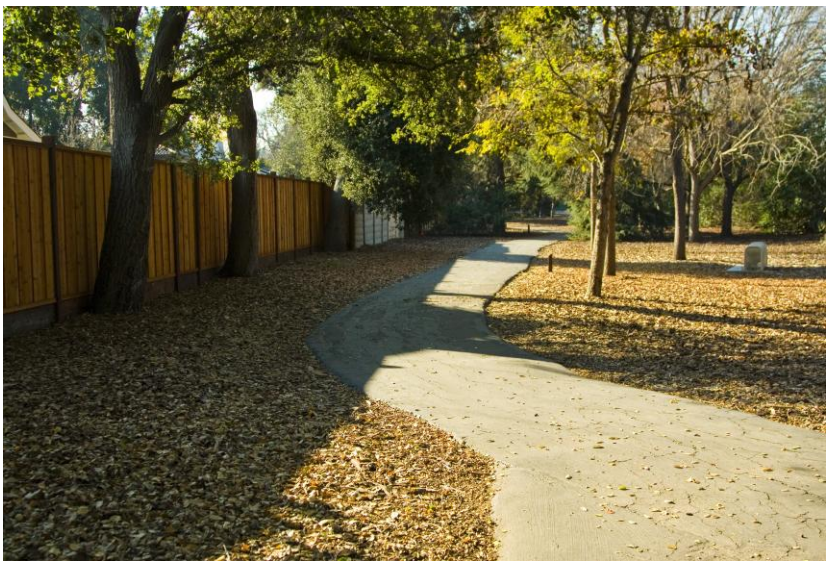
Town of Atherton General Plan ~~2019~~ 2025



TOWN OF ATHERTON
INCORPORATED SEPTEMBER 12, 1923
CALIFORNIA

OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

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OPEN SPACE AND CONSERVATION ELEMENT

I. Purpose and Relation to Other Elements

The purpose of the Open Space portion of this element is to inventory and describe existing and proposed open space lands and uses and to identify goals and policies that support open spaces in Atherton. The purpose of the Conservation portion of this element is to describe the Town's natural and man-made resources; including land, water, ecosystems, cultural and living resources. The Open Space and Conservation Element seeks to maintain the low density, residential character of the Town.

In order to eliminate duplication, the Open Space and Conservation Elements of the Atherton General Plan have been consolidated into a single document, a procedure authorized by Government Code Sections 65301. Programs and policies outlined in the combined Element are to be coordinated with State and Regional open space and conservation policies.

In addition to being closely related to one another, open space and conservation relate closely to the Land Use and Circulation Elements. Decisions implemented under policies contained in those Elements could significantly impact upon open space and sensitive environmental features.

II. Background Information

Open Space Land Uses

The State-mandated Open Space Element is concerned with the management of open space resources, including cultural resources. Open space is defined as, "any parcel or area of public or private land, large or small, or water that is essentially unimproved and undeveloped." California Government Code requires local general plans to address six categories of open spaces:

- Open Space for Natural Resources
- Open Space for Managed Production of Resources
- Open Space for Outdoor Recreation
- Open Space for Public Health and Safety
- Open Space for Military Support
- Open Space for Tribal Resources

The Government Code also requires an Inventory of Open Space Lands. These topics are all addressed in the sections below.

Inventory of Open Space Lands

Table ~~OSC~~OSC-1 and Figure OSC-1 present an inventory of the open space lands existing in Atherton in 2017. The Town owned Holbrook-Palmer Park and the new Town Center Park are included in the category of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation. The privately-owned Menlo Circus Club Country Club equestrian center is also included in the category of Open Space for Outdoor Recreation. The California Water Service owned Bear Gulch Reservoir is included in the category of Open Space for Natural Resources and Open Space for Public Health and Safety.

Table OSC-1: Inventory of Atherton Open Space Lands

Facility	Category	Area
Holbrook-Palmer Park	Outdoor Recreation	22 acres
Town Center Park	Outdoor Recreation	0.98 acres[~~1~~1]
Menlo Circus Club	Outdoor Recreation	29.25 acres
Bear Gulch Reservoir	Natural Resources / Public Health and Safety	99.22 acres
[~~1~~] ~~DPW.~~		

Open Space for Natural Resources

Bear Gulch Reservoir is a water storage facility located on the western border of Atherton. The reservoir is the main storage facility for the Bear Gulch District of the California Water Service. The facility holds 166 million gallons of water and serves over 55,000 people. The lands surrounding the reservoir function as a watershed for the facility. As both a potable water storage facility and a water shed area, the reservoir and surrounding lands owned by Cal Water are designated Open Space for Natural Resources.

Should the Bear Gulch Dam fail, portions of Atherton and west Menlo Park would be subject to inundation. The Community Safety Element of this General Plan addresses dam safety and the potential for inundation of properties below the dam.

The **large lot character of the community,** including significant portions of landscaped and natural privately -owned property, is also considered Open Space for Natural Resources, although not specifically identified on the Open Space Diagram.

