



# ATHERTONIAN

AN ATHERTON COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

2025 WINTER EDITION



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## CITY MANAGER UPDATE

As we look ahead to an exciting 2025, this edition of the Town newsletter is filled with updates and opportunities that reflect our community’s progress and shared vision. Among the highlights is the soon to open **Train Station Museum**. This new addition to the Town Center is set to open in late fall 2025. The station will tell the story of Atherton’s rail history and once open, we will be seeking volunteers and docents to bring this project to life.

Housing continues to be a key focus and included in this edition is an update on our progress as we seek to meet the State’s mandates while preserving the unique character of Atherton.

Other updates include expanded pickleball hours, technology upgrades for our Police Department, and details on Earth Day 2025. Be sure to explore the feature on Holbrook-Palmer Park’s beginnings and learn how you can participate in upcoming initiatives and activities. Together, we’re building a vibrant and sustainable future for Atherton.

## EL CAMINO REAL COMPLETE STREETS STUDY

To address safety and mobility concerns on El Camino Real, the Town, with support of a grant from the San Mateo County Transportation Authority, initiated a study to evaluate how to enhance mobility and improve safety along the 1.5 mile stretch between Selby Lane and Valparaiso Avenue. While El Camino Real is a State highway and a route of significance to the County and the region, this portion lacks sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and accessible transit stops, and experiences seasonal flooding that presents safety concerns for residents and users of the corridor. The study will result in a Complete Streets Corridor Plan that identifies potential changes to the roadway based on technical analysis, safety and infrastructure requirements, stakeholder input, and conversations with the local community.

### WHAT ARE COMPLETE STREETS?

A “complete street” provides mobility options for people of all ages and abilities, particularly for people who are walking, biking, using personal mobility devices, or riding transit. Complete streets offer several benefits, including enhanced safety and quality of life by providing a balanced variety of options for travel.

### EL CAMINO REAL TODAY...



This segment of El Camino Real includes the following general transportation features:

- 3 vehicle lanes in each direction
- Limited on-street parking (in commercial areas only)
- Limited sidewalks and lighting
- Challenging street crossings
- No bicycle facilities
- Limited drainage and stormwater management systems

## EVENTS CALENDAR

### SAVE THE DATE

- April 27: Earth Day — *Protect Our Species*





## GET INVOLVED

Following initial outreach efforts including pop-up events and on-line surveys, various alternatives were developed to address safety and mobility concerns.

The Town is seeking feedback from the wide variety of users who live, work, and travel along El Camino Real. Whether you drive, walk, cycle, use transit, or other modes of transportation, your input is crucial in helping us in developing a design that best fits the daily needs of the community. Each design concept will be evaluated on criteria including:

- Cyclist safety
- Pedestrian safety
- Does it maintain street parking?
- Does it retain vehicle travel speeds?
- Does it address flood impacts?
- Does it minimize traffic diversion and vehicle queuing on local streets?

Please review the concepts below and provide feedback through our on-line survey at [ecrcompletestreets.com](https://ecrcompletestreets.com).

### DESIGN CONCEPT #1: ADDED SIDEWALKS AND STRIPED BIKE LANES



### DESIGN CONCEPT #2: WIDER SIDEWALKS AND BUFFERED/PROTECTED BIKE LANES (STREET LEVEL)



### DESIGN CONCEPT #3: WIDER SIDEWALKS AND PARTIAL BUFFERED/PROTECTED BIKE LANES



What's next? The Town is engaging with the community in January and February 2025 to host more conversations about the potential enhancements for El Camino Real. Your feedback will help in selecting which design works best for the community.



Sacan this QR code or visit [ecrcompletestreets.com](https://ecrcompletestreets.com) to learn more about the project, participate in the survey and sign up for email updates on the study.

Escanee este código QR o visite [ecrcompletestreets.com](https://ecrcompletestreets.com) para obtener más información sobre el proyecto, participar en la encuesta y suscribirse para recibir actualizaciones por correo electrónico sobre el estudio.

