



TOWN OF LOS GATOS

Communication Administrative Plan

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1. Introduction

Effective communication, both internal and external, is vital in any organizational environment as a means of promoting the organization's mission, vision, and values. Due to the rapid growth of alternative communication platforms, such as social media channels, and their use by our residents, it is essential to create a strategic Communications Administrative Plan to assist the many employees and Departments that communicate with the public. Since involving and informing the community is a priority in the Los Gatos Town Council's decision-making process, the ability to reach residents for their input is extremely important.

The goal of the plan is to improve both external communications with the community and internal communication among departments and employees.

The Town is committed to utilizing a variety of tools to communicate effectively with the media and the public. The benefits include:

- Informing the public of the services the Town provides;
- Promoting the Town's achievements, activities, and events of significance;
- Expanding the general visibility of the Town;
- Expanding the community's involvement in decision-making processes;
- Ensuring that accurate information is conveyed to the public in emergencies and with issues of a controversial and/or sensitive nature; and
- Creating and maintaining credibility and ensuring public trust.

In addition to procedural recommendations, this plan formalizes the role of the interdepartmental Communications Team as an integral part of organizational communications by having each member serve as a communications resource in their respective Departments and by meeting on a regular basis to discuss ongoing and emerging communications issues. Appendix J identifies the Communications Team members who contributed to the preparation of this Plan.

2. Communication Mission, Goals, and Objectives:

Town of Los Gatos Communication Mission:

- Provide timely, proactive, accurate, coordinated, and relevant public information using a variety of channels to reach as many community members as possible and promotes the Town's values, demonstrates Town staff expertise, and results in high quality communication.
- Enhance communication with the residents and businesses in Town and the region by proactively identifying emerging issues, improving long-range communication strategies, and communicating key issues, policy decisions, and actions taken by the Town Council.
- Foster communication to enhance transparency and credibility with all stakeholders.
- Promote equal treatment, equitable distribution of and access to resources, and engagement in issues affecting the lives of Los Gatos residents, workers, and visitors.

Goal, Objectives, and Principles:

The **Goal** of the Town Communication Administrative Plan is to provide guidance on the Town's expectations, practices, and outcomes for internal communications to Town employees and external communications to the community, agencies, vendors, and other stakeholders interacting with the Town of Los Gatos.

The Communication Administrative Plan strives to accomplish the following **Objectives**:

1. Support the Town Council's Vision and Strategic Goals, especially by reporting to specific target audiences on the components, activities, and programs that are advancing the Council's objectives;
2. Facilitate two-way dialogue between Town government and Los Gatos community members so they have the opportunity to be actively engaged in decision-making and are aware of Town services and activities;
3. Enhance communications at and among all levels of Town government, with the concept that all elected and appointed officials and Town employees are communicators and ambassadors for the organization on a day-to-day basis;
4. Ensure that all communications/marketing materials are coordinated and consistent in design and content, thereby presenting a united and professional image of the Town; and
5. Position Los Gatos as a unique community and destination with a dynamic population and quality of life, along with a local government that is responsive to its residents, while also encouraging their participation.

Effective communications with the media and the public shall be accomplished both responsively and proactively utilizing the following **Principles**:

Commitment to Collaboration

- Tell our story.
- Be proactive.
- Increase participation.
- Enhance accessibility to local government and the services the Town offers.
- Provide balance: Information provided to the public will be objective, balanced, accurate, informative, and timely.

Commitment to Serving the Community

- Provide clear, relevant, and timely information about the Town and its services, projects, achievements, and emerging issues.
- Foster public confidence through transparency of decision-making and outcomes.
- Increase transparency in all communication: The Town promotes openness and accessibility in all communications, whilst complying with the law and maintaining confidentiality when appropriate.

Commitment to Creativity

- Promote creative ways to tell our story to our audience.
- Stay abreast of emerging communication tools and techniques.

Commitment to Character

- Use consistent communications both internally and externally.
- Ensure communication is both accurate and timely.
- Provide the community an accurate idea of the Town's responsibilities, current issues, and opportunities.
- Protect and grow positive relations with all stakeholders.
- Promote honesty by being open and honest and never knowingly mislead the public, media, or staff on an issue or news story.

3. Target Audiences

The process of identifying and prioritizing the Town's target audiences is a key component of this Communication Plan. Understanding the audience enables the Town to better relate to its social environment and the unique needs of different groups.

