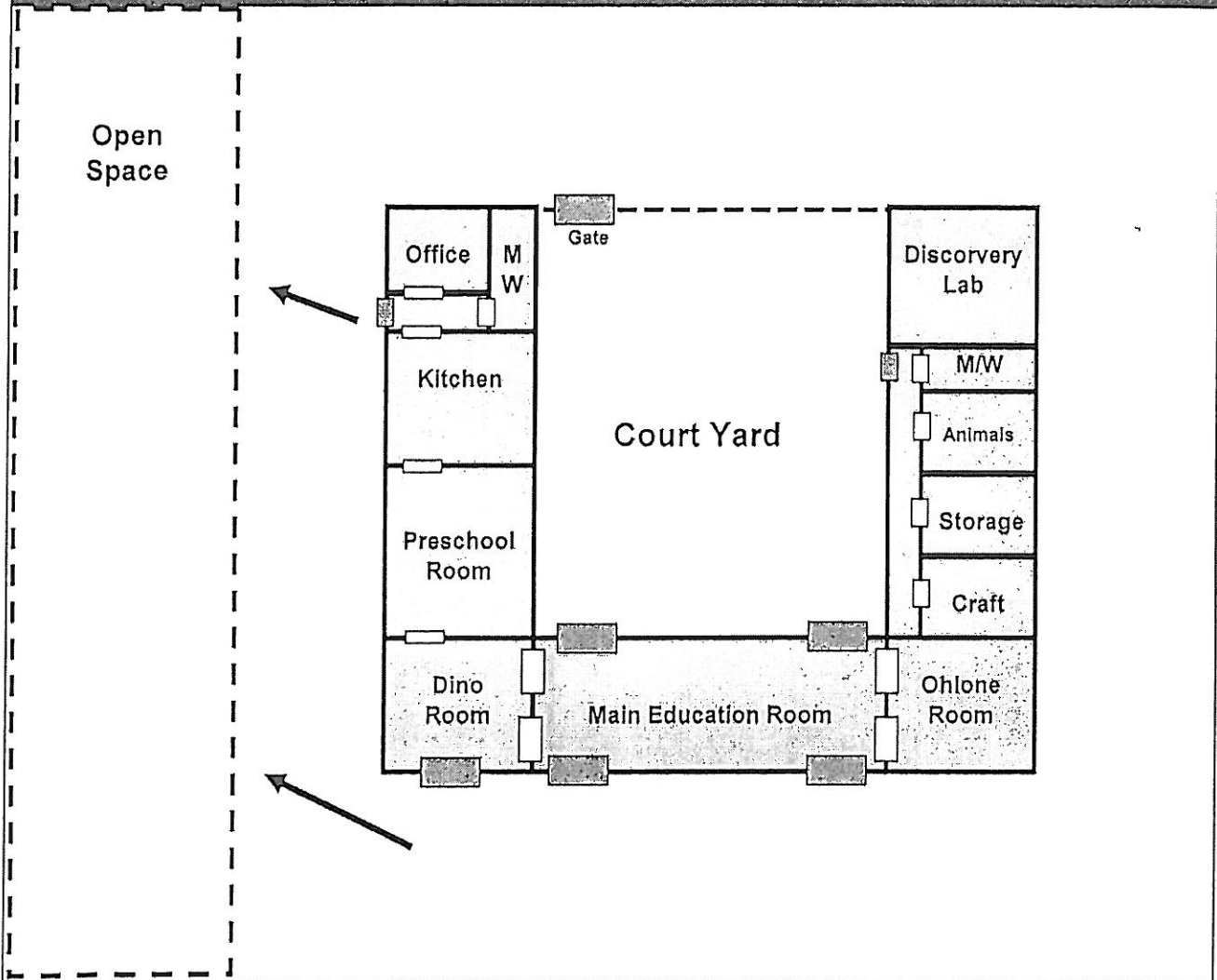
Site: Redwood Grove Nature Center  
Address: 482 University Avenue, Los Altos

City of Los Altos

 = Exit Door

 = Interior Door

**UNIVERSITY AVENUE**



**Emergency Number: 911 – For cell phone,  
dial direct to Los Altos Police Department  
Dispatch (650) 947-2779**