To learn more about the project, you can also visit: [atherton.news/ECR-Complete-Streets](https://atherton.news/ECR-Complete-Streets).

# A HIGHLIGHT OF UPCOMING TOWN INITIATIVES FOR 2025

## STATION MUSEUM OPENING

The Town of Atherton is proud to announce the ongoing renovation of its historic train station into a dynamic Station Museum! This exciting project celebrates the station's storied evolution, from its beginnings as a modest flag stop in 1863 to its closure in 2020.

Set to open in mid to late 2025, the Station Museum will feature captivating dioramas, interpretive displays and multimedia exhibits. Visitors will journey through pivotal eras in the station's history, including its early days in the mid-1800s, the bustling 1920s, the World War II years, the glamorous mid-century period, the commuter era and the transformative rise of Silicon Valley.

The Museum's highlights will include a compelling video, Tracks of Change and 2-D/3-D narratives depicting the Peninsula's rich railway heritage. Each exhibit aims to immerse visitors in the profound impact of the station and its role in shaping regional development.

Stay tuned for updates as we prepare to unveil this local historical experience, preserving the legacy of the Atherton Train Station for generations to come.

## PICKLEBALL EXPANSION AT HOLBROOK-PALMER PARK: A NEW COMMUNITY FAVORITE

The Town's Public Works Department recently conducted a trial to evaluate pickleball's growing popularity at Holbrook-Palmer Park and its shared use with tennis courts. The findings have guided both short and long-term planning to support this exciting sport while balancing the needs of all users, noting:

- **Strong Community Interest:** The trial revealed a high demand for pickleball, with many residents expressing enthusiasm for the sport.
- **Compatibility with Tennis:** No major issues between pickleball and tennis players were identified, proving that with thoughtful scheduling and court policies, both activities can coexist.



# HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

As a result, the Town has developed the following short-term and long-term considerations.

## Short-Term Solutions

- **Shared Use of Courts:** Court 1 has been restriped to accommodate two pickleball courts, complete with nets, allowing for shared use with tennis players.
- **Expanded Pickleball Hours:** To meet demand, pickleball hours have increased:
  - Daily: Open – 12 p.m.
  - Tuesday & Thursday: 4 p.m. – Close
  - Sunday: Open – Close
- **Noise Monitoring:** Recognizing the distinct sound of pickleball play, noise levels will be closely monitored to address potential concerns from neighbors or other park users.
- **Key Access:** Tennis and pickleball players must purchase keys for court access, available at City Hall. Keyholders may bring up to three guests per court.
- **Annual Review:** The Town will conduct a one-year review to assess these adjustments and gather community feedback.

## Long-Term Considerations

To accommodate growing interest, the Town is exploring options for a dedicated pickleball court. Potential locations include the practice wall near the railroad tracks or repurposing the clay court. Funding for this project could come from donations, pending Council approval.

The one-year review will be critical in ensuring recreational balance and addressing emerging needs. Residents will have the opportunity to provide input via a community survey or by emailing public comments to [Council@ci.atherton.ca.us](mailto:Council@ci.atherton.ca.us).



**For more information on tennis and pickleball, visit the Town's website by scanning here.**

**With careful planning and community collaboration, pickleball is set to remain a vibrant and accessible sport for all Atherton residents!**

Atherton's 2023–2031 Housing Element, adopted in October 2024, establishes the framework to meet the State's requirements for allocating additional housing based on regional housing needs. In late December 2024, the Town received a comment letter from HCD identifying items that require further attention from the Town before the element can be certified by the State. These are outlined in a January 8 Council Staff Report available via the link below. At that meeting, the Council hosted a joint session with the Planning Commission to explore potential inclusionary housing programs aimed at increasing housing options in the community. The proposed ordinance will be refined following Council, Commission and public input and will be returned to the Council for future consideration in the coming months.

Over the next few months, the Council and Commission will also be working to revise the Housing Element for re-adoption after addressing comments raised by HCD.

