



DATE: August 24, 2015

AGENDA ITEM #2

**TO:** Historical Commission  
**FROM:** Sean K. Gallegos, Historical Liaison  
**SUBJECT:** 15-H-03 – 51 South San Antonio Road

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Designate the tank house located at 51 South San Antonio Road as a Historic Resource due to its historical integrity and list it on the Historic Resource Inventory subject to the findings.

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### **BACKGROUND**

Built in 1915, this tank house served the Spagnoli family's orchard and home near Pine Lane. In 1993, the owners at that time, Pilgrim Haven (now the Terraces), were going to demolish it in order to develop the land for senior housing. Members of the community elected to save it, and the tank house was moved and restored at the Los Altos History Museum site.

### **DISCUSSION**

The 1915 folk-Victorian architecture is unchanged, except for exterior shingle siding added in 1993 and seismic/strength reinforcement required in its relocation in 1993. The tank house embodies the distinctive characteristics of its function and period. Originally covered with plank siding, when restored in 1993 redwood shingles were used as the outer siding, which ties its finish treatment to the adjacent historic landmark, the 1905 J. Gilbert Smith House. The door and windows, the tank itself, and bead board sections, are original. Much of the trim pieces on the tank level and the latticework came with the tank house; while they may (or may not) be additions since 1915, they were made during its working life at its original site.

The physical environment of the historic property, a working orchard, is no longer original, as that property is now the site of senior housing. However, the look and feel of a historic setting has been duplicated with its adjacency to the J. Gilbert Smith house.

In order to designate a property as a Historic Resource, the Commission must make a finding that the property satisfies the three criteria outlined in Section 12.44.040 of the Historic Preservation Ordinance. As outlined in the report prepared by historian Laura Bajuk, the tank house at 51 South San Antonio Road retains a high degree of integrity in its materials, design, location, setting, feeling and workmanship, and it is a good candidate for designation as a Historic Resource (Attachment B). Based on these findings, staff recommends that the structure be designated as a Historic Resource and listed on the City's Historic Resource Inventory (HRI).

As outlined in the Historic Preservation Ordinance (Sec. 12.44.060), the Commission has the authority to designate properties and structures as Historic Resources and add them to the HRI.

CC: Los Altos History Museum, Applicant

Attachments:

- A. Application
- B. Site and Area Map
- C. Historic Property Evaluation – 51 South San Antonio Road
- D. Site Plan
- E. Historic Structure Photographs

## FINDINGS

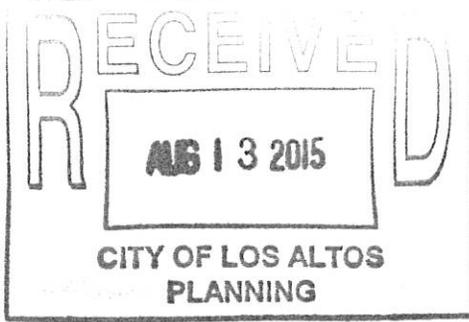
### 15-H-03 – 51 South San Antonio Road

With regard to designating the tank house located at 51 South San Antonio Road as a Historic Resource and listing it on the Los Altos Historic Resources Inventory, the Historical Commission finds the following in accordance with Section 12.44.040 of the Los Altos Municipal Code:

- A. Age. The structure is more than fifty (50) years in age.
- B. Determination of Integrity. The structure retains sufficient physical integrity in the following areas:
  - 1. Design: The combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure and style of a property;
  - 2. Setting: The physical environment of a historic property;
  - 3. Materials: The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property;
  - 4. Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period in history or prehistory; and
  - 5. Feeling: A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.
- C. Historic Significance. The structure is clearly associated with the following area of significance:
  - 1. Architecture/Design: Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a design-type, period, region or method of construction, or represents the work of a master or possesses high artistic value.



# ATTACHMENT A



## CITY OF LOS ALTOS GENERAL APPLICATION

Type of Review Requested: *(Check all boxes that apply)*

Permit # 1106795

<input type="checkbox"/> One-Story Design Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial/Multi-Family	<input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Review
<input type="checkbox"/> Two-Story Design Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Sign Permit	<input type="checkbox"/> Rezoning
<input type="checkbox"/> Variance	<input type="checkbox"/> Use Permit	<input type="checkbox"/> R1-S Overlay
<input type="checkbox"/> Lot Line Adjustment	<input type="checkbox"/> Tenant Improvement	<input type="checkbox"/> General Plan/Code Amendment
<input type="checkbox"/> Tentative Map/Division of Land	<input type="checkbox"/> Sidewalk Display Permit	<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historical Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Preliminary Project Review	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:

Project Address/Location: Los Altos History Museum: 1915 TANK HOUSE, 51 S. San Antonio, Los Altos 94022

Project Proposal/Use: Historic building Current Use of Property: education - history museum

Assessor Parcel Number(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Site Area: 1.36 acres

New Sq. Ft.: \_\_\_\_\_ Altered/Rebuilt Sq. Ft.: \_\_\_\_\_ Existing Sq. Ft. to Remain: \_\_\_\_\_

Total Existing Sq. Ft.: \_\_\_\_\_ Total Proposed Sq. Ft. (including basement): \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's Name: Los Altos History Museum (aka Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum)

Telephone No.: (650) 948-9427 Email Address: lbajuk@losaltoshistory.org

Mailing Address: 51 S. San Antonio Road

City/State/Zip Code: Los Altos, CA 94022

Property Owner's Name: City of Los Altos

Telephone No.: (650) 947-2641 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: 1 N. San Antonio Road

City/State/Zip Code: Los Altos, CA 94022

Architect/Designer's Name: n/a

Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_ Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_

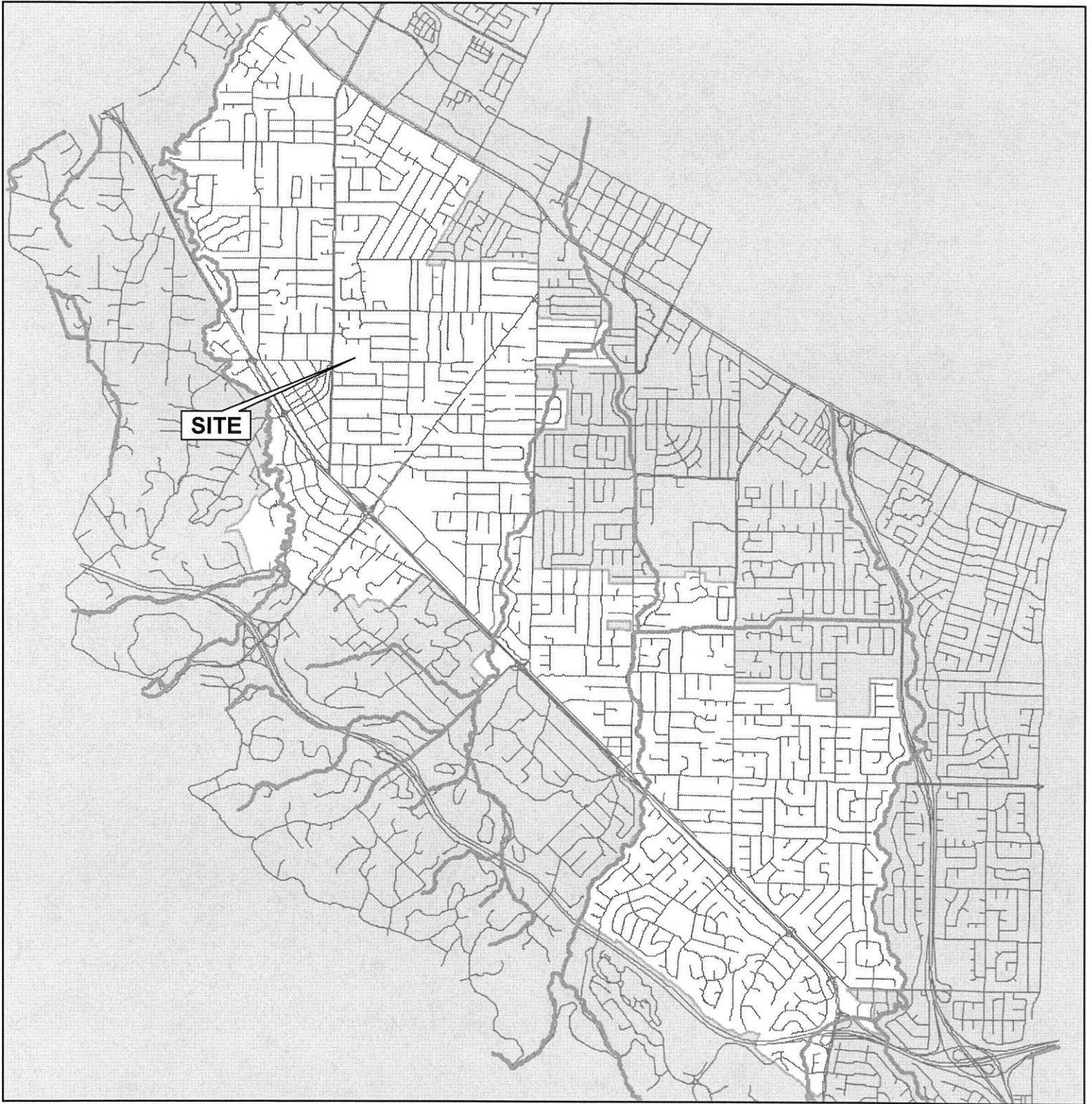
City/State/Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

