

Addendum  
to the  
Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration  
for the

**Los Altos High School  
Expansion Project**

(SCH# 2011092005)

Mountain View-Los Altos Union High School District

October 2023

## **SECTION 1.0 INTRODUCTION, PURPOSE & CONCLUSION**

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The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) recognizes that between the date an environmental document is completed and the date the project is fully implemented, one or more of the following changes may occur: 1) the project may change; 2) the environmental setting in which the project is located may change; 3) laws, regulations, or policies may change in ways that impact the environment; and/or 4) previously unknown information can arise. Before proceeding with a project, CEQA requires the Lead Agency to evaluate these changes to determine whether or not they affect the conclusion in the environmental document.

A Notice of Determination was filed on January 7, 2019, following approval of the Los Altos High School Expansion project by the MV-LA High School District Board. The project was the subject of an Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND). The IS/MND analyzed improving and expanding the Los Altos High School campus, including constructing a new two-story 31,350 square-foot classroom building, a one-story 4,376 square-foot engineering laboratory and classroom building, an approximately 32,200 square-foot student services building, and an approximately 9,800 square-foot auxiliary gymnasium building, as well as reconfiguring the existing cafeteria and food services building, modernizing the gym, installing artificial turf at existing fields, and converting spaces that were proposed to be vacated in the student services building to library use. The project anticipated 410 additional students above existing enrollment numbers at Los Altos High School, increasing student enrollment at Los Altos High School from 2,234 to 2,644 students. The Los Altos High School is located at 201 Almond Avenue in Los Altos (refer to Figures 1.1-1, 1.1-2, and 1.1-3).

The Mountain View/Los Altos Union High School District (the District), which is in the process of implementing the approved 2019 campus expansion, is now proposing the removal of three additional trees that were not accounted for in the 2019 IS/MND; two trees south of the 500 West Wing and one tree along the campus's southern property line on Almond Avenue.

The purpose of this Addendum is to evaluate the environmental impacts of the following change to the approved project:

Compared to the approved project, which would not result in the removal of any existing trees on the Los Altos High School campus, the revised project would remove three trees. The two trees south of the 500 West Wing are not of protected status according to the Los Altos Municipal Code Chapter 11.08, whereas the tree along the campus's southern property line is of protected status. Photos of the existing trees proposed for removal are shown below.



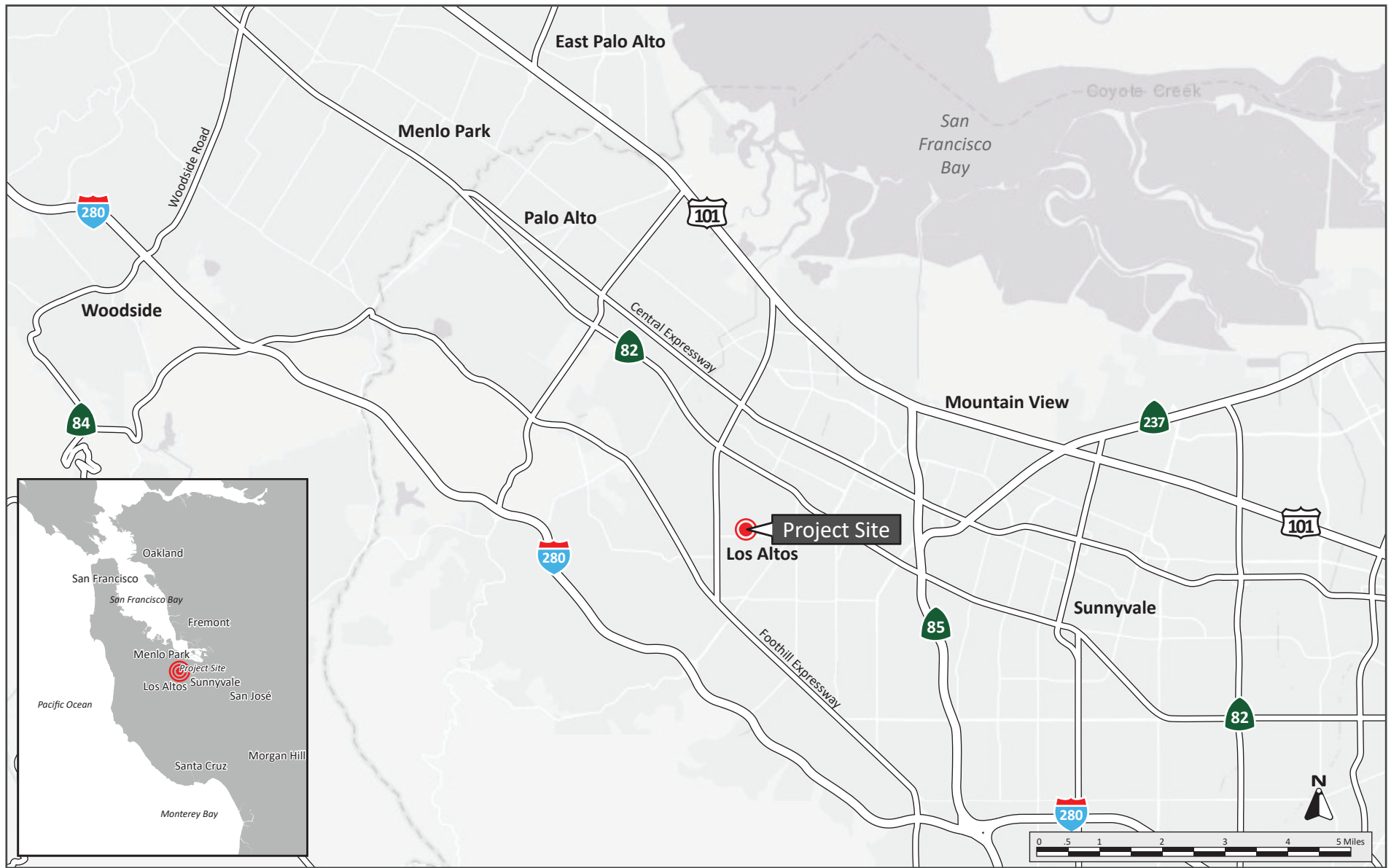
From left to right: Tree for removal south of the 500 West Wing, tree for removal south of the 500 West Wing, and tree for removal along the southern property line.