**For meeting materials from the City Council and Planning Commission, visit:**  
<https://atherton.news/Agendas-Minutes>

**For more information on the Town's Housing Element update process, scan here.**



**For more details on this initiative, visit our Inclusionary Housing Ordinance page: <https://atherton.news/Inclusionary-Housing-Ordinance>**





## LOOKING BACK ON ATHERTON'S HOLIDAY EVENTS

Another year, another Halloween Spooktacular!

Once again the Town of Atherton, the Atherton Library, and the Atherton Police Officer's Association organized the Halloween Spooktacular for the children in our community. Almost 200 attendees turned out for this popular event, filled with holiday spirit! Costumes of all shapes and sizes could be seen while children enjoyed the Library's activity stations, trick-or-treated with Atherton police officers, and enjoyed ice cream from Mr. Softee. To top it all off every child had a chance to show off their costume as they paraded around Town Hall and through the Atherton Police Department. A special thank you to our Atherton residents who coordinate decorations ensuring that this event always has something new to show every year!

**Can't wait to see what the Halloween Spooktacular has in store for all of us next year!**



**Hometown Holidays 2024 was a huge success!**

Over 100 attendees of parents and children visited Atherton Library to enjoy hot chocolate, cookies and visit with Santa. The Friends of the Library provided supplies for decorating cookies, which proved to be almost as popular with the children of the community as Santa!

Between holiday music on the patio and snow globe-making in the library, a festive atmosphere was enjoyed by all. With a little Christmas magic from Santa and all our little elves, the Town's tree was lit!

We look forward to hosting this popular event again next year and seeing you all there!



## SAVE THE DATE ATHERTON EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

Join the Town of Atherton for the 2025 Annual Earth Day Festival on Sunday, April 27, 2025 from 11:00 AM to 3:00 PM at Holbrook Palmer Park. This year's theme is "Protect Our Species," which will feature a number of exciting family-friendly activities and demonstrations. Stay tuned for upcoming event announcements!

The Town is seeking volunteers to support this event. Volunteers play a vital role in creating a meaningful, community-driven event that seeks

to promote sustainability and environmental awareness. Shifts are a minimum of three hours, with placements in community outreach, workshops and activity booths.

Volunteer Opportunities Include:

- Event setup and takedown
- Assisting at activity booths
- Welcoming and guiding attendees
- Supporting eco-friendly initiatives

**To sign up, please visit**  
**[Atherton.News/Volunteer-Form](https://Atherton.News/Volunteer-Form)**



## DEAR SALLY: LET'S TALK ABOUT TREES

**When I am walking in Lindenwood, on some streets I can't walk in the right of way due to plants being in the way. What can I do?**

Please contact code enforcement at (650) 752-0553. The first three feet from the road into the public right of way should be clear to walk. It is the adjacent property owner's responsibility to keep that area clear.

**My neighbor's tree hangs over to my property. What can I do?**

This is a civil matter, so first contact your neighbor and try to work out a mutually beneficial solution. Wherever the tree is planted, that party is responsible. However, some residents agree to split the cost for the pruning.

**When I do my daily walk around Town, I see dead trees. What can I do?**

Email the Town Arborist the address and include a photo if you have one. The Town Arborist will contact the owner for removal as dead trees are a code violation.

**My tree looks to be in decline. What should I do?**

First, have a professional, private certified arborist come take a look at your tree to see if it can be preserved and what mitigation measures can be taken. If the tree is dead or dangerous, then you can apply for the removal permit at Town Hall. A list of tree companies and the tree removal application can be found at the Town's website.

**It's the weekend and I hear my neighbor doing tree work. What can I do?**

First, call the non-emergency police department number and report the work. Work should not be taking place by any contractors on the weekend, only approved emergency work. The police department, if possible, can check to see if the resident has a permit. If not, a code enforcement case will be opened, and the Town Arborist will be notified.

**When driving around town some branches are too low and I cannot see the stop sign. What should I do?**

Please contact the Town Arborist, as trees need to meet a required clearance over the street.



**For a full list of Town Arborist resources, scan here.**  
**<https://atherton.news/Arborist-Services-Tree-Protection>**

**Sally Bentz**  
sbentz@ci.atherton.ca.us • (650) 752-0526

## SUSTAINABILITY TOUR WITH SUSTAINABLE FUTURE OUTDOOR ACADEMY (SFOA)

Atherton staff recently welcomed 35 middle school students from the Sustainable Futures Outdoor Academy (SFOA) for a sustainability tour of the Town Center.



SFOA, dedicated to educating youth about sustainable living and green careers, organizes hands-on field trips to inspire the next generation.

During the tour, staff showcased the Town's all-electric campus, explained the solar panel installation and its benefits, highlighted drought-resistant landscaping and bioswales for stormwater management and detailed how Town Center buildings are designed to reduce energy consumption. Students also learned about the use of recycled materials, repurposed spaces and the creation of expanded outdoor areas for community enjoyment.

Do you know a student group that would benefit from an educational sustainability tour with the Town? Please contact Christabel Soria Mendoza at [csoria-mendoza@ci.atherton.ca.us](mailto:csoria-mendoza@ci.atherton.ca.us)

## WELCOME NEW HIRES



**BENJAMIN TALAVERA (HE/HIM)**  
MANAGEMENT ANALYST II, PUBLIC WORKS

Benjamin Talavera (He/Him) recently joined the Town of Atherton as a Management Analyst II for the Public Works Department. With a Bachelor of Arts in Political Science from UC Davis and a Minor in Chicano Studies,

Benjamin brings over 12 years of experience in public service. He has previously worked for the Judicial Council of California for 10 years and the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District for the past two years. His areas of expertise include Fleet Management, Budget Management and Procurement.

In his new role, Benjamin will be responsible for Budget, Contract Administration, Purchasing, and Public Outreach within the Public Works Department. He is excited to bring his skills to support the community through public service.



**MICHAEL GALLAGHER (HE/THEY)**  
RECEPTIONIST AND POSTAL CLERK

Michael Gallagher (He/They) is the new permanent Receptionist and Postal Clerk for the Town of Atherton. Michael is excited to join the Atherton team and contribute to supporting the community. They can be found

at the Front Desk daily or occasionally taking a walk in the park during lunch breaks.

With a background in Psychology, Michael has worked in a variety of roles over the years, including as a high school and middle school Special Education teacher. While they found teaching rewarding, Michael is looking forward to this new chapter in local government. They are eager to dive into the world of clerking and record-keeping and support the City Clerk and City Manager in their efforts.





## ATHERTON POLICE TECHNOLOGY UPGRADES

The Town of Atherton Police Department is excited to announce a significant step forward in our Police Department's commitment to innovation, sustainability, operational efficiency and safety. We have recently incorporated electric vehicles (EVs), an upgraded Autonomous Drone Program and a new Mobile Field Fingerprint Scanner into our service.

We have added two Chevrolet Blazer electric vehicles (EVs) to our patrol fleet and have assigned two hybrid Toyota Camrys to our detectives. These new patrol cars represent our dedication to adopting environmentally responsible practices, while maintaining the high level of service and response our community expects. With these EVs, we aim to:

- Reduce our carbon footprint and contribute to cleaner air in our neighborhoods.
- Lower operating costs, ensuring taxpayer dollars are used efficiently.
- Leverage cutting-edge technology to enhance our daily operations.

The introduction of EVs to our fleet aligns with our broader goal of integrating sustainable solutions into public safety. We are proud to lead by example in embracing innovative practices that benefit both our community and the environment.

As part of our efforts to enhance public security and operational efficiency, we have upgraded our Autonomous Drone Program. These new advancements include a temperature-controlled launch and landing garage with automated drone battery recharging, extended flight ranges and enhanced imaging systems. With these upgrades, our drones will be able to provide:

- Faster response times to incidents.
- Real-time overwatch to assist officers during emergencies and to provide improved officer safety.
- Better coverage during public events and emergencies, ensuring community safety, improved communication and coordination.

We are also proud to announce the addition of a state-of-the-art mobile field fingerprint scanner to our department's toolkit. This cutting-edge technology enhances our ability to identify individuals quickly and accurately in the field, ensuring faster responses and more efficient investigations. The mobile scanner enables officers to:

- Identify suspects or individuals in real-time during traffic stops or other interactions, reducing the need to transport them to the police station or the county jail, unnecessarily, to identify them.
- Confirm identities securely and reliably, especially in situations involving incomplete or fraudulent identification documents.
- Streamline criminal investigations by providing immediate access to fingerprint databases.

As always, privacy and data protection remain top priorities. We've strengthened safeguards to ensure responsible use of this technology. Our updated Autonomous Drone Program is fully compliant with local, state and federal regulations and the scanner will be used responsibly and strictly within legal guidelines and established policies.

These new tools reinforce our commitment to leveraging modern technology to enhance the effectiveness of our operations, protect our community and maintain trust and accountability.



## FRIENDS OF THE LIBRARY: LIBRARY SPEAKER SERIES

The Friends of Atherton Library are excited to announce the Speaker Series for 2025, curated specifically for our 55+ community patrons.

### IMPORTANT DETAILS

- Speaker Series runs through June 2025
- Limited seating available
- Registration is required

### HOW TO STAY INFORMED

- Visit our new website: [www.athertonlibraryfriends.org](http://www.athertonlibraryfriends.org)
- Sign up for program updates
- Watch for RSVP opportunities for selected programs and events



We invite you to connect with us and join our community of library supporters. Your engagement helps us continue to provide enriching experiences for our local patrons. We hope to see you join us in the new year!

From,  
**The Friends of Atherton Library**

Date	Event	Location
Thursday, February 6, 2025 4–6 p.m.	Speaker #1 — Russ Bertetta & Rodney Paul Flower Power and Ink – San Francisco	Heritage Room
Sunday, March 9, 2025 2–4 p.m.	Speaker #2 — Tree Specialist: Gardening under Oaks	Lindenwood Backyard
Thursday, April 3, 2025 4–6 p.m.	Speaker #3 — Jim Caldwell: American in Paris, Artist Mary Cassatt	Heritage Room
Thursday, May 1, 2025 4–6 p.m.	Speaker #4 — Chris Abramson & Frank Merrill: Note the Past - Atherton Back Pages	Heritage Room
Saturday, June 14, 2025 1–3 p.m.	Ice Cream Book Exchange Marsh Road banner booked 6/7–14	Library Deck

## THE BEGINNINGS OF HOLBROOK-PALMER PARK

### A BRIEF HISTORY BY THE HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

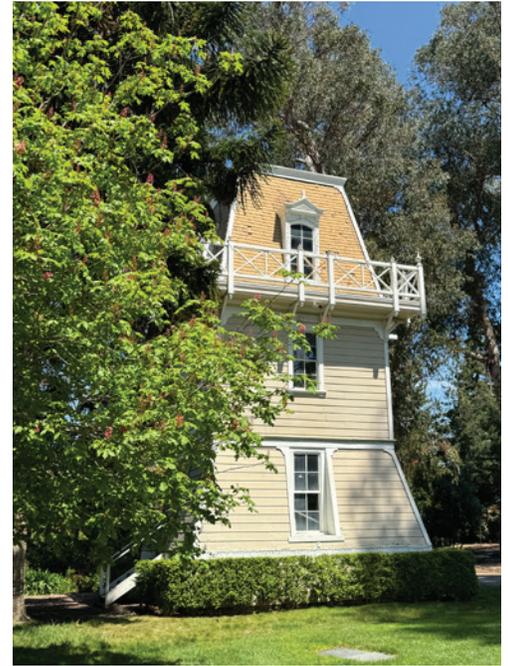
When Olive Holbrook Palmer died in 1958, she willed her estate to the Town of Atherton for recreational purposes. The Council was not inclined to accept this very generous gift of the 22 acre farm, as they felt there were too many liabilities with a large house, old water tower (1883), carriage house (1887) and large acreage.

