

2. GENERAL INFORMATION

2.1 Geography and Demographics

Atherton is a small, rural, and residential community, with no commercial or industrial land-use base. Native live oaks, white oaks, bays, redwoods, cedars, pines and other ornamental trees cover the six square miles of town.

Atherton's population is 6,995 according to the 2011 census. In October 2012, there were 5,052 registered voters and approximately 2,500 households. The median age is 48.2 years.

2.2 The History of Atherton

In 1866, Atherton was known as Fair Oaks and was a [flag stop](#) on the California Coast for the Southern Pacific Railroad between [San Francisco](#) and [San Jose](#) for the convenience of the owners of large estates living north of [Menlo Park](#). The entire area was called Menlo Park. It was part of the [Rancho de las Pulgas](#), which is now southern [San Mateo County](#).

In 1923, Menlo Park wanted to incorporate its lands to include Fair Oaks. During a meeting of the representatives of the two communities, the Fair Oaks property owners maintained their community as a strictly residential area, and they would incorporate independently. Both groups rushed to Sacramento, but the Fair Oaks committee arrived first. It was at that time they realized that they could not keep the name Fair Oaks, as it was already the name of a town near Sacramento. It was decided to honor Faxon Dean Atherton who had been one of the first property owners in the south peninsula and named the Town for him. Atherton was incorporated on September 12, 1923.

[Faxon D. Atherton](#), originally from Massachusetts, had spent several years as a trader in tallow, hides, and merchandise. His friend and business associate, Thomas Lark, had written to him about the opportunities, for family and business, on the San Francisco peninsula. Atherton purchased over 600 acres in 1860. His home, "Valparaiso Park," was built several years later.

With the development of the railroad, other San Franciscans established summer homes further south. The dirt roads were usually treacherous in the winter, and the families would only visit May through September.

The Mayor of San Francisco, Thomas H. Selby, purchased over 400 acres and called his estate "Almendral." John T. Doyle, an attorney, also built a home off Middlefield Road, "Ringwood." [James C. Flood](#), owner of "Linden Towers," is now known as Lindenwood. The Joseph A Donohoe estate was "Holmgrove" and is now the site of Menlo-Atherton High School. James Thomas Watkins' home was "Fair Oaks" which stands today on Alejandra Avenue, after being moved twice.

Edward E. Eyre reigned as first Mayor and in 1928, the residents voted to build a Town Hall, which is still in use today. The early residents sought to build a Town that would be divided into large parcels and would not contain businesses. During the 1920s and 1930s, a few of the large land holdings were subdivided, including James Floods' estate in 1938. In the 1940s and 1950s over eighty subdivisions were recorded bringing the era of large estates to a close. Atherton is still a "plain of oaks." Native live oaks, white oaks, bays, redwoods, cedars, pines and other ornamental trees cover the six square miles of town. There are approximately 50

meetings, he or she must maintain a certain degree of impartiality and be sure to allow all views on an issue to be expressed. However, the Mayor may also participate in debate, expressing his or her own views, and may make or second motions.

When representing the City Council or the Town on Council-decided policy issues, all members of the Council are first and foremost expected to represent the decided policy decision(s) of the City Council without undermining those decisions. Councilmembers are allowed to represent their own perspective; however, this provision is intended to clarify that if a member of the Council is representing the Council or the Town, the policy decision of the City Council is what should be represented irrespective of the member's personal perspective.

3.8 Vice Mayor

The Vice Mayor acts in the Mayor's absence.

3.9 Presiding Officer

In the absence of both the Mayor and the Vice Mayor, the Councilmembers shall elect a temporary Presiding Officer by majority vote.

3.10 City Manager

The City Manager is appointed by the City Council and is responsible to the City Council as a whole, not to individual Councilmembers. The City Manager serves as the chief executive of the Town, administering its day-to-day affairs. The Manager's responsibilities include enforcement of the Town's laws; preparation and submission of the annual budget to the City Council for approval; hiring, discipline, and dismissal of staff; direction and organization of staff in the execution of Council policies; provision of information and recommendations to the Council; and investigation of complaints concerning the Town's administration. The City Manager attends all meetings of the Council and has the right to take part in all discussions of the Council, but has no vote.

3.11 City Attorney

The City Attorney is appointed by the City Council. The City Attorney acts as legal advisor to the City Council, City Manager, the various Town departments, and all Town commissions, committees, and boards. The City Attorney prepares and approves for legality all proposed Town ordinances, resolutions, contracts and other legal documents. The Attorney also represents the Town in litigation and prosecutes violations of the Municipal Code.

3.12 City Clerk

The City Clerk is appointed by the City Manager. The Clerk serves as the Secretary to the City Council at meetings, performs the official recordation of City Council actions, and composes the minutes. The Clerk administers and organizes all municipal elections and coordinates the filing of Political Reform Act conflict of interest statements. The Clerk also manages the Town's records and is responsible for the care and custody of all official records and documents of the Town. Those records include all Town deeds, contracts, leases, ordinances, resolutions, minutes, and the Municipal Code. The Clerk publishes public notices and ordinances as required by law and assists staff and the public in researching information contained in the Town's official

