# NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF
# A DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
# FOR THE HALSEY HOUSE PROJECT

**Los Altos, California**
**February 2025**

**PROJECT APPLICANT:** **City of Los Altos**

**APN:** **175-30-021**

As the Lead Agency, the City of Los Altos will prepare an Environmental Impact Report for the above-referenced project and would like your views regarding the scope and content of the environmental information to be addressed in the EIR.

The project description, location, and a brief summary of the environmental effects that could result from the proposed project are attached.

According to State law, the deadline for your response is 30 days after receipt of this notice; however, we would appreciate an earlier response, if possible. Please identify a contact person, and send your response to:

City of Los Altos
Public Works Department
Attention: Harun Musaefendic
One North San Antonio Road
Los Altos, CA 94022
HMusaefendic@losaltosca.gov

Aida Fairman, Public Works Director — 2/6/2025 (Date)

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**February 2025**

## A. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is to inform decision-makers and the general public of the environmental effects of a proposed project that an agency may implement or approve. The EIR process is intended to provide information sufficient to evaluate a project and its potential for significant impacts on the environment, to examine methods of reducing adverse impacts, and to consider alternatives to the project.

An EIR is prepared when it is determined by the discretionary authority that changes proposed in an approved project will require revisions to the previous EIR because of possible new impacts or an increase in severity of previously identified impacts. As the Lead Agency, the City of Los Altos will prepare an EIR to address the environmental effects of the Halsey House Project.

The EIR will be prepared and processed in accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended, and the requirements of the City of Los Altos. In accordance with the requirements of CEQA, the EIR will include the following:

- A summary of the project;
- A project description, including project objectives;
- A description of the existing environmental setting, probable environmental impacts, and mitigation measures; and
- Environmental consequences, including (a) any significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the project is implemented; (b) any significant irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources; (c) the growth inducing impacts of the proposed project; and (d) cumulative impacts.

The EIR also will discuss a reasonable range of alternatives to the project that could reasonably attain most of the basic objectives of the project and would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant environmental effects of the project (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6[a]).

**Project Location**

The project site is located at 482 University Avenue in Los Altos (Assessor Parcel Number [APN] 175-30-021). The site is situated within the six-acre Redwood Grove Nature Preserve, which is surrounded by single-family residences.

Refer to Figures 1 and Figure 2 for regional and vicinity maps of the project site. An aerial photograph with surrounding land uses is shown on Figure 3. The project disturbance area is shown in Figure 4.

**Project Description**

The Halsey House was built in 1923 and used as a private residence until the property was purchased by the City of Los Altos in 1974 to serve as a park. The building was then converted to a nature center for educational and recreational programming. In 2008, the building was closed to the public. Since 2008, the Halsey House has remained vacant and unused. The Halsey House is a local Historic Landmark and is eligible for the California Register of Historic Resources (CRHR). As a result, it is considered a historic resource under CEQA.

The project proposes to demolish the Halsey House building. Demolition activities would occur within an approximately 15,000 square foot (or 0.3 acre) area of disturbance surrounding the building and would last roughly three months. Demolition equipment, such as an excavator, a bulldozer, and a track loader, would be utilized throughout the demolition period. Equipment and workers would access the site via the Redwood Grove Nature Preserve entrance on University Avenue. Equipment staging would occur within the proposed area of disturbance. After demolition of the building, the site would be cleared and replanted with native plant landscaping that matches the existing vegetation. All building materials would be hauled to an appropriate off-site disposal location.

**Required Project Approvals**

- Historical Alteration Permit

**Potential Significant Environmental Impacts of the Project**

The EIR will identify the significant environmental effects anticipated to result from development of the project as proposed. Mitigation measures will be identified for significant impacts, as warranted. The EIR will include a discussion of all impact areas required by the CEQA Guidelines, with a particular focus on the following specific environmental categories most relevant to the proposed project:

- **Biological Resources** – The project site is located in the Redwood Grove Nature Preserve, which includes mature redwoods and Adobe Creek. The area has the potential to support special-status species (bats and the great blue heron) and sensitive habitats (wetlands). The EIR will identify the existing biological conditions, including special-status species with the potential to occur on the project site and any potentially sensitive/regulated habitats that may be present. In addition, the EIR will identify and discuss the project's biological impacts during demolition.

