

Alternatives Analysis – Vehicle Ramming Prevention of Plaza Park / Montebello / Broadway (CIP 813-0235)

Background

Across the world the issue of safety at events is becoming an area of focus for event organizers and government agencies. The use of vehicles as weapons has been occurring for some time and governments are evaluating ways to keep event goers safe and protected from bad actors. One aspect of event planning that can enhance safety is identifying specific event footprints and hardening those locations. The Town of Los Gatos has defined Plaza Park, including and its adjacent roadways of Montebello and Broadway, as an important downtown event space.

Staff recommended in 2023 that vehicle barriers be added at Montebello and Broadway to ensure the event space is adequately protected. Given the cost of the barriers, additional analysis was requested to identify other potential ways to manage security in this space.

The federal Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency offers guidance¹ on how to reduce the risk of vehicle ramming incidents with tools in the following categories: active, passive, deployable and improvised. Active mitigation tools are operable and move independently such as retractable bollards or barriers with hinge arms. Passive barriers are stationary and require effort to move such as landscaping. Deployable practices are ones that are used short-term during events much like the anti-vehicle barriers the Town currently uses. Improvised tools are items such as dump trucks or other large vehicles, which the Town has also used on occasion on the past. For this analysis staff evaluated options across all four categories of tools and presents that analysis for further consideration and discussion.

Use of Town Plaza Park

Town Plaza Park is a primary space for special events in Downtown Los Gatos. The space is used for two annual Town events: Spring into Green and Los Gatos in Lights. Each year it is also used for several recurring community events: Jazz in the Plazz (10-week event series), St. Patrick's Day, Derby Day, and Drums in the Park. The space also hosts other community events throughout the year. Most of these events include the closure of Montebello Street, and Broadway between South Santa Cruz Avenue and Montebello Street. The Town's weekly Farmers Market occurs on Montebello Street and Broadway.

The Montebello and Broadway closure is implemented approximately 67 times each year, during which time the space fills with pedestrians. The Farmer's Market is by far the most

¹ [www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Vehicle Incident Prevention and Mitigation Security Guide 508 20240418.pdf](https://www.cisa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Vehicle%20Incident%20Prevention%20and%20Mitigation%20Security%20Guide%20508%2020240418.pdf)

frequent event that necessitates closure. The Santa Clara County Department of Health stipulates the requirements and standards for Farmer's Market. Specifically, food vendor booths must be on a hard surface such as pavement. If the Farmer's Market was moved to the Plaza grass, then each booth would need to be set on plywood or a tarp. The grass would not withstand this intensity of use, and this option is not recommended.

On February 7, 2023, staff presented to Town Council information regarding the staff resources necessary to support Town and community special events. To more effectively manage the space and staff resources, staff recommended limiting the number of road closures in this area to eight per year on Montebello/Broadway and three per year on South Santa Cruz. The Town Council was hesitant to limit the number of events and road closures and requested that staff return to the Council if the limit is approached, before denying any special event permit. The Council was in support of having a lively event scene in Town. Staff agreed and committed to providing periodic updates through the Manager's Memo on the number of event permits received and processed.

On May 21, 2024, during the budget hearing Town Council directed use of \$50,000 from the Downtown Streetscape Revitalization / Economic Recovery Efforts project for the installation of bollards on Broadway and Montebello to provide consistency in how closures are implemented. PPW staff developed design plans and posted the project for bidding on October 25, 2024. Seven bids were received and opened on November 20, 2024, with costs ranging from \$70,000 to \$193,000.

Goals and Needs of Various Interested Parties

Safety within this space has been a long-standing concern and poses a challenge as needs vary between interested parties. The following is a summary of the specific needs of various interested parties.

Event Organizers: Groups that host events within the Plaza Park and/or surrounding roadways need consistent and cost-effective solutions to event set up. This is critical to allowing event organizers to predict event related costs.

Los Gatos Event Staff: Staff is seeking consistency in requirements placed on various events at Plaza Park. Currently, each event closure is implemented in different ways with different equipment by each organizer. This could lead to inequities between events.

Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department (LGMSPD): Police prefer barriers that can stop a moving vehicle from entering the event space.

Santa Clara County Fire: The Fire Department (and emergency medical services) need access into the event space to provide services. While medical services may be provided via foot access, firefighting requires the ability to remove the barriers quickly and safely.