- Residents/Businesses/Visitors of Los Gatos - The Los Gatos community is the highest priority audience. Strengthening the relationship between Town government and residents, property owners, businesses, and people who come to work, dine, shop, worship, or recreate in Town is the foundation of this Communication Administrative Plan. The audience includes but is not limited to: local businesses, residents, community-based organization (CBOs), faith-based organizations (FBOs), schools, and all people who come to Los Gatos to dine, work, worship, shop, and recreate.
- Members of Town Council, Boards, Commissions, and Committees - While these individuals are also residents of Los Gatos, it is important to recognize the work they do on behalf of the Town, and that they communicate on behalf of the Town.
- Town Employees - People employed by the Town of Los Gatos are both part of the target audience and are an integral part of the success of the Communication Plan. All employees reflect the values of the Town in their daily work.
- News Media - The media outlets are important because their coverage of the Town has significant influence on the public's view of government. "Media outlets" include a variety of print, web, and broadcast mediums.

4. Communications Team

Coordinated by the Town Manager's Office, the Communication Team is an interdepartmental team comprised of staff from all Departments and all levels of the Town organization who have responsibility for public information. The Communications Team strives to ensure greater coordination for consistency of messaging, sharing of resources and knowledge, and more effectively plan for, produce, and distribute Town information.

The Communications Team is responsible for the development, implementation, and maintenance of this plan. The Communications Team coordinates and enables the decentralization of communication among Town Departments. The use of this decentralized organization for the implementation of the Communication Administrative Plan compliments the principal of open communication. With decentralization there must be a commitment by Team members to presenting a consistent, focused message to the community.

The Communications Team is comprised of Town employees who are already producing and distributing communications materials within their Departments. Each Department will be responsible for identifying at least one representative for the Team. It will be the responsibility of the Department representative(s) to ensure that the Communication Administrative Plan is promulgated and adhered to within their Departments. The Team members are required to be abreast of best practices by affiliation with media, communication organizations, and participation in relevant training. Team members should track social media metrics to better understand what types of messaging is resonating with the recipients.

The team will meet monthly and implement this plan utilizing a phased approach.



5. Communication Tools – External

A. Branding and Use of Town Seal

i. The Town seal should be used on all formal, official Town documents and communications.

Examples of appropriate use of the Town seal include:

1. Profile photo for Town main social media accounts
2. Letterhead
3. Forms and applications
4. Slideshows and presentations
5. Town apparel worn by staff while on official Town business
6. Email signature blocks

ii. Specific guidelines for use of the Town seal, creating email signature blocks, and other formatting specifics may be found in the “Formatting and Branding” Appendix.

iii. The new Town branding introduced in 2019 may be used for more informal marketing and branding purposes. The design is simple, printer-friendly, and easily identified as associated with the Town of Los Gatos on marketing and promotional materials. Examples of appropriate use of the new branding include:

1. Social media graphics
2. Flyers, banners, and posters
3. Postcards and mailings
4. Promotional materials such as mugs or cups
5. Town apparel worn by staff either while on Town business or outside of work
6. Annual Report

iv. Specific guidelines for use of the new Town branding, including official fonts and Town colors can be found in the “Los Gatos Visual Brand Guidelines” Appendix.

B. General Content Guidelines:

When creating or editing content on the official Town website and social media accounts, authorized users shall:

- Be respectful, professional, ethical, and comply with all Town policies, local, State, and Federal laws.
- Use plain language and proper grammar. Avoid technical terms or abbreviations unless there is a common understanding of its meaning.
- Ensure the information communicated is accurate and complete. If a mistake is made, it should be disclosed and promptly corrected.
- Be transparent, truthful, careful, and considerate. Keep in mind that once content is posted online, it will remain in perpetuity.
- Stay current and be consistent with the goals of the Town.

When using official accounts, authorized users shall not:

- Post personal information, except for the names of Town employees whose job duties include being available for contact by the public.
- Post something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Users should trust their instincts and contact a supervisor with any concerns.
- Express personal views or concerns through postings.
- Reveal any confidential information as defined by any Town policy, or local, State, or Federal law.
- Post anything that would infringe upon another's property rights, such as copyrighted material.
- Post anything that would injure another person's or entity's professional or personal reputation.
- Post any content that engages in political or religious advocacy.
- Post any content that is prohibited (as listed below).