[~~1~~] ~~Source: DPW~~

Open Space for Managed Production of Resources

Groundwater is a sub-regional resource that produces irrigation water for some properties in Atherton. The quantity and quality of groundwater haves been of concern, and the subject of past studies. Atherton, along with other concerned agencies cooperate in its study and management.

The Town of Atherton is part of the **San Francisquito Creek area** (the creek itself is located in the City of Palo Alto) of the Mid-peninsula that overlies the **Santa Clara and San Mateo Plain Groundwater Sub-basins**. Concerns about increased reliance on local groundwater resources for landscape irrigation were raised in the Town of Atherton by 1992. By then, five years of drought and the installation of more than 100 new wells raised concerns that such reliance might lead to land subsidence, declining water levels, and saltwater intrusion. A 1993-95 study[12] was commissioned by the U. S. Geological Survey, in cooperation with the Town of Atherton, which describes the general geohydrology of the San Francisquito Creek alluvial cone; historical groundwater development; present-day well distribution and groundwater use; the aerial and seasonal variation of groundwater levels and direction of flow-aerial variation in groundwater chemistry; and the establishment and initial measurements of a land elevation surveying network for monitoring potential land subsidence. The study findings included:

- The number of active, probably active, and unknown wells in Atherton ranged from 175 to 403 in 1994. Approximately 95% were used for private residential irrigation with the remainder used for public and private institutions.
- Groundwater levels were expressed in two ways: depth-to-water level below land surface or hydraulic head (i.e., water level expressed as an altitude above sea level). The depth-to-water level ranged from less than 20 feet below land surface nearest the San Francisco Bay to about 70 feet below land surface near Alameda de las Pulgas. The hydraulic head level ranged from less than 10 feet above sea level nearest the San Francisco Bay to about 60 feet above sea level near Alameda de las Pulgas.
- Groundwater flow was generally north or northeasterly towards San Francisco Bay.
- All measured hydraulic heads within the study area from April 1993 to September 1995 were above sea level, which indicated that saltwater intrusion was unlikely during that period.
- Water quality samples provided no evidence of saltwater intrusion from San Francisco Bay.
- The lack of land-elevation surveying network and historical data prompted the establishment of 21 surveying sites as part of the study. These sites plus one existing benchmark were surveyed in March 1994 to establish a baseline for monitoring subsidence. A determination as to whether subsidence is occurring presently or in the future will require repetitive measurements of land surface elevation.

[2] USGS Water Resources Investigations Report, 97-4033.

The Town (in Resolution 14-21, September 17, 2014)[3], along with the cities of Palo Alto, East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, Stanford University, San Mateo County, Santa Clara Valley Water District and several other agencies and non-governmental organizations have committed to:

- Collaborating with other agencies and organizations to better understand the hydrology and geology of the San Francisquito Creek area, and
- The sustainable management of local groundwater to protect its quality and ensure its availability during droughts and emergency situations.

While no lands are specifically designated Open Space for Managed Production of Resources, the Town's low intensity development, its support of Green Infrastructure, and polices directed toward sustainable management of local groundwater to protect its quality and future availability, act to help protect this natural resource.

Open Space for Outdoor Recreation

The facilities described below provide open space for outdoor recreation in Atherton.

Atherton's premier public park, **Holbrook-Palmer Park**, is a 22-acre open space facility located on Watkins Avenue near Middlefield Road. The Park offers many amenities to the community, including shady, treelined walking paths, tennis courts, a playground, a large sports field, open space and gardens. Several historic buildings provide a glimpse of Atherton's ~~past, and~~past and provide space for meetings and classes. The Main House and the Jennings Pavilion are also used for meetings, weddings and larger events. The park supports a variety of activities, including sports, a place to play for children, classes, public and private events, a preschool and more.

Development of the Park is governed by the adopted[4] **Holbrook-Palmer Park Master Plan 2014** (adopted May 20, 2015). In the Master Plan it is noted that the need for new parkland is not anticipated as the Town's population is stable. There are, however, opportunities for refinement and improvements. The adopted Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan includes a link through Holbrook-Palmer Park to enhance cyclist connectivity and safety. Other recommendations include modifications to the Park Entrance, pedestrian access improvements and new path links, signage and lighting improvements. The Master Plan builds on the concept of the park as an arboretum. It recognizes the Little League Field improvements and relocation of the Playschool. The Master Plan calls for interior restoration and upgrades for expanding public use of the historic Carriage House and relocation and redesign of the Park Maintenance Building and~~&~~ Corporation Yard. Finally, parking management options are offered.

Atherton's second public park, the new Town Center Park (previously called the **Reading Park**) is located adjacent to the new Atherton Library that ~~will be~~was constructed as part of the Town's Town Center project at the corner of Dinkelspiel ~~(~~Station~~)~~ Lane and Maple Street. Landscaped open space provides a quiet area for reading and other passive activities, as well as a "Civic Court" with benches, a community porch and other landscaped areas. The ~~approved construction plans for the new~~recently completed Town Center

[3] ~~Resolution 14-21, September 17, 2014.~~

[4] ~~Adopted May 20, 2015.~~

includes a new "Town Green" located between the new City Administration Building and the new Library. The Town Green and Library gardens ~~would be~~are the landscape focus of the new Town Center. ~~It would~~These areas also provide for stormwater detention and function as a component of **Green Infrastructure** (see section below).

The **Menlo Circus Club** is a private equestrian center located on Elena Avenue at Park Lane. The Club provides almost 30 acres of open space for outdoor recreation for its members including polo, swimming, tennis and horse shows.

Open spaces for outdoor recreation are also provided at the **public and private schools** in Atherton. Access to these facilities ~~are~~is generally restricted to students and faculty during school hours. The schools are listed in Table OSC-2.

Table OSC-2: Inventory of Schools in Atherton

School	Grades	Public/Private
Encinal School	Elementary	Public
Las Lomitas School	Elementary	Public
Laurel School	Elementary	Public
Selby Lane School	Elementary	Public
Menlo-Atherton High School	High School	Public
Menlo School	Middle & High School	Private
Sacred Heart Schools	Elementary, Middle & High School	Private
Menlo College	College	Private

Open Space for Public Health and Safety

The only area in Atherton designated as Open Space for Public Health and Safety is the **Bear Gulch Reservoir** which is required for the protection of water quality and a water reservoir. Bear Gulch Reservoir is also categorized as an Open Space for Natural Resources and further described in that section.

Open Space for Military Support and Tribal Resources

Atherton has no areas designated as Open Space for Military Support, as there are no military facilities in or near Town. Neither does Atherton have areas designated as Open Space for Native American Tribal Resources, as there are no known Native American Tribal Resources in or near Town.

III. Conservation, Development, and Utilization of Natural Resources

The State-mandated Conservation Element is concerned with the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources, including plants and animal wildlife, water bodies and watersheds, forests, soils, minerals and energy conservation. California Government Code requires local general plans to address seven categories of natural resources:

- Water and its Hydraulic Force
- Forests
- Soils
- Rivers and Other Waters
- Harbors and Fisheries
- Wildlife
- Minerals and other Natural Resources

Water and Its Hydraulic Force

Groundwater management and recharge of the **Santa Clara and San Mateo Plain Groundwater Subbasins** is discussed under the section entitled Open Space for Managed Production of Resources, above.

Surface stormwater runoff currently infiltrates into the open space and other pervious areas in the Town or flows on the ground surface until it is captured by the town's drainage infrastructure. See below for greater discussion of the Town's stormwater system. As mandated by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Regional Permit (MRP) Bay Area communities are to transition their "gray" or piped stormwater infrastructure to "green" infrastructure, as well as to increase the implementation of green infrastructure to aid in improving water quality. **Green Infrastructure** is an approach to managing and treating wet weather impacts that uses vegetation, soils, and other elements and practices to restore some of the natural processes to the management and improved quality of stormwater runoff. At the local level, Green Infrastructure is a series of natural areas or systems that provide habitat, flood protection and cleaner water. At the neighborhood or site level, Green Infrastructure stormwater management systems mimic nature to soak up, infiltrate, and store water. Examples include downspout rerouting to storage or permeable areas; rainwater harvesting, storage, and later use; rain gardens and planter boxes for infiltration, evaporation, and transpiration; bioswales that facilitate conveyance, filtration, and infiltration; permeable pavements that promote infiltration and storage; green streets and alleys designed for storage, infiltration and evapotranspiration; green roofs; and tree canopies. Green infrastructure facilities and opportunities are further defined and discussed under the Town's Green Infrastructure Plan.[25]

Forests

The entire Town of Atherton can be considered a **Coastal Oak Woodland**. Coastal Oak Woodland is defined primarily by the composition of its overstory. The Town's overstory consists of deciduous and evergreen

[5] ~~Source of highlighted text in this paragraph: CD+A~~
https://www.ci.atherton.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/6813/Green-Infrasturcture-Plan?bidId=

hardwoods (mostly oaks) sometimes mixed with scattered conifers. The dominant oak species in Town are the Coast Live Oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) and the Valley Oak (*Quercus lobata*), along with many White Oaks (*Quercus alba*), Blue Oaks (*Quercus douglasii*), and Black Oaks (*Quercus kelloggii*). Species associated with Coast Live Oak on moister sites are Pacific Madrone, California Bay, Tanoak, and Canyon Live Oak, while Coast Live Oak occurs with Valley Oak, Blue Oak, and Foothill Pine on drier sites. Numerous other tree species including Coast Redwood (*Sequoia sempervirens*), Incense Cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*), Ash (*Fraxinus* ~~S~~spp.), Southern Magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*), Deodar Cedar (*Cedrus deodara*) and Elm (*Ulmus* ~~S~~spp.) are found throughout the Town.