\*\*\* If your project includes complete or partial demolition of an existing residence or commercial building, a demolition permit must be issued and finalized prior to obtaining your building permit. Please contact the Building Division for a demolition package. \*\*\*

(continued on back)



# AREA MAP



## CITY OF LOS ALTOS

**APPLICATION:** 15-H-03  
**APPLICANT:** Los Altos History Museum/City of Los Altos  
**SITE ADDRESS:** 51 S. San Antonio Road – 1915 Tank House

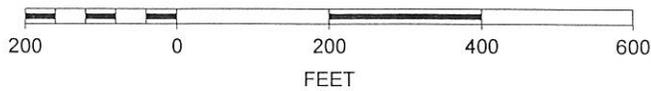


Not to Scale

# VICINITY MAP



SCALE 1 : 3,000



CITY OF LOS ALTOS

**APPLICATION:** 15-H-03  
**APPLICANT:** Los Altos History Museum/City of Los Altos  
**SITE ADDRESS:** 51 S. San Antonio Road – 1915 Tank House

# ATTACHMENT C

State of California X The Resources Agency Primary #  
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION HRI#  
**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\* Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) \_\_\_\_\_ \* NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_  
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B1. Historic Name: Spagnoli Tank House

B2. Common Name: 1915 Tank House, at the Los Altos History Museum

B3. Original Use: water tank and tank house B4. Present Use: education/history museum

\* B5. Architectural Style: unknown (agricultural outbuilding typical of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-early 20<sup>th</sup> c.)

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

Built in 1915, this tank house served the Spagnoli family's orchard and home near Pine Lane. In 1993, the owners at that time, Pilgrim Haven (now the Terraces), were going to demolish it in order to develop the land for senior housing. Members of the community elected to save it and the Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum raised over \$40,000 to do so, led by Marion & Bob Grimm. On May 12, 1993 - the day after its approval/acceptance by City Council - it was moved and restored at the Los Altos History Museum. Furnished as if a migrant farm worker was living in it, it has been used to teach local history ever since.

\* B7. Moved?  No  Yes  Unknown Date: May 12, 1993 Original Location: Pine Lane & Los Altos Avenue

\* B8. Related Features:

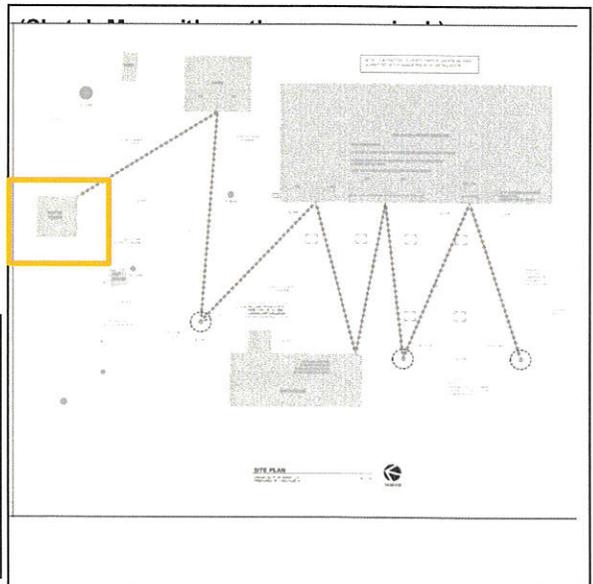
B9a. Architect: unknown b. Builder: unknown

\* B10. Significance: Theme orchard outbuilding Area \_\_\_\_\_  
Period of Significance 1915-1950s (?) Property Type orchard Applicable Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
(Discuss importance in terms of historical or architectural context as defined by theme, period, and geographic scope. Also address integrity.)

Very few century-old tank houses remain in the county, and even fewer are publicly accessible. After its useful life nearby at the Spagnoli family farm near Pine Lane, it deteriorated. In 1993, it was fully restored when it was moved to the Museum site; dry rot and other conditions were corrected. The City of Los Altos required its restoration to be sturdy enough that the tank *could* be filled with water.

