



## Item No. 20 Town of Atherton

### CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL**

**FROM: GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER**

**DATE: OCTOBER 20, 2021**

**SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF CONCEPT PLAN FOR TRAIN STATION  
RENOVATION – FEEDBACK AND DIRECTION**

#### RECOMMENDATION

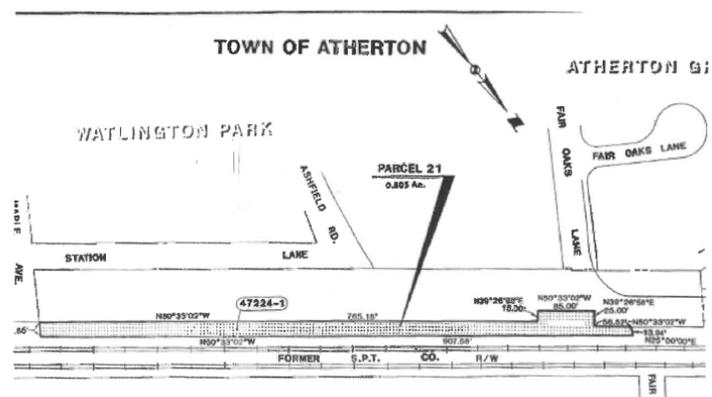
Review the concept plan for renovation of the train station as prepared by the City Council Ad Hoc Subcommittee (DeGolia/Hawkins-Manuelian) and provide feedback and direction.

#### BACKGROUND

Through a Project and Funding Agreement with the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board (JPB) as part of the closure of the Atherton Station, the Town secured \$400,000 in support of “...development and implementation of an initial plan by the Town to provide site improvements in the Maintenance and Use Area shown in Exhibit B, including landscaping and screening improvements and potential modifications to the station building to integrate the station building into the Town Center...”. Exhibit B consists of the area surrounding the station building and the area along the rail corridor fencing to Maple Avenue.

Funding provided by the JPB could be used for either the integration of the train station building into the Town Center or the study and potential implementation of pedestrian access improvements between the Town Center and the Menlo Park Caltrain Station.

With the closure of the Atherton Station, an Ad Hoc City Council Subcommittee (DeGolia/Hawkins-Manuelian) was established to prepare a concept plan for renovation of the train station building and create a space within the Town Center where the public could view the history of the station.



## **ANALYSIS**

Attached is a Report from the Ad Hoc City Council Subcommittee. The Report outlines the proposal to renovate the station with static and interactive displays related to the history of the train station in Atherton.

The Town is responsible for the station area and corridor landscaping through the Maintenance and Use Agreement; but the JPB retains ownership of the property. Any proposed renovations will require concurrence of the JPB Board. Funding is on a reimbursement basis.

Following the City Council approval of concept, staff will prepare a Request for Proposal for design services to assist the Town in refining the necessary improvements. Following design, the Town would then bid construction work to complete the physical renovations. Specialty content and interior displays would be conducted by separate contract.

## **POLICY FOCUS**

Policy focus for discussion should be around the concept plan for the station and overall expectations for the project development.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

None at this time.

## **GOAL ALIGNMENT**

This Report and its contents are in alignment with the following Council Policy Goals:

- Goal C – Create and Expand the Town Center/Library
- Goal E – Strengthen Community Engagement and Transparency

## **PUBLIC NOTICE**

Public notification was achieved by posting the agenda, with this agenda item being listed, at least 72 hours prior to the meeting in print and electronically. Information about the project is also disseminated via the Town's electronic News Flash and Atherton Online. There are approximately 1,200 subscribers to the Town's electronic News Flash publications. Subscribers include residents as well as stakeholders – to include, but be not limited to, media outlets, school districts, Menlo Park Fire District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

## **COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL**

This item \_\_\_ has or X has not been before a Town Committee or Commission.

\_\_\_ Audit/Finance Committee (meets every other month)

\_\_\_ Bicycle/Pedestrian Committee (meets as needed)

**Train Station Renovation**

**October 20, 2021**

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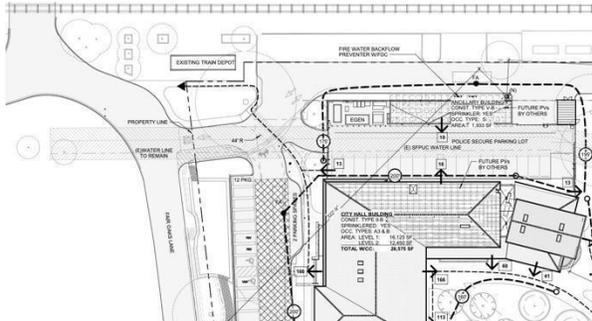
- \_\_\_\_\_ Civic Center Advisory Committee (meets as needed)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Park and Recreation Committee (meets each month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Planning Commission (meets each month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rail Committee (meets every other month)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Transportation Committee (meets every other month)

**ATTACHMENTS**

Subcommittee Report – Train Station Renovation Concept

**Train Station Exhibit Proposal**

The goal of the Train Station Exhibit is to create a public location in the new Town Center campus to celebrate Atherton’s rich history with the train. The concept is to create a place where visitors can stroll, sit and view displays. Within the train station and within the historic Town Hall building, there will be displays that tell the story of Atherton’s history with the railroad and train station.



**The Town Center Campus**

The proposed location for the Train station exhibits are the Train Station and secondarily the Historic Town Hall building.

The station could be renovated to accommodate images of historic photos, model trains, secured display cases, and an audio visual display. The Town is responsible for the

integration of the station into the Atherton Town Center; but Caltrain does retain approval authority over specific renovations, so they will need to be consulted at some point in the project.

The train station would need to be structurally improved and any display areas would need to be protected from the weather, as well as reasonably secured to prevent theft.

Staff does not anticipate that Caltrain would object to improvements designed to renovate the station building into an Exhibition Area.



**Renovation of the train station.**

Renovations to the train station would require that staff engage an architect and construction contractor. This would involve an RFP that would be publicly bid. The staff would put together a request for proposal for architectural and exhibit design services to begin the process of creating a design for the contemplated displays.

The train station is located in a highly visible position and will draw attention to the Atherton Town Center. Parking is immediately available.

The concept is to create a place where visitors can stroll, sit and view displays. Within the train station, we envision displays of Atherton's train station history, the trains and the riders. The train station will be outfitted with a video display and benches, various free standing historical displays and a secure display case that will feature model trains on a track as a focal point. These model trains will present a chronological evolution of the history of the train in Atherton.

The existing station structure will be preserved as much as possible. The entrance and the "Atherton" station sign will be flipped to the opposite side to face the Town Center instead of the train tracks. This can be done with little change to the building. It is a mirror structure so the sides may be changed by reusing the same material and moving them to the other side. The building will need to be weatherized. Security cameras will allow the police to remotely monitor the space.



On the outside there may be benches and seating areas and there is a walkway leading to the Town Center. This will be integrated with the look and feel of the Town Center planned landscaping and will serve to draw foot traffic to the center.



Since the structure has windows on all sides we will explore the use of displays placed in the middle that visitors walk around. We will try to keep the original structure intact and work with the natural light. Within the station there are only two small wall sections that can house wall mounted displays.

**Content:**

We will assemble historical content related to Atherton’s history with the train and the train station by collaborating with the Heritage Association and using the town's collections as well as the San Mateo Historical archive, the Menlo Park Historical Society, the Sacramento Rail Museum archives and various historians and video sources. The Atherton Heritage Association has historical photos of the train station and some limited memorabilia. These images will be selected and digitized to create displays and a short video . We will also invite Atherton residents to share and donate their historical photos and memorabilia via the city email.

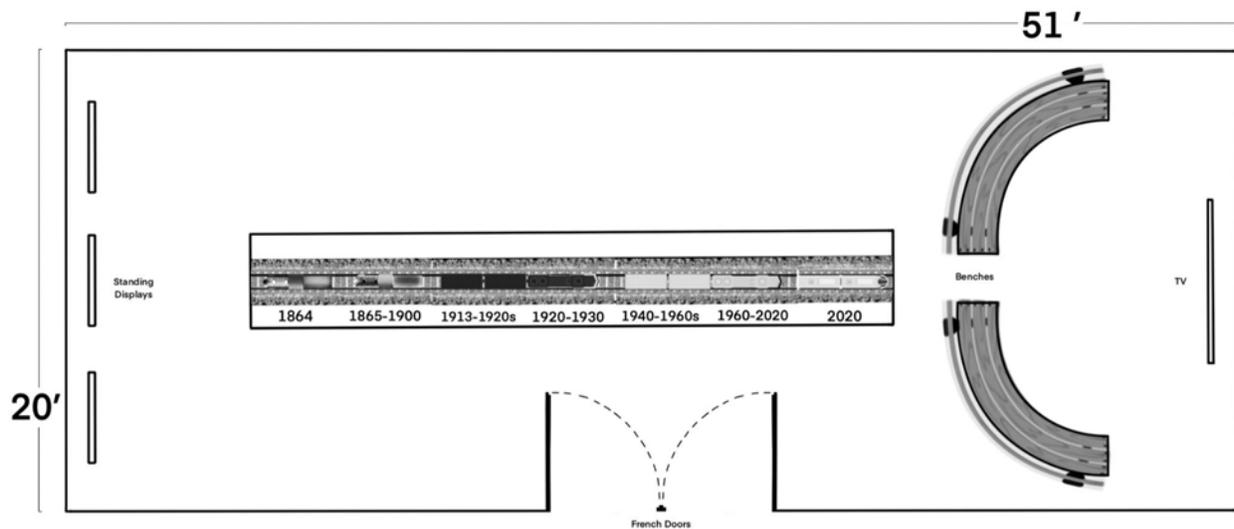
**Display technologies:**

An interactive video display will be developed and projected onto a screen in the train station (and perhaps in the Historic Town Hall) where users can select the content they wish to see. Audio will be streamed to the visitors iphone or played though the exhibit speakers or headsets. The existing outdoor train schedule display case may be retrofitted to house additional displays.



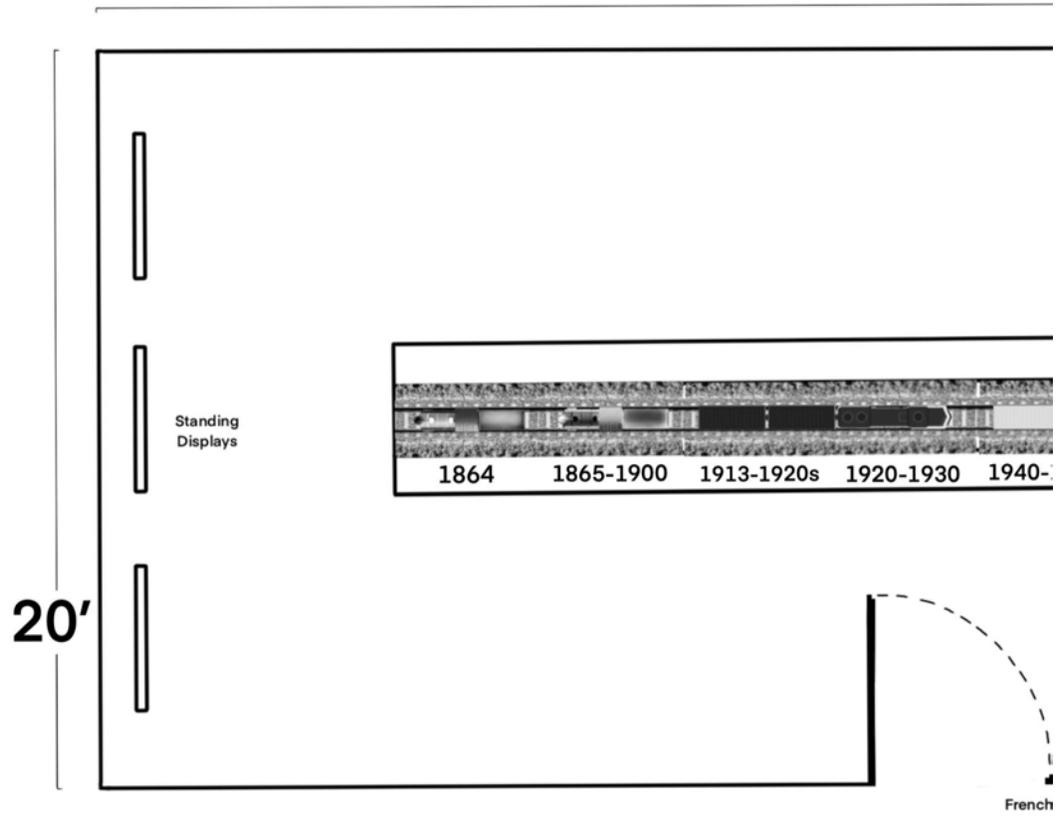
**The tentative Exhibits:**

The initial concept of the train station museum involves three areas: 1) free standing displays that tell the story of pre-train atherton (native americans, settlers and the stagecoach days), 2) a center display that features a train track with model trains that show the history and evolution of the trains, the station and the riders over time and 3) a video screen with seating that will show a short video. There are also two wall spaces that can be used for mounted displays or memorabilia cases.



**1) Free standing displays of Pre train Atherton:**

On the Fair oaks side of the station there will be free standing displays that visitors can walk around. Since the walls are glass this will allow us to retain the existing structure and available light. These displays will tell the story of the native americans that lived in the Atherton Area, the early settlers, the stagecoach days and the early development of the peninsula section of the train.



When the roads were dry, the Hall and Crandall Stage could travel from San Francisco to San Jose in six hours.



Concord coach

The first stagelines used light mudwagons on the rough Peninsula roads. After better roads were built, the more comfortable Concord coach was used.



In 1849, a stagecoach journey from San Francisco to San Jose cost 2 ounces of gold. At the scale, measure enough gold to pay for the journey. Then, get into the mudwagon.

The displays will be full size 5-6"feet tall. They can be simple prints, cutouts or 3d cases.

Example of a free standing display from RWC museum



## 2) Center model train and track display

At the center of the museum is an encased model train track. It is divided into time periods starting from the beginning of the train to the close of the train station 2020. At each station there is a model train engine of that time period and photos and information about the Atherton station and the riders who used the train at that time. Budget permitting, small models of the station

may be constructed of each period. We will be seeking to buy Model train engines of cars for each period from existing sources. These will ideally be in the larger G model scale.





Model trains;

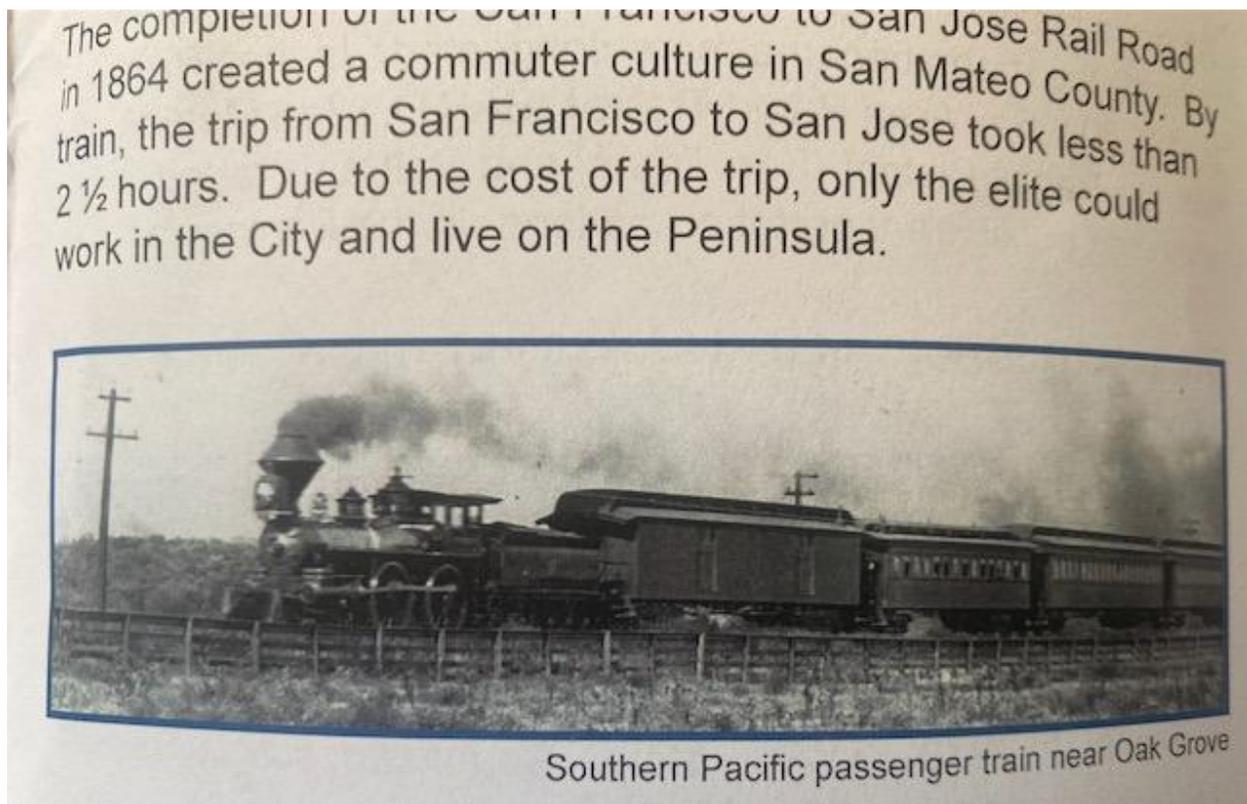
We will search for historical model train engines to incorporate in the case.

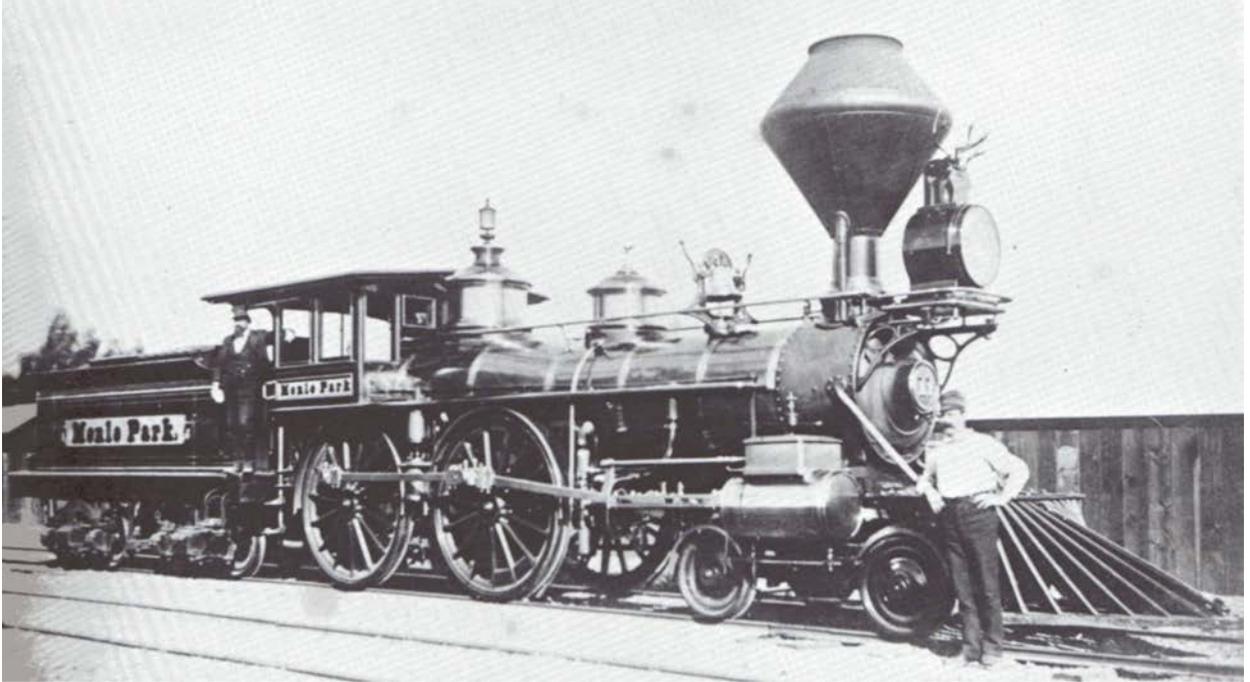
Model trains come in various sizes. We are told that the Model G scale is readily available.

**Potential train track timeline:**

- 1860-65 (map of train) San Francisco and San Jose RR is built and launches
- The Fair Oaks flag stop days, “Big Four” train barrons settle here 1865-1900
- The Fair Oaks flag stop becomes the Atheron station, 1910-1930
- Various train renovations over time and the evolving community around it, the San Francisco commuter days 1940-1975
- Caltrain replaces Southern Pacific [1975-80]
- The decline of the train riders, Silicon Valley becomes central 1980-2020
- 2020 the close of the train station during the Covid Pandemic

**Examples:**





## "Big Four" Families Settle on the Peninsula



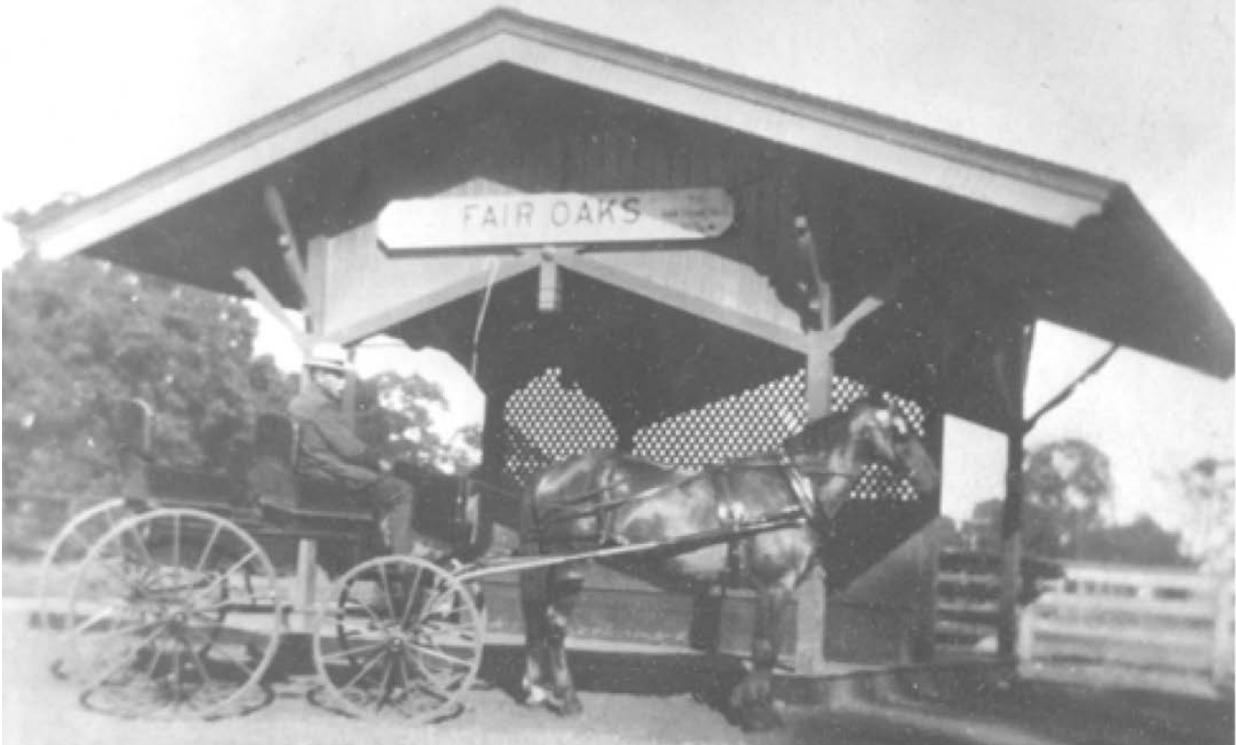
Members of the "Big Four" made large land purchases in San Mateo County with some of their heirs eventually settling here.

In 1868, the San Francisco—San Jose Railroad was absorbed by the original Southern Pacific Railroad. It was absorbed again in 1870 by the Central Pacific, which was controlled by the "Big Four" (Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Collis Huntington and Mark Hopkins).

Following their local railroad purchase, three of the "Big Four" made large land acquisitions within the county. In the southern portion of the county, Stanford developed one of the west coast's largest horse farms which extended into today's Stanford University. The Crocker

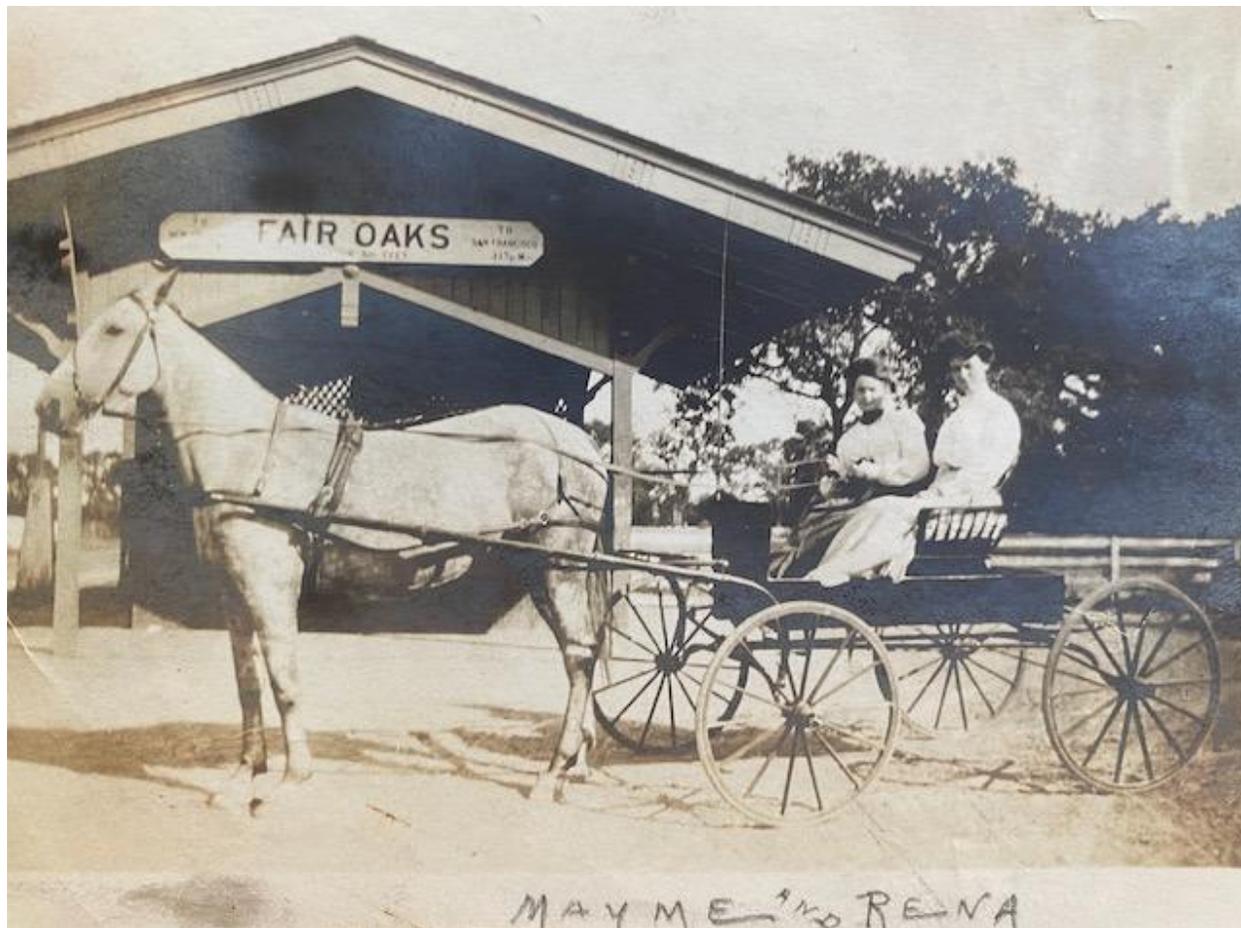
Land Company purchased 4,000 acres in the north county, including San Bruno Mountain. Finally, the Hopkins family acquired land in Menlo Park and Redwood City.

Hopkins and Crocker's heirs would eventually settle in the county. In 1883, Timothy Hopkins acquired a mansion in Atherton. Among the many Crocker mansions in San Mateo County were William Crocker's New Place and Templeton Crocker's Uplands, both built in Hillsborough in 1907 and 1913 respectively.



Fair Oaks 1904 - Alameda Heritage Association







**Atherton 1913 – Atherton Heritage Association**

The train station is renamed from Fair Oaks to Atherton

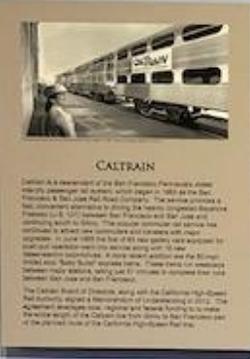


**Atherton 1920 – Atherton Heritage Association**









**CALTRAIN**

Caltrain is a member of the Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system, providing a direct, efficient, and convenient rail service. The service provides a fast, convenient, and reliable mode of transportation for the San Francisco Peninsula and the San Jose area. The service is operated by the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. The service is operated by the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system. The service is operated by the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) system.

The Caltrain Board of Directors, along with the California High-Speed Rail Authority, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2012. The agreement sets forth the terms, conditions, and responsibilities for the operation of the Caltrain line from San Jose to San Francisco and the extension of the Caltrain line to the San Francisco Peninsula.