The CEQA Guidelines §15162 state that when an EIR has been certified or Negative Declaration adopted for a project, no subsequent EIR shall be prepared for that project unless the Lead Agency determines, on the basis of substantial evidence in light of the whole record, one or more of the following:

1. Substantial changes are proposed in the project which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects;
2. Substantial changes occur with respect to the circumstances under which the project is undertaken which will require major revisions of the previous EIR or Negative Declaration due to the involvement of new significant environmental effects or a substantial increase in the severity of previously identified significant effects; or
3. New information of substantial importance, which was not known and could not have been known with the exercise of reasonable diligence at the time the previous EIR was certified as complete or the Negative Declaration was adopted, shows any of the following:
  - a. The project will have one or more significant effects not discussed in the previous EIR or Negative Declaration;
  - b. Significant effects previously examined will be substantially more severe than shown in the previous EIR;
  - c. Mitigation measures or alternatives previously found not to be feasible would in fact be feasible and would substantially reduce one or more significant effects of the project, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative; or
  - d. Mitigation measures or alternatives which are considerably different from those analyzed in the previous EIR would substantially reduce one or more significant effects on the environment, but the project proponents decline to adopt the mitigation measure or alternative.

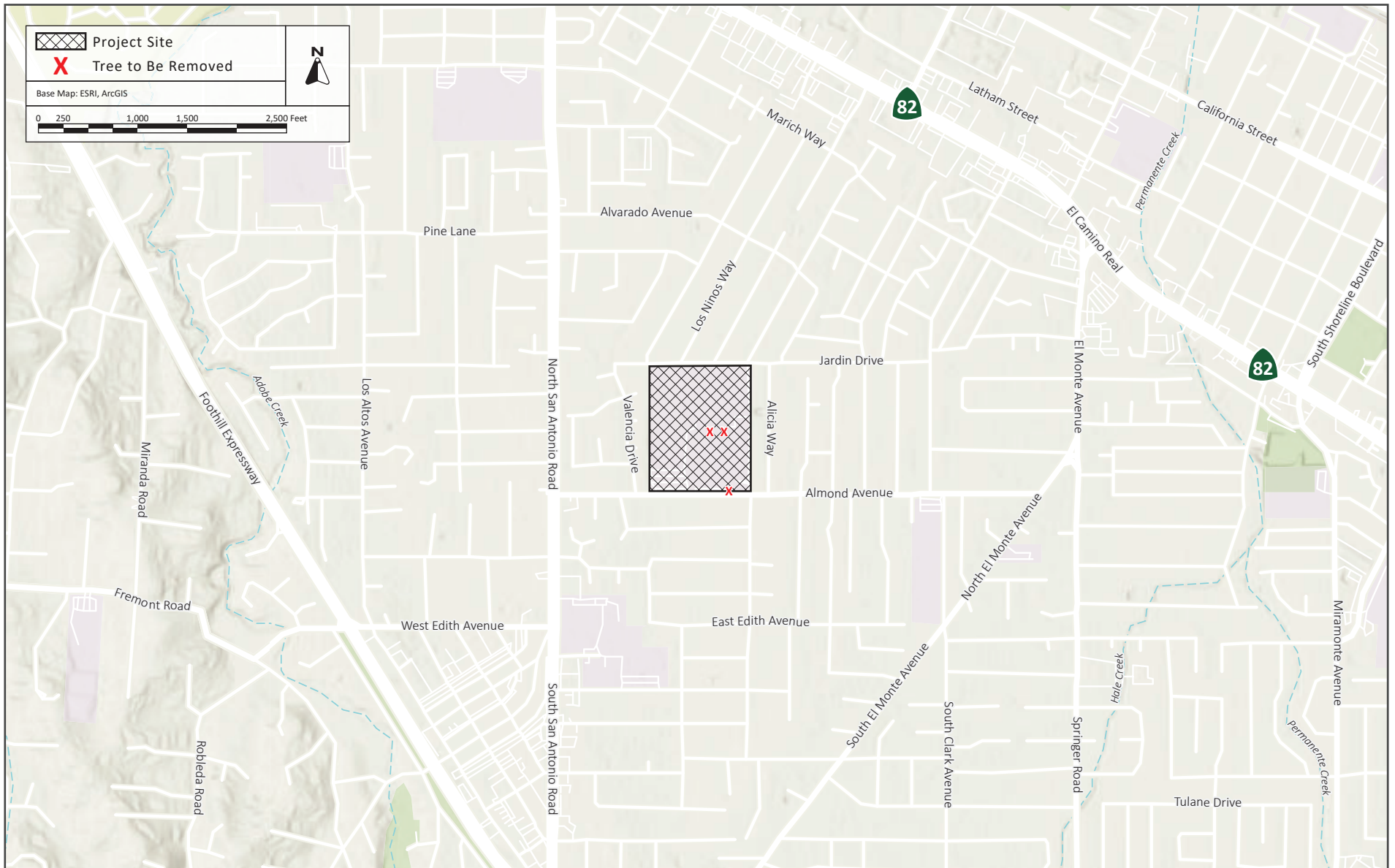
CEQA Guideline §15164 states that the Lead Agency or a responsible agency shall prepare an Addendum to a previously adopted Negative Declaration if only minor technical changes or

additions are necessary, but none of the conditions described in §15162 (see above) calling for preparation of a subsequent Negative Declaration have occurred.



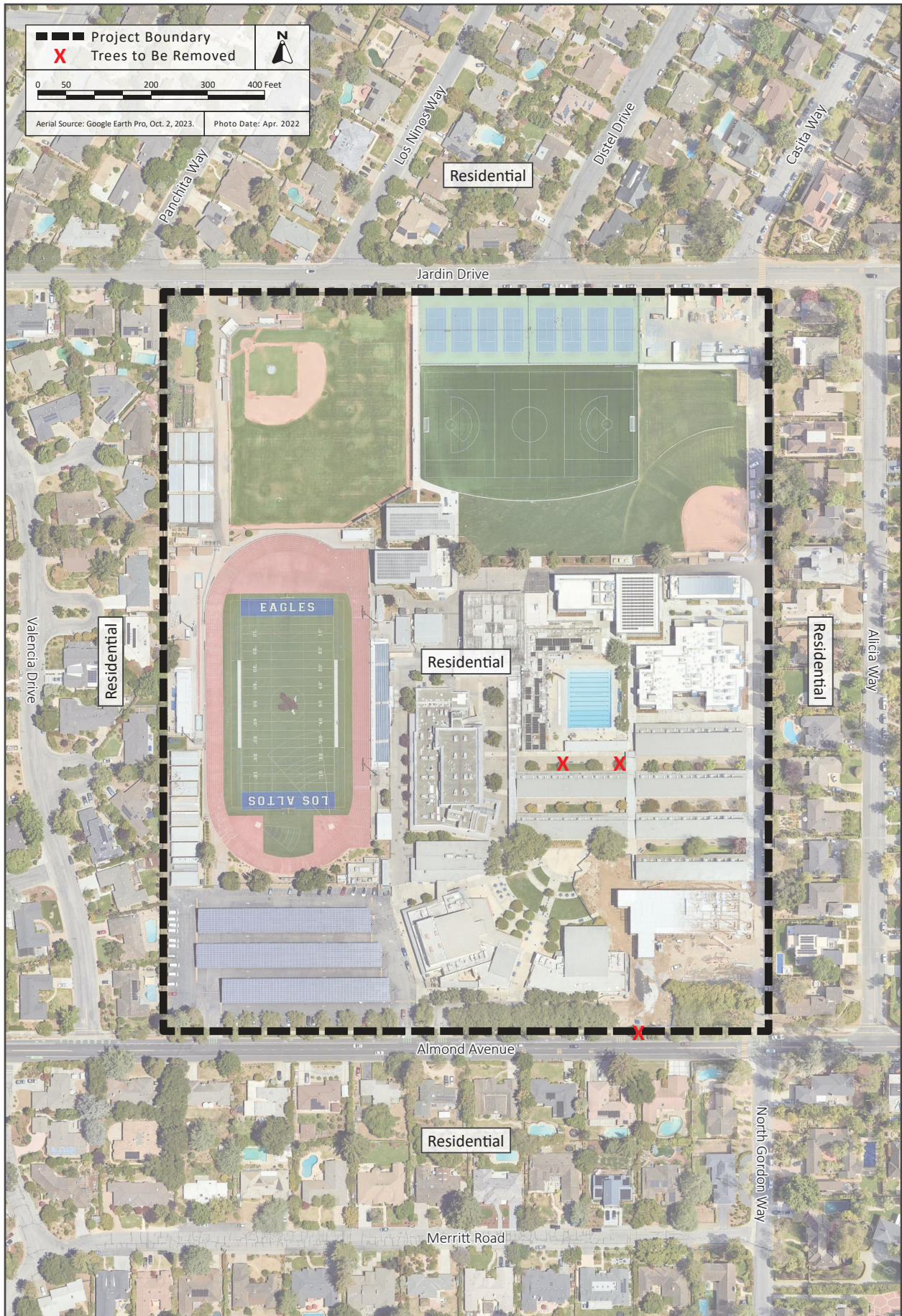
REGIONAL MAP

FIGURE 1.1-1



VICINITY MAP

FIGURE 1.1-2



TREE REMOVAL AERIAL MAP

FIGURE 1.1-3

## Analysis

### Biological Resources

The City of Los Altos Tree Protection Ordinance (LAMC Chapter 11.08) regulates the removal of Protected Trees. Protected Trees are defined as follows:

- Any tree that is 48 inches in circumference measured at 48 inches above grade;
- Any tree designated by the historical commission as a heritage tree or any tree under official consideration by the historical commission for heritage tree designation;
- Any tree which was required by the City to be either saved or planted in conjunction with a development review application.

### **Trees South of the 500 West Wing**

The two trees south of the 500 West Wing are within the path of planned utilities and would be removed to avoid interference of the trees' roots with utilities. An Arborist Report completed in October 2023 assessed the condition and status of the two trees (see Appendix A). The two trees are evergreen pear trees (*Pyrus kawakamii*), have circumferences of less than 48 inches measured at 48 inches above grade (the trees measure approximately 38 inches in circumference), are not considered heritage trees, and were not required to be saved or planted in conjunction with a development review application, and therefore are not of protected status according to the Los Altos Municipal Code Chapter 11.08. According to the Arborist Report, the tree located further east is considered in poor health and the tree located further west is considered in fair health. Therefore, a tree removal permit is not required for their removal and the project would not be in conflict with the City of Los Altos' Tree Preservation Ordinance. Two replacement trees would be planted on campus to offset the removal of the trees.

### **Tree Along Southern Property Line**

The tree along the campus's southern property line, an African fern pine (*Afrocapus falcatus*), would be removed to address a public safety concern, as the tree's roots are lifting the public sidewalk and causing a tripping hazard. The tree has a circumference of 51 inches measured at 48 inches above grade and is within the City's right-of-way, therefore, the tree is of protected