Over the years, Town policies have supported the preservation and protection of trees in general and heritage trees (trees 48 inches or greater in diameter measured 4 feet above grade) in particular. Tree protection was included as a policy in the 2002 General Plan, Open Space and Conservation Element. The Atherton Municipal Code describes why trees are essential to the health, welfare and quality of life ~~to~~ for the citizens of Atherton:

1. To preserve the scenic beauty of the town and to ensure the privacy of its citizens;
2. To maintain ecological balance;
3. To prevent erosion of topsoil;
4. To protect against the hazards of floods and the risk of landslides;
5. To counteract air pollutants and oxygenate the air;
6. To absorb noise;
7. To provide the opportunity as green infrastructure;[~~3~~6]
8. To maintain the climatic and microclimatic balance; and
9. To decrease high wind velocities.

Specific Tree Preservation Guidelines, Standards and Specifications were adopted in 2004 to regulate development and protection measures during construction. ~~–~~Those *Tree Preservation Guidelines* were updated in 2019 to ensure their effectiveness and applicability to current practices.

Soils

Atherton is essentially built-out with low-density residential and supporting facilities (i.e. schools, public and quasi-public and similar uses). As such, soils supporting agricultural uses, the traditional subject of this topic, are less important. However, prevention of soil erosion and potential loss of topsoil is a Town objective. Further, prevention of soil compaction near the roots of trees and heritage trees in order to support their viability, is also a Town objective, as specified in the Tree Preservation Guidelines. Along with other techniques, the use of green infrastructure measures can aid in reducing soil erosion.[~~4~~7]

[6] ~~Source: CD+A~~

[7] ~~Source: CD+A~~

Rivers, Other Waters and Floodwater Management

The primary waterway in Atherton is the **Atherton Channel**. The headwaters of the Atherton Channel originate west of Interstate 280 in the hillside area of the Town of Woodside. Historically, the Atherton Channel, like many of the smaller creeks in the area, did not have a permanent channel extending all the way downstream to the Bay. Most years, the small flows soaked into the porous soils in the flatlands; only during floods did the flow remain on the surface all the way to the Bay. Urbanization and development created impervious surfaces, which lead to the need for controlled drainage facilities to dispose of stormwaters. Prior to 1958, drainage facilities were constructed along the historic floodways as development proceeded. Developers that originally subdivided the land from large estates installed many of the facilities. The Town formed the Atherton Channel Drainage District in 1958 to construct and maintain storm water collection facilities in areas determined to be in the local stream flood plain. The District boundaries include most of the Town south of Atherton Avenue, a portion of unincorporated University Heights, and small areas of the City of Menlo Park and Town of Woodside.

In 2001 a **Town Wide Drainage Study** was prepared with the objectives of developing an inventory of the existing drainage system for incorporation into the Town Geographic Information System (GIS) database, assessing the weaknesses of the drainage system with input from the community, and developing estimated costs and a prioritized plan for improvements to the drainage system. By 2014 the Town had implemented 26 of the 55 improvement projects identified in the 2001 Drainage Study.

In 2014, an update to the 2001 Drainage Study was requested for several reasons. Recent residential development may have impacted previously identified drainage issues. Drainage improvements are now required to comply with the Municipal Regional Stormwater Permit (R2-2015-0049) adopted in 2015.[~~7~~] In addition, the Town adopted drainage design criteria in January 2013 aimed to reduce peak stormwater flows and improve water quality. The goals of the desired drainage study update were to: update the inventory of the existing drainage system, assess current system weaknesses with input from the community, develop a prioritized plan for improvements to the drainage system, with itemized cost estimates, review stormwater management policies for compliance with the Green Infrastructure Plan, 2015 Municipal Stormwater Permit, and describe opportunities for regional stormwater detention. The *Town Wide Drainage Study Update* was completed in April 2015. The *Update* included recommended storm drainage improvement projects prioritized according to the tiers listed below.

- **Tier 1** Improvements mitigate flooding problems that can create significant life and safety issues.
- **Tier 2** Improvements are intended to avoid damage to private property caused by storm runoff from public areas.
- **Tier 3** Projects are located on public property and not influenced by downstream drainage system.
- **Tier 4** Projects are located on public property and influenced by under capacity downstream drainage system.
- **Tier 5** Projects were recommended in the 2001 Drainage Study but drainage issues in these areas have not been observed recently.

[~~7~~] ~~Source: CD+A~~

Atherton participates in the **San Mateo Countywide Water Pollution Prevention Program**[8] (SMCWPPP), a partnership of the City/County Association of Governments (C/CAG), each incorporated city and town in the county, and the County of San Mateo, which share a common National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. The Federal Clean Water Act and the California Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act require that large urban areas discharging stormwater into the San Francisco Bay or the Pacific Ocean have an NPDES permit to prevent harmful pollutants from being dumped or washed by stormwater runoff, into the stormwater system, then discharged into local waterbodies.