Los Gatos Parks and Public Works Staff: PPW staff can accommodate any type of barrier or traffic control device, but recognizes that certain protocols, such as anti-vehicle barriers, are staff intensive. Staff may not be available for overtime, which would be required for certain potential solutions.

Analysis and Results

Following is a summary table of alternatives considered, the associated cost, and an assessment of whether the alternative meets the needs of the various interested parties. Staff notes that there are a number of options not presented in this table, such as spike strips and use of security personnel and gates. The use of spike strips would be hostile to the pedestrian environment. The use of security personnel would be costly and would not necessarily stop a vehicle from entering the space. Ultimately, staff has assessed the alternatives that appeared most feasible for this space.

The analysis suggests that two options would meet the needs of all interested parties and be viable for implementation: installation of bollards and permanent closure of the roads. Closure of the road will take staff time to implement and has implications for parking on the Montebello Lot and potentially of operation of the Post Office. As such, staff continues to recommend bollards as the most cost effective solution to providing security at this location.

Potential Action	Considerations	Capital Consideration	Maintenance Requirements	Does the Solution Meet Stakeholders Needs?				
				Event Organizers	Los Gatos Event Staff	LGMSPD	County Fire and EMS	PPW
Moveable Anti-Vehicle Barriers (Deployable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high level of protection Requires three PPW staff to set-up/break-down and operate during event at cost of about \$400 per hour (3 staff; cost would be higher for overtime). Assuming 67 events requiring 5 hours staff time each totals \$134,000 per year at straight time Must be operated by staff – cannot be left to event organizers to manage 	Town owns two AVB's	None	No. Not cost effective when considering staff time to set up and break down	Yes	Yes	Yes	No. Cannot guarantee staff is available to work all events and equipment is not operable by non-staff.
K-Rails / Concrete Barriers / Water Filled Barriers (Deployable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide high level of protection if installed correctly Aesthetically inconsistent with Downtown Los Gatos Requires PPW staff to set-up/break-down at cost of about \$520 per hour (4 staff; cost would be higher for overtime) Assuming 67 events requiring 5 hours staff time each totals \$174,200 per year at straight time Would require use of backhoe to place and move in the event of emergency; this is not safe in a crowd Must be operated by staff – cannot be left to event organizers to manage 	\$30,000 - \$40,000	None	No. Not cost effective when considering staff time to set up and break down	Yes	Yes	No. Would require heavy equipment to move or time to drain in the event of water filled barriers	No. Cannot guarantee staff is available to work all events and required equipment can only be operated by staff. Safety of event attendees cannot be guaranteed when using heavy equipment during event.
Moveable Planter Boxes (Deployable)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aesthetically consistent with Downtown Los Gatos Would require ongoing staff maintenance of plantings and hand watering Require storage area near Plaza Park Only effective if appropriately locked in place when in use, may require inspection or staff installation to ensure safety of closure. <u>None identified that achieve base goal of crash rating.</u> Crash mitigation would require permanently affixed planters. 	Unknown	Maintenance of planting material	Yes.	Yes	No	Yes	No. Adds to staffing burden to maintain plantings and store barriers when not in use
Traffic Rated Bollards (Active)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can be used by any person – staff or event planner Low maintenance Provide high degree of protection Potential for sand and grit depending on quality of product installed Management of keys is required to prevent unauthorized use; staff proposes requiring a deposit for use of the key. 	\$250,000 - \$275,000	Periodic cleaning may be required	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Permanent Closure of Roads via Installation of Planters (Passive)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide full protection Lowest long-term operating costs County Fire access concerns Impacts VTA bus route Eliminates access to Post Office Would require coordination with Frontier to eliminate their vehicular access via Montebello Long lead time and staff time to implement / coordinate 	Unknown	Low	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

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				Event Organizers	Los Gatos Event Staff	LGMSPD	County Fire and EMS	PPW
Do Not Allow Closure of the Roadways for Events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminates basic issue staff is seeking to address • Contradicts past Council direction • Eliminates Farmers Market use of the space, which is a primary driver of downtown traffic on Sunday • Significantly impacts the ability of events to load in and out • Exacerbates safety concerns related to pedestrians that may spill over into the roads during larger events 	None	None	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes