



Item No. 15 Town of Atherton

CITY COUNCIL STAFF REPORT – REGULAR AGENDA

**TO: HONORABLE MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL
GEORGE RODERICKS, CITY MANAGER**

FROM: ANTHONY SUBER, DEPUTY CITY MANAGER/ CITY CLERK

DATE: JUNE 19, 2024

**SUBJECT: RECEIVE AND FILE THE 2024 ATHERTON EARTH DAY
REPORT AND PROVIDE COMMENTS REGARDING FUTURE
EVENTS**

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Council receive and file the Earth Day 2024 Report and provide any comments regarding future events.

BACKGROUND | ANALYSIS

Every year in April, the Town comes together to honor Earth Day. The Environmental Programs Committee (EPC) assists staff in planning and facilitating an Earth Day Event designed to engage and educate the community on sustainability and climate-related topics as well as promote the goals of the Town's Climate Action Plan (CAP). In 2020 and 2021, the EPC decided not to host an in-person Earth Day Event due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2022, the EPC hosted an Earth Day Event at Holbrook-Palmer Park that included 35 vendors and over 300 attendees. Additionally, neighboring jurisdictions came together to host a We Love Earth Festival in Menlo Park which included similar activities and vendors as Atherton's Earth Day Event. In 2023 Atherton participated in a regional Earth Day Celebration partnering with the City of Palo Alto, City of Menlo Park, and 350 Silicon Valley. The event received additional financial support from Town partners at GreenWaste, Peninsula Clean Energy and CalWater. The goal was to leverage resources, volunteers, and staff to improve event coordination and the experience for the community.

For the 2024 Earth Day event, Council supported a return of Earth Day at Holbrook-Palmer Park led by the EPC and staff. The EPC Subcommittee and staff developed a work plan that included family-friendly activities, food, exhibitors, special demonstrations, and an outreach and engagement campaign supported by students for content creation. The following is a summary of the event details.

Event Basics

The event was held on Sunday, April 21 at Holbrook-Palmer Park from 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM. It included a few new features including a bicycle valet provided by the Silicon Valley Bicycle Coalition that was accompanied by a social media campaign to promote biking and walking to the event. CalWater provided a water refill station that accommodated visitors, exhibitors, and volunteers. Staff, Volunteers, and Exhibitors / Vendors were onsite starting at 8:00 AM for setup and traffic control. The schedule of events listed an 11:30 Storytime led by the Atherton Library and a Tree Walk led by the Atherton Tree Committee. There was an electric leaf blower competition to promote the upcoming gas-powered leaf blower ban, a Sheep vs. Robotic lawnmower competition, and recognition of art contest participants. In total there were 45 exhibitors that included several town partners such as Menlo Fire Protection, HIP Housing, Knox Playschool, CalWater, GreenWaste, Atherton Library and more. The full map and vendor list are included as Attachment 1.

Food

EPC Chair, Amy Farrell connected with Menlo College's food service provider, Sodexo, to facilitate an arrangement with Food Fleet, their vendor that manages relationships with food truck that are fully registered and licensed to conduct business in San Mateo County. Ultimately, staff secured three food trucks with entirely vegetarian food options. The vendors were Picnic Basket, Casita Vegana, and Vegan Hood Chefs.

Clean Vehicle Showcase

Tesla representatives committed to showcasing a Cyber Truck with representatives onsite to discuss its features and technologies. They also provided several vehicles equipped with autonomous driving technology for test drives.

Kid's Activities

The Atherton Library and Friends of the Atherton Library provided book giveaways related to sustainability and provided arts/crafts activities for kids. The Beetle Lady returned with an expansive showcase for kids of all ages. The Knox Playschool, Beekeepers Guild of San Mateo Peninsula Feed Store each had an exhibit or activity that was kid-friendly and engaging. The Riekes provided information for summer camps for children related to nature and art/crafts using nature.

Exhibitors

Overall, there were 45 exhibitors that provided activities, educational information, and interactive demonstrations. Town partners used the event to connect with residents and neighbors and solicit input on a variety of town topics. A full list of vendors is available as Attachment 1. Staff are curating the vendor list to evaluate their appropriateness for future Earth Day events.

Special Demo's

The Atherton Arts Foundation organized and hosted an art exhibit that included works from local artists in the Pavilion and student art content with participants receiving recognition and gift cards to support their creative endeavors.

UC Davis Sheepmowers, South Day Turf and Equipment Rentals and Husqvarna collaborated to create a Sheep vs. Robotic Lawnmower competition that was a clear favorite. This demonstration was an effort to showcase alternative methods to gas-powered lawn equipment.