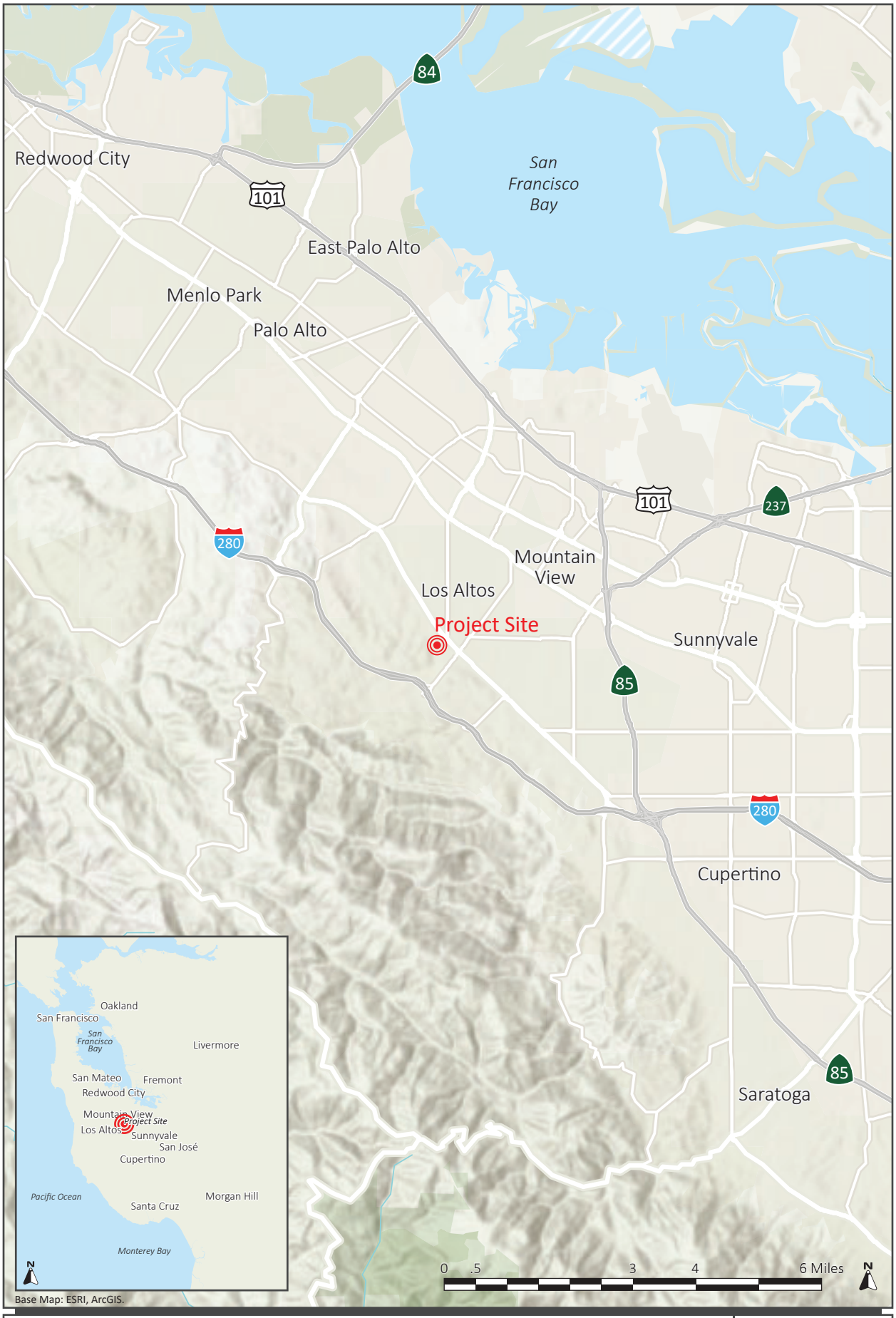
- **Cultural Resources** – The project, as proposed, would demolish the Halsey House, which is a local Historic Landmark and is eligible for the CRHR. This would be a significant impact under CEQA that could not be mitigated to a less than significant level. The EIR will disclose the significant and unavoidable impact, identify all feasible mitigation (such as recordation and salvage), and identify a reasonable range of alternatives to the proposed project.

- **Hydrology and Water Quality** – The project site is currently mapped in an area designated as a Zone AE Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Additionally, the Halsey House structure is partially within a mapped floodway associated with Adobe Creek. Floodways are FEMA designated areas where no placement of blockages shall occur unless an analysis is conducted that shows the structures present no impact. The EIR will analyze the surrounding floodplain and determine whether or not the existing structure impedes flood flows. The EIR will also evaluate the impacts of demolishing the structure

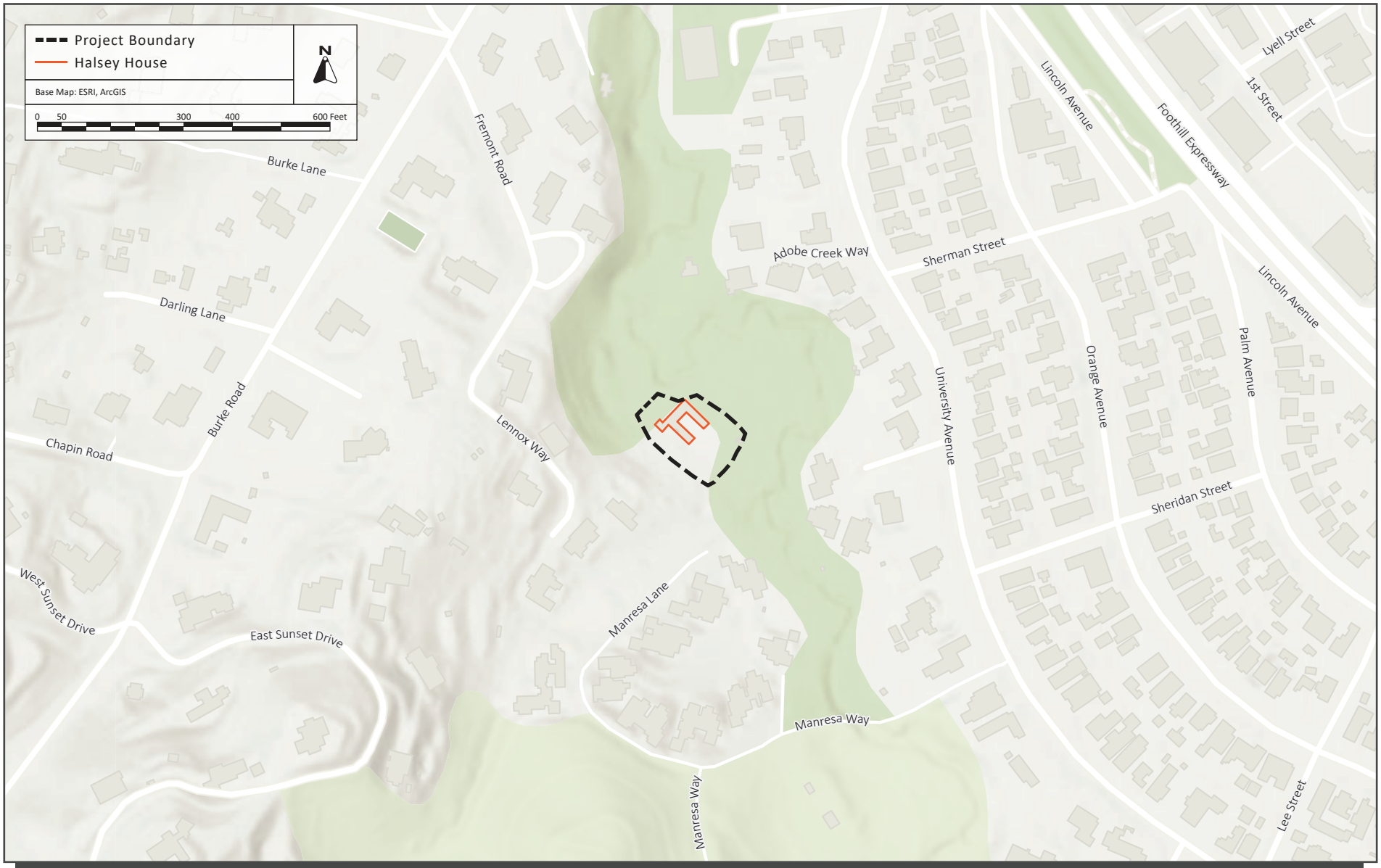
- **Cumulative Impacts** – Pursuant to CEQA Guideline Section 15130, the EIR will discuss the cumulative impacts of the project in combination with other past, present or reasonably foreseeable projects.

