

Spring Down Open Space Vision Statement

Spring Down Open Space is one of the most accessible, prominent, and irreplaceable of the Town's Open Space properties. When acquired by the Town, the 6-acre property was envisioned as a tranquil natural area in very close proximity to parking, trails, and Town Center activities. It is more than fulfilling that promise. Its large, gently sloped meadow is shielded from Portola Road traffic and other activities by a wooded perimeter of primarily Coast Live Oaks and Coast Redwoods, many of them heritage trees. In the south corner of the property, there is a small pond with a protective stand of Red Willows on one side and a meadow seeded with native grasses and wildflowers on the other. A meandering loop path provides open views across the property, as well as close-up views of the pond and associated wildlife, especially waterfowl. For passerby on Portola Road and adjoining trails, Spring Down is emblematic of the Town's rural aesthetic and is a gem of the scenic corridor.

The Town's goals for Spring Down were ambitious and visionary given the property's condition when purchased--the meadow was dominated by equestrian facilities, and the pond was anoxic, full of construction debris and a chain link fence, and surrounded by impenetrable willows. An Ad Hoc Spring Down Master Plan Committee recommended in 2011 a two-stage process of land and pond restoration. Transforming the pond was the biggest challenge. It took six years of planning and permitting before the most sensitive work- relocating dusky-footed woodrats, a State special-status species- could be carried out, which was necessary before heavy equipment could remove the construction debris from the pond, clear the willows on the west side of the pond, re-contour the pond, and grade the area north and west of the pond to channel drainage of overflow. All of this was accomplished in 2017. By January 2018, a meadow of California poppies, Clarkias, yarrow, lupines, and other wildflowers was establishing on the west side of the pond, and a barn owl nest box was mounted in a Coast Redwood northeast of the pond, where it is ideally situated for barn owls to hunt in the open meadow. The nest box will be opened when use of rodenticide ceases on nearby Town properties. Since February 2018, mallards and a Great Blue Heron have been seen regularly on the pond, an almost immediate illustration of the rich avifauna that the property can support.

The Open Space Committee's and Conservation Committee's firm view is that this idyllic property should continue to be protected as inviolate Town Open Space. Spring Down's unique combination of pond habitat and peaceful meadow, enrich the Town Center complex by providing a space for reflection and nature appreciation.

Goals:

1. Engage the community
 - a. Integrate Spring Down with established trail networks by identifying and establishing connector paths with the Town Center campus and Portola Road trails.
 - b. Build awareness about Spring Down with Town messaging on Facebook, PV Forum, and other media.
- Utilize the educational value of Spring Down by encouraging local science classes and school groups to visit and observe.