

DEI Commission Talking Points

Materials submitted for the DEI Commission

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- **Clear and Bold Vision**

- Help eliminate racial inequities and improve outcomes for all groups while positioning the community for transformation.
- Elevate Los Gatos as a diverse, inclusive and welcoming town.

- **Clarifying the Commission's mission**

- Help drive the implementation of strategies and policies that realize the vision of a diverse, equitable, inclusive and welcoming culture in Los Gatos.
- Derive the strategies and policies from collective processes that engage many different organizations, clubs and sub-communities throughout Los Gatos.

- **Core Values**

- Community Engagement
- Equity
- Collectivity
- Transformation
- Unity

- **Why was the Commission established?**

- Following the country's racial reckoning in the Summer of 2020, to confront its past and present, it was clear The Town needed to intensify its own efforts to look within and address its own current conditions and practices, as well as development of actions to advance organizational culture, equity, inclusion and a sense of belonging.
- The Town Council, along with other Town entities, have been working for several years to actively improve the sense of belonging, and to create a culture of dialogue, learning and mutual respect across diverse communities in Los Gatos. Over 30 Town partners joined together for the Los Gatos United Against Hate Walk on November 14, 2021, with over

2,000 individuals walking with signs expressing unity. In 2022, the Council adopted the 2040 General Plan which included a new Racial, Social, and Environmental Justice Element. The Library joined the effort, for example with the A to Z World Food food culture database, through programming on affordable housing and the intersection of environmental sustainability and equity, and with the Represent Los Gatos Oral History Project to fill the gaps in the Local History Room's stories of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Parks and Public Works developed, with the help of the Arts and Culture Commission, utility box artwork that integrates DEI values. Most extensively, the Town engaged in a year of work guided by American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley Insights from 2021-2022, which resulted in a set of recommendations that would integrate and grow these separate DEI initiatives.

- The Town Council sought an advisory body on matters pertaining to creating equitable opportunities and a sense of belonging within the Town, to guide in accomplishing the goals of integrating and growing these initiatives.
- There are recent examples of hate speech that remind us of the need to improve the climate of belonging. For example, in December 2023, Superintendent Sanderson wrote to the Los Gatos High School community: We are disappointed to share that this morning, graffiti containing racist slurs were found on the marquee at Los Gatos High School, as well as at neighboring businesses and community organizations on Main Street. On March 6, 2024, Saratoga High School Administration received a WeTip message that a student was imitating soldiers from Nazi Germany with actions and hate speech during class. The incident was investigated and school staff are working directly with the student and their family on discipline and consequences. And, on May 25, 2024, while we cannot confirm if the youth involved were students of schools in Los Gatos, these youth came honking and blowing horns from the streets and from the steps leading into the building during a community event celebrating Africa Day for all in Los Gatos. The perpetrators tried everything to get into the main building to shut down the celebrations and asked when Africa Day will be over but

participants and supporters of all hues at the event prevented them from doing so.

3. Link the Commission's purpose to the Work Plan

The Commission adopted aspects of Goals A, B, C and D as defined by the Town Council for the DEI Commission. These are summarized as:

Goal A, 1a: Review the Community Grants Rubric through an equity lens

Goal B, 1a: Review the 4 Town Events with an equity lens

3a: Develop a community learning opportunity that explores historical inequities and the history of Los Gatos.

Goal C, 1a: Collaborate with community groups on equity activities

2a: Work with school and youth leadership to plan joint initiatives with community partners and the Town on equity issues.

Goal D, 1a: Develop a yearly communications campaign, eg signage, arts, etc. to promote equity ideas.

FAQ's:

Why does Los Gatos need affordable housing?

From the CalMatters website, just more than half of the state's households own their homes — the third lowest rate in the country and the lowest rate within the state since World War II. And those homeowners skew significantly white. White Californians are twice as likely as Black Californians to own

their home, according to 2019 Census data. The racial gap in homeownership has widened over the years, which also means Black Californians are less likely to build wealth over time.

De jure racism attitudes continue to create segregated communities, and thus California has legislated intentional efforts to change the situation by requiring the development of affordable housing. In PolicyLink's Bay Area Equity Atlas (see <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/mapping-segregation>), Los Gatos is listed as one of the 20 Most Segregated Neighborhoods of White Wealth. Segregation (re)produces social inequality, as residents in neighborhoods of concentrated wealth experience compounded advantage and those in concentrated poverty experience heightened disadvantage.

To remedy the enduring legacy of segregation and create a region where all can participate and prosper, we must address restrictive land use policies that allow exclusionary neighborhoods to remain disproportionately rich and white.

Why are there restrictive covenants?

- These restrictions date back to a 1926 Supreme Court case, *Corrigan v. Buckley*, which ruled that the racially-restrictive covenant of multiple residences in Washington DC was a legally-binding document that made the selling of a house to a black family a void contract. Soon after this ruling, racially restrictive covenants flourished around the country. This racism was also supported by the FHA which lowered the risk estimates for properties with restrictive deed language. The FHA even demanded that developers who received construction loans include racially restrictive covenants in the whole subdivision's property deeds.

Why do we need to talk about uncomfortable events in the Town's history that we are not proud of?

- We are not separate from our past, it is crucial to understand current events in light of their history. We believe the adage spoken by Martin Luther King, Jr - “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice”. If we understand our past and the challenges still facing our community, we can all be inspired to be part of the solutions.
- Also as a means to educate new and current residents challenges we faced and how we can improve upon them to be a better and welcoming community to all.

How can we make sure covenants and other exclusionary items don't happen again?

- Communication, Building awareness and OneCommunity mindset
- Formation of DEI commission should help
- Attitude of openness and speaking up - getting comfortable with openness.

How can the Town celebrate its diversity?

- From DEIC perspective, executing on the work plan we've already agreed upon.
 - Some other ways could be (town council, chamber etc...)
 - Acknowledging and organizing (where possible) diverse festivals from different ethnic backgrounds.
 - Highlighting/celebrating/promoting businesses owned by people from different backgrounds
 - Publishing diversity related 'positive' stats in the town - age, ethnicity, businesses etc - celebrate success and efforts of all the players who are making the difference.
 - Work with local schools and students directly on DEI initiatives and importance. eg . Fisher Middle has a DEI club. Unaware if LGHS, SHS have one.. explore!
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