Menlo Fire Protection District assisted visitors with an activity on fire safety and proper fire extinguisher usage.

Volunteers & Youth Engagement

EPC Student Intern, Aishani Garg and EPC Chair, Amay Farrell coordinated all volunteers which included students from Design Tech High School, Woodside Priory, Menlo Atherton High School, Sacred Heart School, and Tesla. Volunteers assisted with outreach content development and event day support. There were over 60 volunteers including those that assisted in day of activities and planning activities leading up to April 21.

There were several youth-led and supported exhibits that engaged the teen population. Atherton's Youth Advisor group hosted an information table, Patchwork with Purpose provided information and led a clothing exchange, Surf Rider Foundation provided information related to water testing and clean up activities, and Boy scout troops that led a service project demonstrating the challenge of accessing clean water underdeveloped regions in the world.

Outreach, Engagement and News Coverage

The Town conducted an outreach campaign that included print and digital methods. We posted banners on Marsh Road and Watkins Avenue, engaged residents and neighbors via our typical channels of email blasts, Town calendar posts, Athertonian Announcements, and social media (Facebook, Instagram, X, Nextdoor, Eventbrite). Mayor Hawkins and Chair Farrell developed press releases that were shared with local and regional media outlets. The Eventbrite post had over 500 RSVP's.

Social Media Impact and Outcomes:

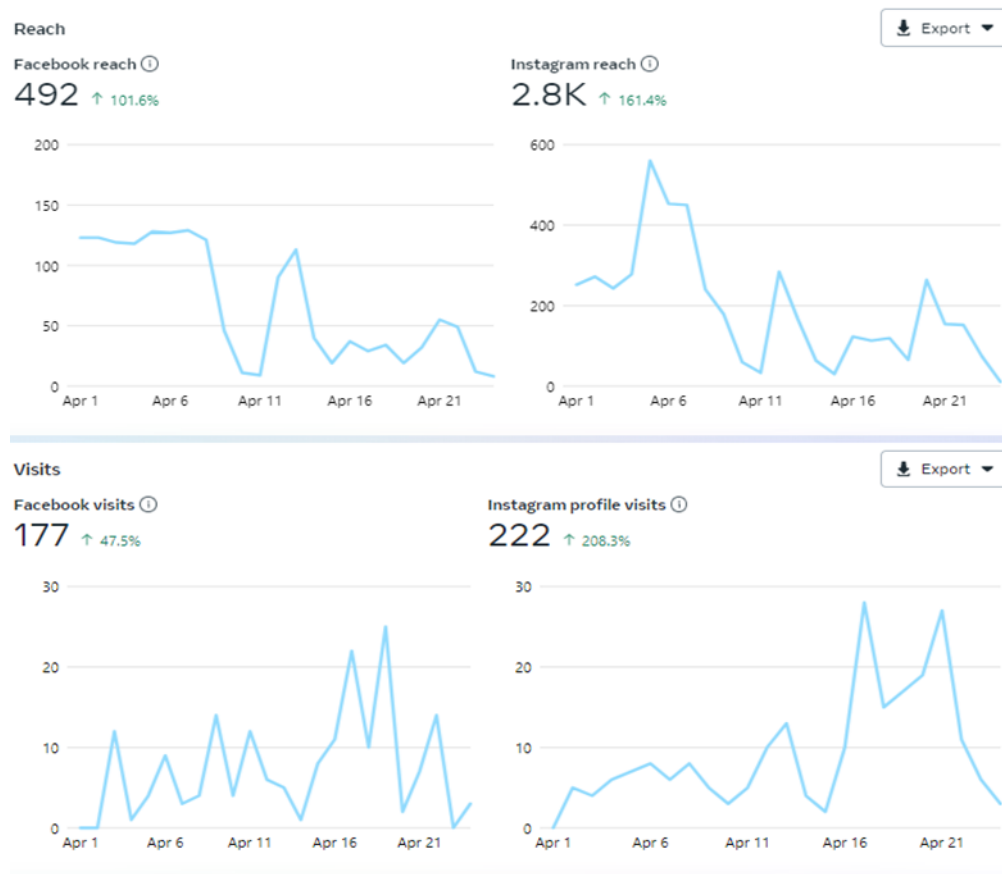
The goal was to attract viewers to the Town pages and website. From April 1 – April 24 Instagram outperformed Facebook. The Reach on Facebook was at 130 and 500 on Instagram in the last week alone (April 14-April 20). In total this was 630 unique visitors for that period. The Town spent less than \$40.00 on boosted social media advertisements.

Facebook April 1 – April 24

Reach across Facebook was up 101.6% from the prior month over that same period. Visits to the page were up 47% and page likes were 532.