- **Alternatives to the Project** – Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, the EIR will evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the project, based on the results of the environmental analysis. A No Project Alternative will be evaluated along with its impacts. The alternatives discussion will focus on those alternatives that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic objectives of the proposed project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant environmental effects identified in the EIR (CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6). The environmentally superior alternative(s) will be identified based on the number and degree of associated environmental impacts.

In addition, the EIR will address the project's impacts on aesthetics, agricultural/forestry resources, air quality, energy, greenhouse gas emissions, hazards and hazardous materials, land use/planning, mineral resources, noise, population/housing, public services, recreation, transportation, tribal cultural resources, utilities/service systems, and wildfire. The EIR will also include all other sections required under the CEQA Guidelines including significant and unavoidable impacts, significant irreversible environmental changes, and growth-inducing impacts.

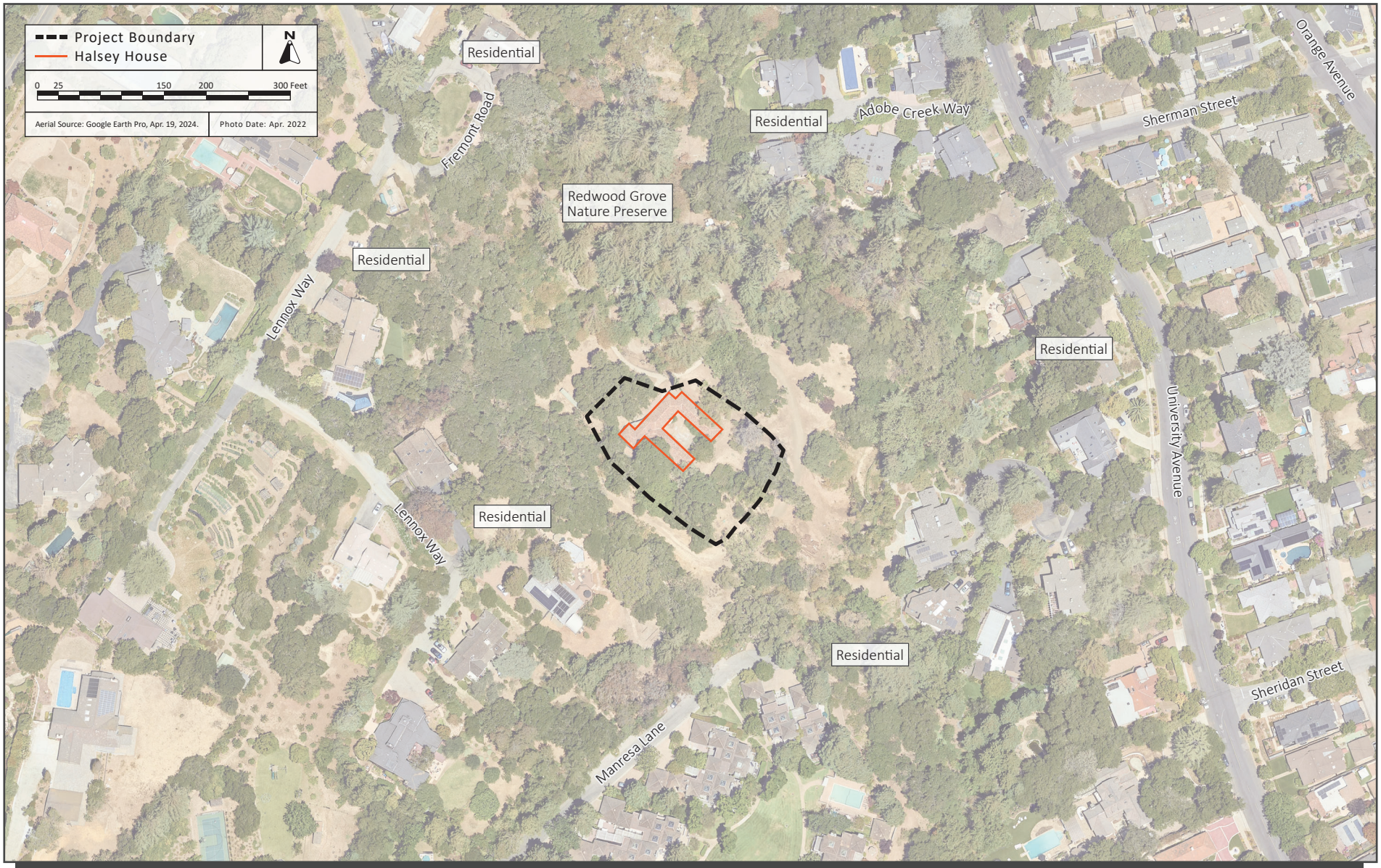



REGIONAL MAP | FIGURE 1

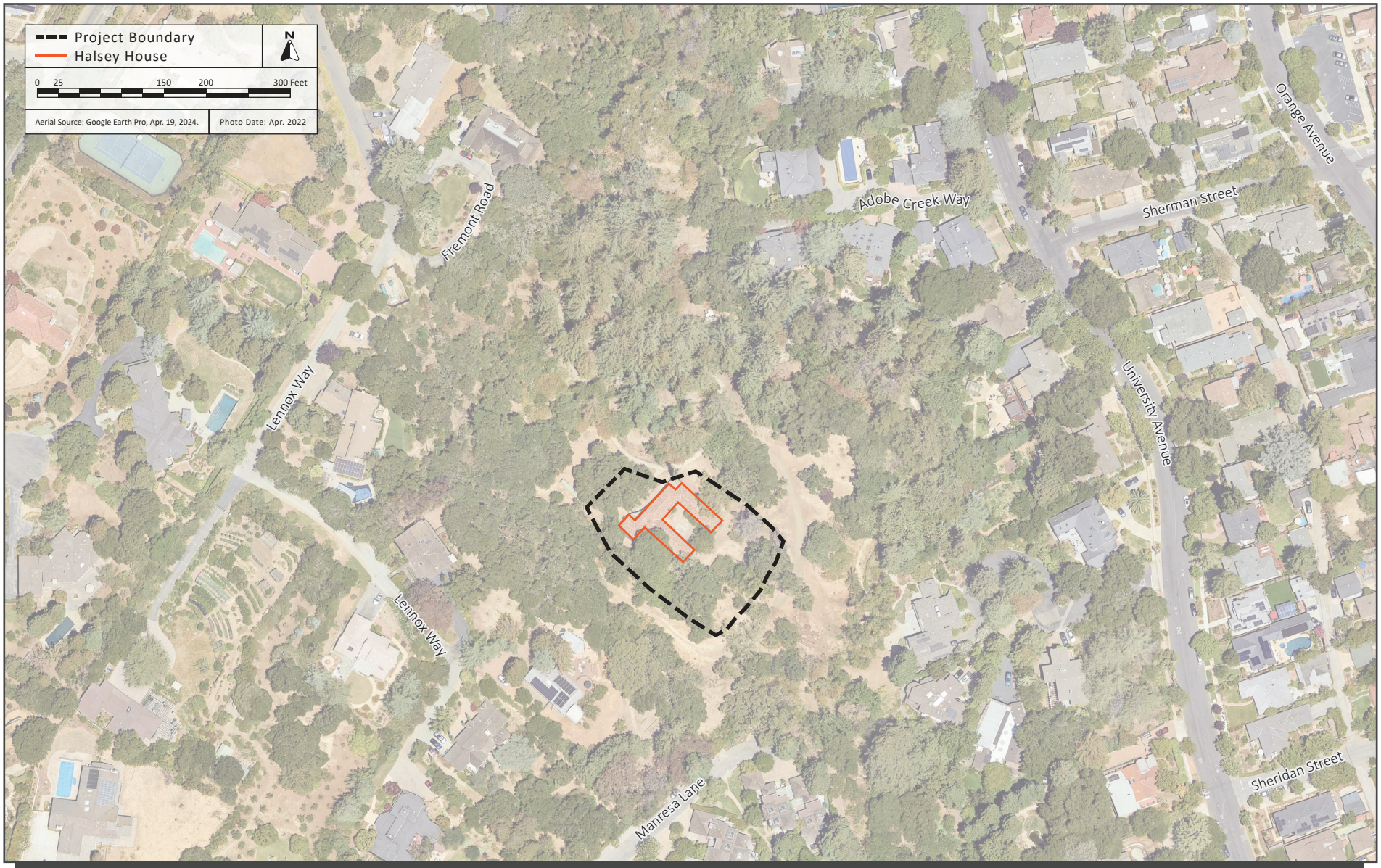



VICINITY MAP

FIGURE 2




AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH AND SURROUNDING LAND USES | FIGURE 3




SITE PLAN

FIGURE 4