Originally covered with plank siding, when restored in 1993 redwood shingles were used as the outer siding, which ties it to the finish treatment of the adjacent historic landmark, the 1905 J. Gilbert Smith House. The door and windows, the tank itself, and bead board sections, are original. Much of the trim pieces on the tank level and the lattice work came with the tank house; while they may (or may not)

(This space reserved for official comments.)



**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\* Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) \_\_\_\_\_ \* NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_  
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be additions since 1915, they were made during its working life at its original site.

**Historic Significance.** Representing the last of its once-numerous kind, the 1915 Spagnoli tank house teaches our community about its past, and how that past has created the place we enjoy today. It is a centerpiece of the Museum's annual school tours for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

1. Event: Agriculture remains California's largest business, yet our local story--and world prominence--is today only a shadow on the edges of a high-tech, suburban society. Thanks to the Southern Pacific Railroad, which helped fruit farmers settle and develop the west, Santa Clara Valley was the top food producer in the world in the early 1900s, and was connected globally to markets by SP's international shipping network.

2. Person/People: The Spagnoli family does not reach a level of prominence; rather they are typical of 19<sup>th</sup> c. immigrants who left starvation, poverty and war behind and started a new life in a fertile new country. They were at best working class.. but the abundance they found in America, like good food, public education and regular work, gave them a platform from the next generations would build a new life.

3. Architecture/Design: A typical 19<sup>th</sup> c. water tower of the region, it embodies the distinctive characteristics of its function and period.

**Determination of Integrity.** The tank house structure retains nearly all its historic integrity:

1. Design is unchanged since 1915, except for exterior shingle siding added in 1993 and seismic/strength reinforcement required in its relocation in 1993.

2. Setting: The physical environment of the historic property, a working orchard, is no longer original, as that property is now the site of high-density senior housing. BUT the look and feel of a historic setting has been duplicated at the Museum. Additionally, it is available to the public and is used to teach about our agricultural past, which is a huge improvement over it being abandoned (and perhaps a nuisance) on private property.

3. Materials are either original or have been replaced in-kind to correct dry rot, etc. Exception: because the City of Los Altos required higher level engineering to support a full water tank than it was originally constructed for when it was moved here in 1993, the interior is sheathed in plywood. No such engineering is visible from the outside.

4. Workmanship: Its folk-Victorian architecture is still very visible; this was a home-made structure, nothing fancy. That spirit remains true today.

5. Feeling: While obviously cared for, the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time is well-communicated by the tank house. It is a century-old building that has never been modernized, and indeed was restored to its agricultural function (minus a full tank of water, of course) and has been placed in a setting which educates about local agricultural practices in the 19<sup>th</sup> c.

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

\* B12. **References:** Los Altos History Museum - Archives \_\_\_\_\_

B13. **Remarks:**

**BUILDING, STRUCTURE, AND OBJECT RECORD**

\* Resource Name or # (Assigned by recorder) \_\_\_\_\_ \* NRHP Status Code \_\_\_\_\_

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\* B14. Evaluator: Laura Bajuk, E.D., Los Altos History Museum

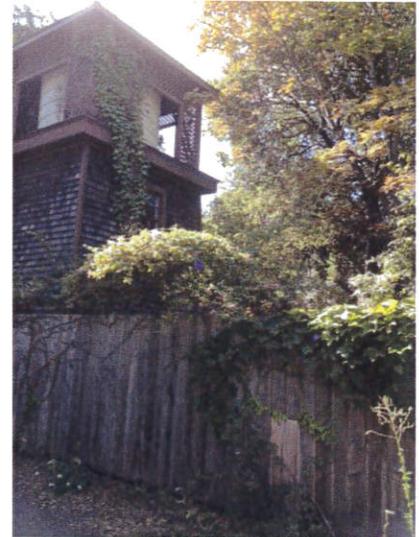
\* Date of Evaluation: August 19, 2015



Front view



Back view (by LA Police Dept.)



Side view (facing the main library)



Side view (facing softball field) - note historic Formway "Wizard" walnut huller in foreground used for education programs. These were manufactured in Los Altos and made harvesting walnuts much easier and faster. (Ladder was in place temporarily while feral beehive was removed so that repairs can be made to the structure, 8/13/15.)







# Tank House Images: Los Altos History Museum

51 South San Antonio Road, Los Altos, CA 94022

Owner: City of Los Altos. Agent: Association of the Los Altos Historical Museum, aka Los Altos History Museum



Front view: facing the patio between the Smith House & Museum building



Back view (facing Los Altos Police Dept.)