status according to the Los Altos Municipal Code. As a result, removal of the tree will require the completion of a Tree Removal Permit application, processed by the Public Works Department. Once the City issues a Tree Removal Permit, public notification shall be posted on the property for at least ten days before the tree removal can occur. However, the removal of this tree, despite its protected status, would not result in a significant impact in that the tree is of a common species and an ordinary street tree along the public right-of-way.

As described in the 2019 IS/MND, there are no sensitive habitats on or adjacent to the project site, and special-status plant and animal species are not expected to occur on the project site. The trees themselves are not special status plant species and do not provide suitable habitat for special status wildlife species. The trees would be removed outside of the nesting season (which occurs February 1st – August 31st, inclusive) and therefore, removal of the trees would not result in the take of any nesting birds, active nests, eggs, or nestlings. However, if the trees were to be removed during the nesting bird season, the modified project would be required to comply with Mitigation Measure



MM BIO-1 from the approved 2019 IS/MND, which would minimize the impact of tree removal and construction on nesting birds to a less than significant level.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings of the Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration prepared for the project and knowledge of the project area, the District has concluded that the proposed change to the project (removal of three common, ordinary trees) would not result in a new significant environmental effect or substantially increase the severity of previously identified significant effects. The conclusions in the Initial Study and adopted Mitigated Negative Declaration would not change. For these reasons, a supplemental or subsequent Initial Study and Mitigated Negative Declaration is not required and this Addendum to the Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted for the Los Altos High School Expansion Project (SCH# 2011092005) has been prepared.

This Addendum will not be circulated for public review, but will be attached to the Mitigated Negative Declaration adopted for the Los Altos High School Expansion Project, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines §15164(c).