**CALTRAIN COMMERCIAL 1987**  
 When the San Francisco Board took over the operation of Caltrain in June 1987, annual ridership was 200,000. This number has increased nearly 100 percent to 4,000,000 riders serving Caltrain in 2012.



**CALTRAIN RIDERS**  
 For passenger comfort, Caltrain cars are equipped with overhead luggage racks, binocular storage and reading material for seniors and people with disabilities. Wheelchair boarding instructions to assist at each stop.



**CALTRAIN**

Caltrain is a descendant of the San Francisco Peninsula's oldest electric passenger rail system, which began in 1863 as the San Francisco & San Jose Rail Road Company. The service provides a fast, convenient alternative to driving the heavily congested Bay Area Peninsula (I-5, I-805) between San Francisco and San Jose and continuing south to Gilroy. This popular commuter rail service has continued to attract new passengers and travelers with high-speed electric locomotives. A major recent addition was the 20-unit limited stop "Baby Bullet" engine train. These trains run weekdays between major stations, taking just 15 minutes to complete their route between San Jose and San Francisco.

The Caltrain Board of Directors, along with the California High-Speed Rail Authority, signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 2012. The agreement leverages local, regional and federal funding to make the entire length of the Caltrain line from Gilroy to San Francisco part of the premier route of the California High-Speed Rail line.



**CALTRAIN COMPLETES 1985**  
 When the Joint Powers Board took over the operation of Caltrain in July 1985, service initially was 20,000. This number has increased nearly 500 percent to 1,200,000 riders riding Caltrain in 2012.







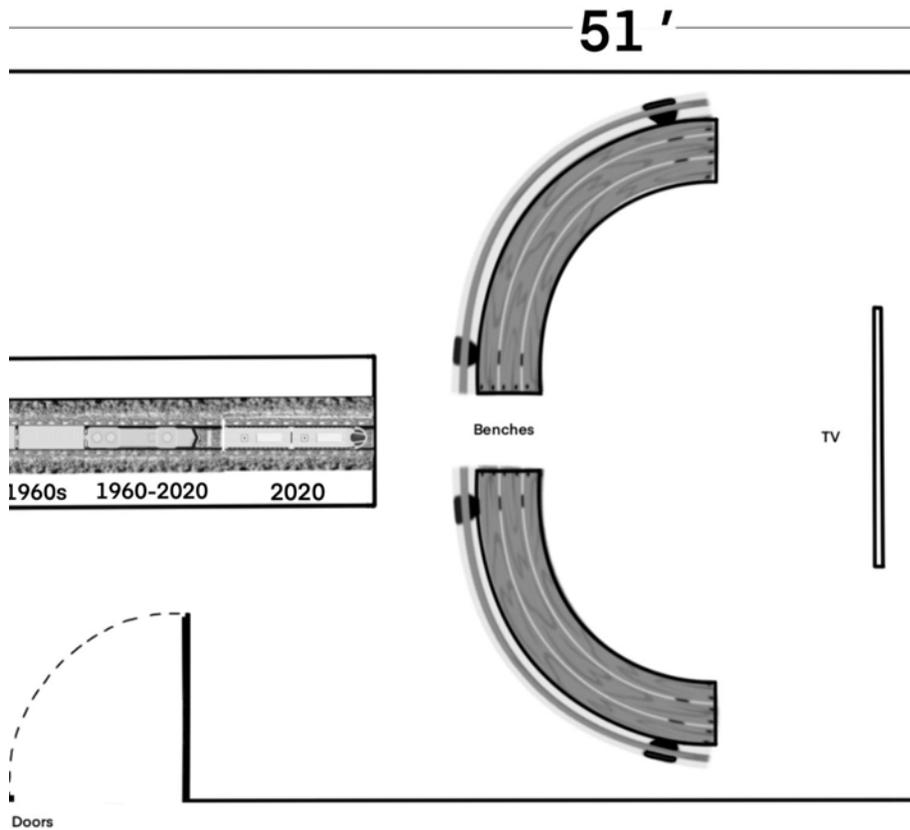
| 2012



A southbound train at Atherton station in December 2020 on the final weekend of service to the station

### 3. Video display area

The third section of the museum will feature a video screen and seating where a short history film is played. It can be interactive or on a loop. It will have a start button or motion sensor. This video will be commissioned and created from historical footage and images. This same video may also be available to view in the historic town hall.



Within the station there are also two wall areas that could house images, or 3d displays of train memorabilia. Historic train memorabilia will be sought from other museums, historic societies, Caltrans, Atherton residents, collectors and auctions.

#### 4. The exterior of the station

Outside of the station museum is the historic clock and we may want to include seating. The existing old Atherton train station sign could be retrofitted to say Atherton Train Station Museum. The existing outdoor display case can be renovated and can house historical image reproductions and information. Additional outdoor lighting may be needed on the back side and walkway to the town center

There may be an access ramp required at the parking lot but the existing hardscape will not need changes from the current plans to accommodate the flow.

Budget permitting, a kid's train sculpture/play structure may be a nice draw for young kids.