The Municipal Regional Permit outlines the State's requirements for municipal agencies in San Mateo County to address the water quality and flow-related impacts of stormwater runoff. Some of these requirements are implemented directly by municipalities while others are addressed by the SMCWPPP on behalf of all the municipalities. This is a comprehensive permit that requires activities related to construction sites, industrial sites, illegal discharges and illicit connections, new development, and municipal operations. The permit also requires a Green Infrastructure Plan (see Town of Atherton, Green Infrastructure Plan, 2019),[6] ~~,[9]~~ public education program, implementing targeted pollutant reduction strategies, and a monitoring program to help characterize local water quality conditions and to begin evaluating the overall effectiveness of the permit's implementation.

The Town actively enforces regulations related to **erosion and sedimentation control**. Development projects, especially those involving grading, excavation and vegetation removal, require preparation of erosion and sediment control plans in compliance with local and regional regulations and subject to local review.

~~Currently (2019) the Town of Atherton has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding[10] with the jurisdictions of the City of Redwood City, City of Menlo Park, and County of San Mateo to complete the planning, design and environmental permitting for the proposed~~ The Town inIn conjunction with San Mateo County and the Cities of Menlo Park and Redwood City, the Town collaborated on the **Bayfront Canal/Atherton Channel Flood Protection and Restoration Project led by OneShoreline**. This project was completed in 2023 and mitigated flood impacts ~~from~~in t~~T~~he Atherton Channel and Bayfront Canal watersheds, which have experienced flooding for decades. The project ~~are multijurisdictional watersheds crossing all of the member jurisdictions~~installed two underground culverts that direct excess water from Atherton Channel and the Bayfront Canal into ponds within the Ravenswood Complex of the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration Project. This project is not ~~located~~ in Atherton, but it helps mitigate runoff impacts that occur in Redwood City from stormflows that originate in upstream communities like Atherton. ~~The two channels intersect in the City of Redwood City west of U.S. 101 near the Marsh Road interchange. Both watersheds have experienced decades of repetitive flooding. All of the member jurisdictions have been impacted by flooded streets, residences and businesses.~~ By design, the project reduces flood impacts to these communities, improves water quality, and supports regional flood protection efforts.[7~~11~~]

[8] **STOPPP** is another acronym for the San Mateo Countywide **S**tormwater **P**ollution **P**revention **P**rogram.

[9] ~~Source: CD+A~~

[10] ~~Source: DPW~~

[11] ~~OneShoreline, 2025, Bayfront Canal and Atherton Channel Flood Protection and Ecosystem Restoration Project, https://oneshoreline.org/projects/bayfront-atherton-flood-protection/.~~

~~The Town is currently considering alternate locations for a **Stormwater Capture Project**: a runoff diversion, storage and treatment system. This project has several objectives, including those listed below.~~

1. ~~Capturing dry weather runoff in order to eliminate the transport of pollutants to San Francisco Bay,~~
2. ~~Capturing at least the first flush of wet weather runoff to reduce the load of pollutants transported to the Bay,~~
3. ~~Detaining potential flood flows from the Atherton Channel,~~
4. ~~Meeting requirements of the MRP including implementing green infrastructure opportunities,12~~
5. ~~Minimizing the on-going operations and maintenance costs, and~~
6. ~~Reusing storm water for irrigation.~~

Harbors and Fisheries

Atherton has no harbors or fisheries in or near Town.

Wildlife and Habitats

The California Department of Fish and Game maintains the California Natural Diversity Database (CNDDB), that inventories the status and location of rare plants, animals and natural habitats in California. A search of the database was completed for Atherton and the surrounding area, to identify rare and sensitive species and habitats with the potential to occur within the Town. Table OSC-3 lists the rare and sensitive species and communities that may occur within the Town. The Town monitors new development to ensure that it does not negatively impact sensitive species, especially those listed in the table.

Table OSC-3: Biological Resources with the Potential to Occur in Atherton **(Species Status is based on 2020 data; Status can change at the time of project review.)**

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Status
San Mateo thornmint	*Acanthomintha duttonii*	Plant	FE, 1B~~13~~
Franciscan onion	*Allium peninsulare* var. *franciscanum*	Plant	1B
Bent-flowered fiddleneck	*Amsinckia lunaris*	Plant	1B
Kings Mountain manzanita	*Arctostaphylos*	Plant	1B
Congdon's tarplant	*Centromadia parryi* ssp. *Congdonii*	Plant	1B
Franciscan thistle	*Cirsium andrewsii*	Plant	1B
Fountain thistle	*Cirsium fontinale var. fontinale*	Plant	FE, 1B
Lost thistle	*Cirsium praeterens*	Plant	1A
San Francisco collinsia	*Collinsia multicolor*	Plant	1B
Santa Cruz Cyprus	*Cupressus abramsiana*	Plant	FE, 1B
Western leatherwood	*Dirca occidentalis*	Plant	1B
Tiburon buckwheat	*Eriogonum luteolum* var. *caninum*	Plant	1B
San Mateo woolly sunflower	*Eriophyllum latiolobum*	Plant	FE, 1B
Hoover's button-celery	*Eryngium aristulatum* var. *hooveri*	Plant	1B

