

Community News

Atherton: A timeline for Town Center project



John Orr / Daily News Atherton Town Hall, which houses the town council chambers, would be the only one of the Town Center's existing buildings to be spared in the expected redesign of the facility. Seen in a photograph made on Tuesday, March 31, 2015, it was built in 1928 as the town's first police station.

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PUBLISHED: February 1, 2017 at 6:36 pm | UPDATED: February 2, 2017 at 5:38 am

From Atherton town documents:

1928 — Town Hall opens, housing the police department and jail, as well as a meeting place for the city council. At the time, Atherton was mostly populated by summer residences of San Francisco families on large lots.

1965 — Police and town administration buildings open on Ashfield Road. Those buildings have served their “full useful lives, cannot be economically upgraded to current code standards, and need to be replaced.”

Mid-1980s — Originally housed in a converted single-family home, the Atherton Library is expanded to its current 4,000 square feet. That building is “inadequate for current library purposes.”

1994 — Following research by a contractor to analyze needs, “temporary improvements” were made to the police department, including modular trailers for personnel and a garage for police motorcycles.

1999 — The planning and building departments are moved out of the Ashfield Road buildings to a “temporary” trailer, where they have stayed. That trailer is covered by a tarp to keep out rain, and the outside walls are a patchwork of patches.

2008-9 — A council-appointed task force evaluated the need for a new police and administration building, concluding that the town had need of 27,000 square feet of facilities to replace the 14,000 square feet in use.

2012 — Atherton voters approve Measure F, which precluded putting a new library in Holbrook-Palmer Park, and Measure L, which requires that funding for a new Town Center be primarily from donations and other sources, not from general or parcel tax funds.

2013 — The City Council formed the Civic Center Advisory Committee with seven town residents and two ex-officio council members. Among other movement, a library-needs assessment called for a 9,000-square-foot building, and a new Town Center was envisioned that featured a police department and town administration building on the north side, and a library on the south side, of a town green. The first cost estimate for the project — \$67 million — was rejected by the advisory committee. The committee agreed that the project would be budget-driven, and that public involvement would be encouraged. It was recognized that library funds would be used for the library rebuild.

2014 — Cost of the overall project, including administration and police buildings, and library, estimated at \$31.8 million. Mack5 is hired as project manager.

2015 — WRNS Studio selected as design architect, and Atherton Now is formed as the fundraising group. Schematic design for project and environmental impact report are accepted by the council. It is decided that historic Town Hall would become part of the new library.

2016 — “Santa Barbara Mediterranean” style selected for facade of new police and administration buildings, “to be similar to Santa Barbara style prevalent at UC Berkeley and Stanford University.” New council chambers to be attached to southern end of police department at an angle, to avoid conflict with a 36-inch underground San Francisco Public Utilities Commission water line. Square footage of overall project reduced and other changes made to reduce the amount of funding needed from donations to \$20.7 million.

2017 — Council discussion on Feb. 1 and possible action slated for Feb. 15 to call for election to replace Measure L, so that town funds may be used for Town Center project. Council expected to approve 100 percent design development plans and cost estimate, and direct project team to proceed with construction documents. Construction may begin in early fiscal year 2017-18, with a project opening expected in fiscal year 2019-20.

Funding — As of Dec. 7, 2016, the total accrued project budget was \$3,429,500. The library fund contributed \$964,500, the general fund \$354,000, the building facilities fund provided \$594,000, and donations provided \$1,535,000.

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John Orr John Orr edits and writes for Daily News feature pages, including arts and entertainment. He also reports on the Town of Atherton and some other cities. Previously, he was mysteries and thrillers books columnist for the Mercury News, and also wrote about movies and blues music.

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