Instagram April 1 – April 24

The Reach was 2.8k, which represented a 161.4% increase from the prior month over the same period. Profile visits increased 208%.



Highest reach on a story ⓘ



Instagram story

Apr 5, 2024, 12:45 PM

This story's reach (158) is **25%** higher than your median story reach (126) on Instagram.

The highest reach on a posted story for Instagram was:

News Coverage

Almanac:

<https://www.almanacnews.com/news/2024/04/17/community-briefs-sheep-v-robotic-lawnmower-at-atherton-earth-day-festival-donate-auction-items-for-may-day-and-more/>

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CBS:

<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/atherton-earth-day-festival-hosts-grass-mowing-competition-between-sheep-and-robots/>

InMenlo:

<https://inmenlo.com/2024/04/21/earth-day-celebrated-at-holbrook-palmer-park-in-atherton/>

M-A Chronicle:

<https://machronicle.com/community-celebrates-the-earth-at-annual-atherton-festival/>

Patch.com:

<https://patch.com/california/menlo-park-atherton/atherton-earth-day-festival-hosts-grass-mowing-competition-between>

Mercury News: (Subscription Needed)

https://www.mercurynews.com/2016/05/11/earth-day-activities-slated-for-atherton/?gad_source=1&gclid=Cj0KCQjwltKxBhDMARIsAG8KnqVhXrVQxQaOTmTE0IQQn_xrb-1MbZZmThvwjxTDzR4ugqKYzyNcVt_caAuEtEALw_wcB

Environmental Programs Committee Recommendations

The EPC Earth Day Planning Subcommittee held several debrief meetings and the full EPC met to review the event and discuss future events at the May 16 regular meeting. The Committee reached consensus that Earth Day is a tremendous draw for residents and neighbors and helps to foster an organic environment to connect with community members under the topics of sustainability and climate impacts. However, the planning and production efforts consume nearly half of the EPC's time in a fiscal year.

The Committee has demonstrated an interest in returning their focus to other facets of their Council-directed charter – providing recommendations on programmatic and policy initiatives for Council consideration on a wider range of environmental topics. The Committee would fully support continuing the Earth Day event in some format as outlined below.

Future Earth Day Options to Consider

Option 1: Continue with a one-day event held at Holbrook-Palmer Park with vendors and exhibitors in the community engagement format that is Atherton centric. The EPC proposed engaging an Event Planner as a consultant to assist staff if this is the preferred course. While the EPC would participate, the event would be organized and directed by staff.

Option 2: Return to the regional collaboration to leverage financial resources, staff and volunteers to execute a one-day Earth Day event. This would likely not be at Holbrook-Palmer Park and would engage similar partners as in 2023. While the EPC would participate, coordination with the regional partners would fall to staff.

Option 3: Break up the Earth Day events into two or more smaller events over the course of Earth Month to limit the logistical demands of a one-day large scale operation. Sample activities / events might include a one-day speaker event on a preferred topic, a one-day induction cooktop demo, or a one-day composting workshop in partnership with the County. These examples are to serve as potential options only.

There may be other options for the Council and Committee to consider that engage the community in the conversation of Earth Day and Earth Month.

FISCAL IMPACT

The Council traditionally allocates \$5,000 toward Earth Day. In 2024, the Council authorized a one-time increase of \$5,000 to support the event. The Town spent a total of \$9,089 on the event with a remaining balance of \$910. Expenses included an unplanned post event need of \$575 to clean the Pavilion carpet. Staff recommends that if Council supports Option 1, that the annual budget be set at \$10,000 inclusive of any consultant cost for event management.

GOAL ALIGNMENT

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

- Goal Area B – Preserve Small Town Character and Quality of Life
- Goal Area E – Strengthen Community Engagement and Transparency

POLICY FOCUS

The EPC is charged under the Governing Committees Resolution to “provide the City Council with recommendations, outreach programs, and education on environmental issues facing the

Town's natural and built environment." Acting in an advisory capacity, the EPC has the following powers and duties:

- a. Upon request, make recommendations (programmatic and legislative) to the City Council on all matters pertaining to the Town's natural and built environment and the Town's regional role and responsibilities as one of the communities on the San Francisco Bay Peninsula.
- b. Pursuant to established City Council programs and policy, assist staff in the creation of proactive community engagement programs for residents, commercial and public enterprises active within the Town's jurisdiction.

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 Protection District, service providers (water, power, and sewer), and regional elected officials.

COMMISSION/COMMITTEE FEEDBACK/REFERRAL

Environmental Programs Committee (meets every other month)

ATTACHMENTS

1. Holbrook-Palmer Park Layout and Vendor List