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type	Status
Hillsborough chocolate lily	*Fritillaria biflora* var. *ineziana*	Plant	1B
Fragrant fritillary	*Fritillaria liliacea*	Plant	1B
Marin dwarf-flax	*Hesperolinon congestum*	Plant	FT, ST, 1B
Kellogg's horkelia	*Horkelia cuneate* ssp. *Sericea*	Plant	1B
San Francisco lessingia	*Lessingia germanorum*	Plant	FE, 1B
Coast lily	*Lilium maritimum*	Plant	1B
Davidson's bush-mallow	*Malacothamnus davidsonii*	Plant	1B
Hall's bush mallow	*Malacothamnus hallii*	Plant	1B
White-rayed pentachaeta	*Pentachaeta bellidiflora*	Plant	FE, SE, 1B
San Francisco owl's-clover	*Triphysaria floribunda*	Plant	1B
Caper-fruited tropidocarpum	*Tropidocarpum capparideum*	Plant	1A
Bay checkerspot butterfly	*Euphydryas editha bayensis*	Invertebrate	FT
California tiger salamander	*Ambystoma californiense*	Amphibian	FT, CSC
California red-legged frog	*Rana draytonii*	Amphibian	FT, CSC
Western pond turtle	*Actinemys marmorata*	Reptile	CSC
San Francisco garter snake	*Thamnophis sirtalis tetrataenia*	Reptile	FE, SE
White-tailed kite	*Elanus leucurus*	Bird	CFP
American peregrine falcon	*Falco peregrinus anatum*	Bird	FD, SE, CFP
Northern harrier	*Circus cyaneus*	Bird	CSC
Burrowing owl	*Athene cunicularia*	Bird	CSC
Vaux's swift	*Chaetura vauxi*	Bird	CSC
Olive-sided flycatcher	*Contopus cooperi*	Bird	CSC
Loggerhead shrike	*Lanius ludovicianus*	Bird	CSC
Pallid bat	*Antrozous pallidus*	Mammal	CSC
Townsend's big-eared bat	*Corynorhinus townsendii*	Mammal	CSC
Western mastiff bat	*Eumops perotis californicus*	Mammal	CSC
San Francisco dusky-footed woodrat	*Neotoma fuscipes anneciens*	Mammal	CSC
American badger	*Taxidea taxus*	Mammal	CSC

~~12~~ 1 Source of highlighted text in this paragraph: DPW and CD+A

~~13~~ Status:

FE = Federally listed as endangered
FT = Federally listed as threatened
FD = Federally delisted
SE = State-listed as endangered
ST = State-listed as threatened
CSC = California Species of Special Concern
CFP = California Fully Protected Species
1A = California Rare Plant Rank List 1A (plants presumed extirpated in California and either rare or extinct elsewhere)
1B = California Rare Plant Rank List 1B (plant species that are rare or endangered in California and elsewhere)

Riparian habitats along the Atherton Channel and other drainages are important to providing plant and wildlife habitats and controlling erosion.

The coastal oak woodland habitat that exists throughout Atherton is an important natural resource and is described in greater detail under the Section entitled "Forests."

Minerals and Other Natural Resources

Atherton is within an urban area with no known mineral or other similar natural resources. The San Mateo County General Plan Resources Map does not identity any known mineral resources or mineral recovery sites within or adjacent to the Town.

Cultural Resources

Cultural resources in Atherton take the form of historically significant buildings, structures and artifacts. Several of the historically significant buildings are privately owned; only one of which has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Town also has a policy of protecting and preserving historical artifacts. The term historical artifact is defined as a structure or object that meets the criteria for listing on the national, state or local level. A 2006 survey of potential historical artifacts resulted in compilation of the official catalog known as the Atherton Historical Artifact Inventory. The policy specifically excludes buildings designed for human occupation and objects housed in the interiors of buildings.

Table OSC-4: Atherton's Historically Significant Buildings and Structures

Building or Structure	Year Constructed	Status
Watkins/Cartan House	1866	Privately owned, listed in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP)
Water Tower, Holbrook-Palmer Park	Circa 1870	Publicly owned, listed in the NRHP
Gen Merrill Carriage House, Holbrook-Palmer Park	1896	Publicly owned, listed in the NRHP
Sacred Heart Schools Main Building	1898 and 1915	Privately owned, appears eligible for listing as a historic structure
Menlo School, Stent Family Hall (Douglass Hall aka Payne-Douglass House)	1913	Privately owned, listed in California Point of Historical Interest Log~~[12]~~ [1] and Historic American Buildings Survey, ~~[13]~~ [2] potentially eligible for listing in the NRHP
Perry Stable (Associated with Australian Racehorse Phar Lap)	Circa 1920	Privately owned, eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR)
Caltrain Station, Town Center	Mid-1920's	Publicly owned, appears eligible for listing in NRHP
Town Hall (Council Chambers building) Town Center	1928	Publicly owned, appears eligible for inclusion in CRHR

[1] California Department of Parks and Recreation

[2] San Mateo County's Inventory of Historic Resources

Climate Action Plan

Atherton's proposals and policies related to climate change are contained in its adopted **Climate Action Plan,** which was updated in 2023**,**.[8] The Climate Action Plan (CAP) is summarized in the Land Use Element of this General Plan. Transportation aspects of the CAP are addressed in the Circulation Element. Energy, water and solid waste programs and policies are addressed in this Open Space and Conservation Element.

Energy and water-saving measures can help reduce Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions and impacts from drought conditions. Building energy is the sector with the most immediately achievable and affordable reduction opportunities. A primary focus of the CAP is on residential energy efficiency strategies to significantly reduce existing emissions and on the voluntary implementation of new building standards which incentivize new home builders towards designing net zero energy homes. In addition to energy efficiency, the updated CAP also prioritizes electrification of new and existing homes as another key strategy to GHG reduction.

~~[12] California Department of Parks and Recreation~~

~~[13] San Mateo County's Inventory of Historic Resources~~

Reducing the amount of waste deposited into the landfill through material reuse, reduction, and recycling is an important strategy to reduce GHG emissions. Waste reduction and recycling help reduce emissions and the amount of single-use materials. As part of the updated CAP, waste reduction strategies focus on waste diversion of organic materials and composting.

IV. Goals, Objectives, Policies, and Actions

Goal OSC-1:	Protect both publicly and privately held open space lands from deterioration of their semi-rural charm, scenic value and environmental equilibrium.

Objective OSC-1.1: Preserve presently existing open space, wildlife and vegetation.

Objective OSC-1.2: Prevent developmental encroachment on open space and sensitive environmental resources.

Objective OSC-1.3: Endeavor to prevent soil erosion and the potential loss of topsoil through the development review process.

Policy OSC-1.1: The Town shall endeavor to protect scenic resources, significant stands of natural vegetation, wildlife habitat, public safety and significant archaeological resources, both publicly and privately held.

Policy OSC-1.2: The Town seeks to preserve the open space characteristics of existing public and private schools, churches, the Menlo Circus Club, the Bear Gulch Reservoir property and the public parks.

Policy OSC-1.3: Holbrook-Palmer Park shall serve as the Town's primary outdoor recreational facility subject to the following conditions:

A. The property shall not be used, occupied or operated for commercial or housing purposes except those which are strictly incidental and appropriate to its use as a public recreational park.
B. The Park is to be used for the benefit of the citizens of Atherton.
C. The Park may not be used for political purposes except those which involve the public affairs of the Town of Atherton as a whole.
D. The Park may be rented for use by others in accordance with the standards established by the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Policy OSC-1.4: Maintain Holbrook-Palmer Park so that the Park retains its utility for community activities and events while remaining a tranquil haven for Park visitors, which balances the needs of the community.

Policy OSC-1.5: In addition to Holbrook-Palmer Park and the Town Center Park, public elementary and high school properties should also be considered for recreational purposes.

Action OSC-1.1:	Minimum lot sizes, setback restrictions, height limitations, tree protection and preservation, and sign regulations shall be employed to accomplish open space and conservation objectives.
Action OSC-1.2:	The Town shall evaluate the potential for cooperative recreational use of existing school sites.

Goal OSC-2:	Protect and enhance the existing Coastal Oak Woodland character of the Town.

Policy OSC-2.1:	Trees shall be preserved wherever practical. This policy shall be explicitly considered during the development and subdivision process.
Policy OSC-2.2:	Wherever possible, drought tolerant native species trees shall be used for new and replacement planting and be tolerant of seasonal water inundation where used in or adjacent to green infrastructure facilities.[9] ~~[17]~~
Policy OSC-2.3:	Enforce the Heritage Tree Ordinance and Tree Preservation Guidelines and Standards, or equal document.

Goal OSC-3:	Minimize the impacts of flooding on health, safety and property damage.

Policy OSC-3.1:	New development shall provide detention volume to attenuate any increase in stormwater runoff caused by increased imperviousness created by the proposed development.
Policy OSC-3.2:	~~The Town will assure that opportunities for~~Promote the use of green infrastructure ~~o~~in future capital improvements where feasible, and ~~are~~ routinely recommend use of green infrastructure during development review conducted ~~considered~~ by all Town departments.[10] ~~[18]~~
Action OSC-3.1:	The Town will continue to seek and coordinate partnering opportunities for shared green infrastructure projects with other public and private entities and property owners, as feasible.[11] ~~[19]~~
Action OSC-3.2:	The Town will encourage property owners to incorporate water conservation techniques into their landscaping to reduce water usage and use green infrastructure techniques to capture and/or treat rainfall and stormwater runoff at its source, as feasible.[12] ~~[20]~~