## 5. Displays on the interior of the Historic Town Hall

Original, historic oil and water color paintings of the Atherton Train Station and, possibly, a second display of the Audio/Video History of the Train Station would be displayed on the walls of the Historic Town Hall, where they could be secured.

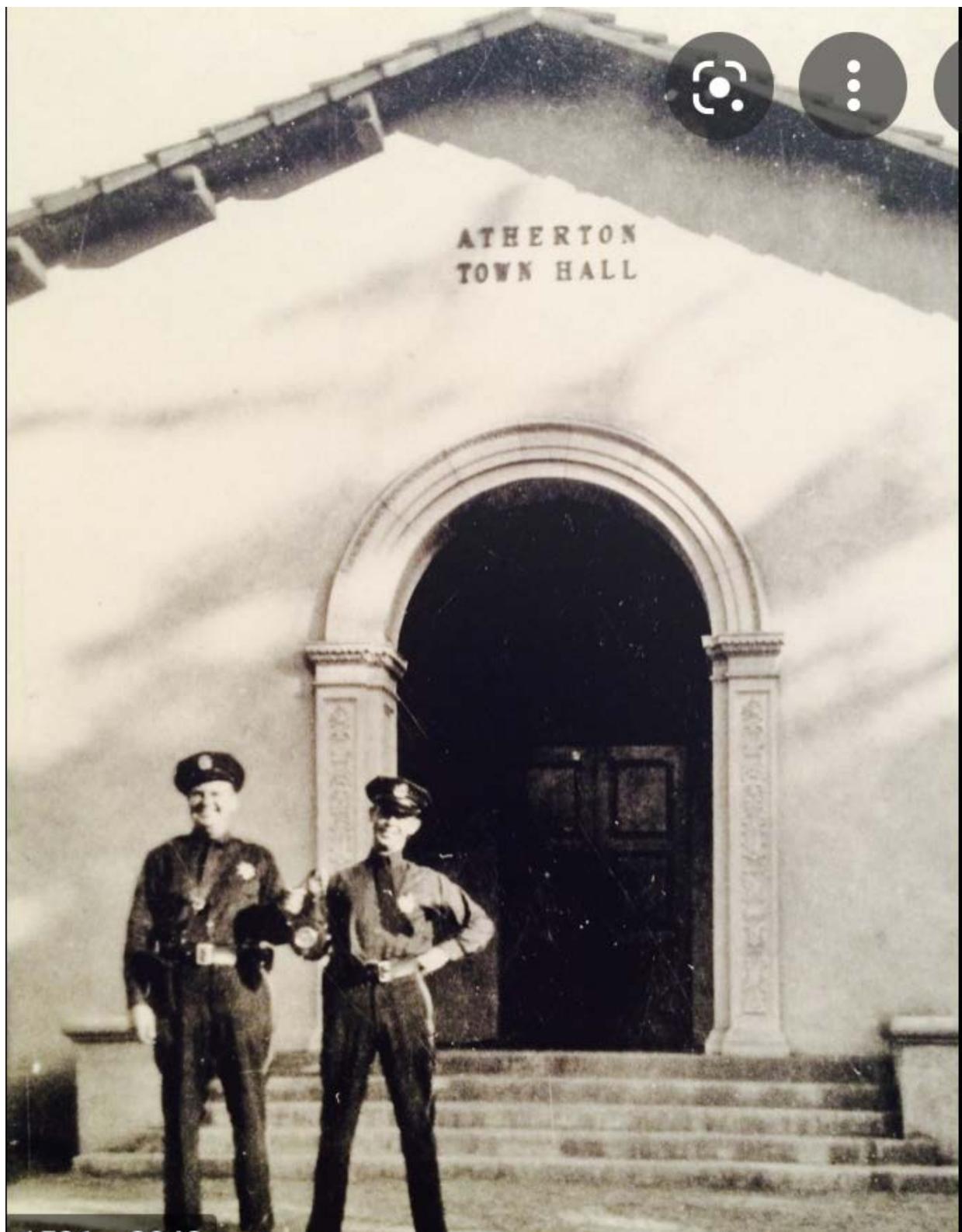
The proposed budget for the interior displays and video is approx \$50,000-\$150,000.

### **Next steps:**

- 1) Building renovation Bid: A design/ architectural firm will be engaged (via public bid) for the building modifications, weatherizing and renovations of the train station structure
- 2) Bids for the displays and video exhibits: A bid will go out for an exhibit design firm to create the display content and installation of display technology. A separate bid may or may not be required for the video production. This short documentary for the museum maybe shown at the opening ceremony and city's birthday and well as in the historic town hall.
- 3) The Council could form a Citizen's Committee (Brown Act) to take on the task of finding additional images and memorabilia from the community and other sources.

## **Associated Work and Funding**

In the course of identifying material for the Train Station Museum, we are finding old photos of Atherton and different activities related to Atherton. We believe that it would be wise (and cost effective) to digitize any important photos and to enlarge, frame and display in the library or elsewhere in the Town Center any that are deemed worthy. For example, in the police department we could put an old photo of the police from the early days. If these are enlarged and printed in sepia tone they would be very attractive.





**Redwood city photos printed and framed**