Fortunately, the women of the Town of Atherton had a different opinion. They realized how valuable this gift was to the Town. A survey was circulated in 1959 to one third of all households in Atherton, asking residents for their opinion regarding recreational needs and interests. Not only did an overwhelming majority of residents respond, they also expressed an interest in more recreational activities and even indicated a willingness to pay additional taxes to support such

facilities and services. The Council was astounded, vowing to be more responsive in the future and quickly accepted Olive's gift.

Among other things, Olive's will states that the "property shall not be used or occupied for commercial or housing purposes"... and shall be used... "as a public recreational park." Violating these terms would initiate a transfer of the 22 acre parcel to the Board of Trustees of Stanford University.

These farsighted and civic minded women served as a precursor to the Atherton Dames, formed in 1967. Over the years, the Dames grew in number and influence. Through many community fundraisers, they raised money for the development of Holbrook-Palmer Park. They made it possible to build the Jennings Pavilion, renovate the barn and water tower, among other things, and leave behind a rich legacy which, as residents, we all enjoy



to this day. The Dames have since disbanded and Holbrook-Palmer Park Foundation has taken over the support of the park.

To find out more, come visit the Atherton Heritage Association on Tuesdays, 10 AM to 1 PM. We are located in the old Council Chambers in the Civic Center, right next to Atherton Library and Mme. Colette.

## ATHERTON ARTS FOUNDATION UPDATE

Atherton Arts Foundation (AAF) is building a community of and for artists! We are proud of our heritage of creating summer music, obtaining sculptures for the park and art camps for children. Our ongoing commitment to an art community is several fold:

AAF offers a variety of art classes. For a schedule, please visit our website, [athertonartsfoundation.org](http://athertonartsfoundation.org). Come join us for a class!

Be sure to visit the new art exhibit at the Town Center. AAF provides an ongoing art show which changes artists quarterly.

AAF is an ambassador for Holbrook Palmer Park. Not only are our art classes held in the lower level of the Main House, we are in the process of presenting a

permanent display of Atherton artists upstairs in the Main House. The opening will be late Fall 2025.

A fun addition to the park is a small 'Painted Rock Garden' right outside the art room doors. Children of all ages have contributed to the rock garden, with generations of families leaving their creativity for all to enjoy. Please come in and paint a rock!

We partnered with 'Power Book Bags.' We meet every other month to sew book bags from donated fabric. This summer, over 250 bags were delivered to the headquarters of Power Book Bags, in Sutton Bay, MI!

As you walk through the park, please stop by the Art Room, and if anyone's 'home', you're welcome to come in, visit and be part of the community!



TOWN OF ATHERTON  
80 Fair Oaks Lane  
Atherton CA 94027



## SENIOR GROUP

The Town of Atherton's Senior Task Force (STF), formed in 2023, has been working to determine the needs of Atherton's senior community and their extent. The STF has held a number of focus groups, internal & external discussions and several public "Senior Focused Seminars." Their efforts have helped the team to produce insightful findings and a vision to support Atherton seniors in 2025 and beyond.

The 2025 Senior Task Force Proposed Plan focuses on incorporating the San Mateo Library System (and the Atherton Library in particular) into senior support, serving as a resource hub for the senior community. The STF plans to continue to work closely with library and Town staff to support and publicize the Library's Senior Initiative including the existing, "Older Adults Programs & Services." These include Tech Skill Building, Gem Painting, a Safe Driver Course and more. The team will also identify and propose initiatives that serve "unmet needs" of Atherton's seniors.

The STF presented their findings and 2025 Vision to the Town Council this past fall. We look forward to building upon their research to bring to life the Task Force's vision for a bright future for Atherton seniors.

## UPCOMING EVENT



### EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

Sunday, April 27, 2025  
11:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Join the Town of Atherton for the 2025 Annual Earth Day Festival at Holbrook Palmer Park.



## STAY IN TOUCH