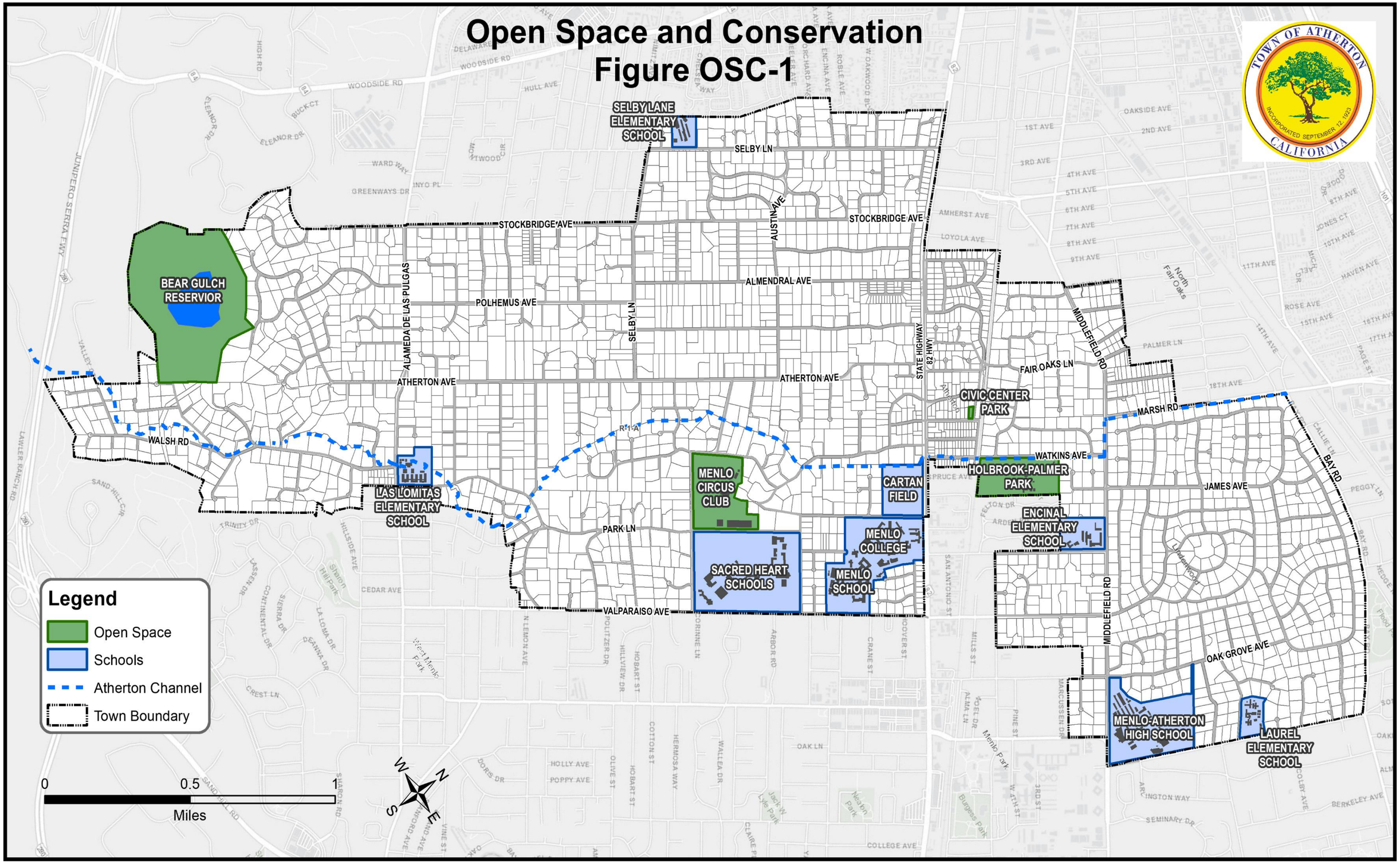
Goal OSC-4:	Protect both publicly and privately held cultural resources from deterioration and/or destruction.

~~[17] Source: CD+A~~
~~[18] Source: CD+A~~
~~[19] Source: CD+A~~
~~[20] Source: CD+A~~

Policy OSC-4.1:	Encourage the preservation of both private and public historical resources and artifacts for the benefit of future generations.
Policy OSC-4.2:	The Town will comply with minimum State requirements in the event archaeological or paleontological resources are discovered during construction.

Goal OSC-5:	Implement the GHG programs in the Atherton Climate Action Plan related to energy efficiency, community waste generation, and reduced water consumption.

Open Space and Conservation
Figure OSC-1



V. Endnotes

[1] USGS Water Resources Investigations Report, 97-4033.
[2] CD+A.
[3] CD+A
[4] CD+A.
[5] CD+A.
[6] CD+A.
[7] OneShoreline, 2025, Bayfront Canal and Atherton Channel Flood Protection and Ecosystem Restoration Project, https://oneshoreline.org/projects/bayfront-atherton-flood-protection/.
[8] Town of Atherton, 2023, *Atherton Climate Action Plan Update*, https://climateaction.ci.atherton.ca.us/climate-action-plan.
[9] CD+A.
[10] CD+A.
[11] CD+A.
[12] CD+A.