The following content is prohibited on all official Town accounts:

- Content unrelated to the Town or specified post topic.
- Violent and/or pornographic content.
- Content promoting discrimination on the basis of race, creed, color, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability, veteran status, national origin, or any other legally protected class.
- Profane language or content.
- Solicitations of commerce, including but not limited to advertising of any business or product for sale.
- Violations of any law, threats, and/or promotion of violence or illegal activity.
- Content compromising public safety or security.
- Content supporting or opposing any political candidate or campaign, including ballot measures.
- Content that violates a legal ownership interest of any other party.
- Apparent spam, content posted by automatic software programs (i.e., "bots"), or comments containing links to malware and/or malicious content that affects the normal functioning of a computer system, servers, or browser.
- Duplicate comments posted repeatedly within a short period of time.
- Personal attacks or comments containing actual defamation against a person, either as determined by a court or comments that are patently defamatory by easily discovered facts.
- Private or personal information posted without consent.

C. Website:

The Town website represents the Town as a whole and serves as a primary means for the public to obtain accurate information, complete business, find resources, and participate in Town government. The website demonstrates the Town's commitment to transparency and accessibility to local government. The purpose of the Town website is to provide pertinent information to the public, conduct business with the Town, and promote Town goals as guided by the Town Council. The Town's website provides useful and practical information available to residents, businesses, and visitors.

i. WEBSITE USER DEFINITIONS

1. Website Administrator: Has the ability to edit the Town website in its entirety, manage users, and grant permissions in consultation with the Department Director.
2. Website Back-End User: Has the ability to edit Department pages with direction from the Department Director or Website Administrator.
3. Narrow Access User: Has the ability to edit only specific pages (i.e., Department interns may be granted narrow access to specified Department pages)

ii. WEBSITE BEST PRACTICES

1. All requests for new Website Administrator and Website Back-End Users must first be approved by the Department Director.
2. Each Department has the responsibility of maintaining and editing their own webpages. Questions regarding user permissions or content should be directed to the Town Manager's Office.
3. Whenever possible, link to the source of information instead of creating a separate document that would require oversight and updates.
4. Limit content to relevant Town-related material.
5. Department landing pages should have a brief introduction to the Department with relevant links and a consistent appearance.
6. Reviews and updates to Department webpages should be done as needed and at least annually.
7. Content added to the website should be designed to be as accessible as possible to people with disabilities (see Appendix F).
8. Information should be accessible with the fewest "clicks" possible.

iii. EXTERNAL LINKS

1. Information and links from external sources posted on the Town website should specifically address information regarding Town services, Departments, officials, programs, safety and disaster preparedness, emergency alerts, meetings, recognition, recruitment, history, community, and/or offerings specifically related to or originating from the Town.

The Town may post Town-affiliated or Town-sponsored information from Town Departments, Town government agency partners, relevant media outlets (local, regional, State), and/or organizations that have co-sponsored an event with the Town.

The Town may post information from non-profits providing housing or philanthropical services in Los Gatos that the Town has partnered with or sponsored an event with.

Events from non-profits providing housing or philanthropical services in Los Gatos that the Town has not partnered with or sponsored the event with should not be posted on the Town website.

The Town may post information from the official sites or accounts of local, State, and Federal government or quasi-government agencies.

The Town reserves the right to deny requests to post external links or information that do not fall into any of these categories.

2. The following links are prohibited on the Town's official website:
 - a. Links to personal websites;
 - b. Links to commercial or religious websites (except as allowed by the above criteria);
 - c. Links to sites associated with, sponsored by, or serving a candidate for elected office, any political party, or organization supporting of seeking to defeat any candidate from elected office or ballot proposal;
 - d. Links to websites with obscene or objectionable images or text; and/or
 - e. Links which point to content on the Town's intranet or other servers inside the Town's firewall.

D. Social Media:

Social media refers to websites and applications that enable users to create and share content. Examples of current social media channels the Town utilizes are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Nextdoor. Many people engage with the Town via social media. These channels are important tools for the community to learn of events, obtain news, and receive emergency notifications. The Town recognizes the importance social media to improve communication and interaction with the public while reaching new and broader audiences in addition to traditional media sources. The Town endorses the use of these tools, realizing the positive effect they can have on employees, the community, and the business of the Town. It is critical that the information going out on these social media channels is both engaging and accurate.

i. New Social Media Accounts:

1. Before opening new accounts, Town Departments and Town Boards, Commissions, and Committees should check with the Town Communications Team for review and for submittal to the Town Manager for approval.
2. Departmental accounts will be managed and maintained by the Department.
3. Town Board, Commission, or Committee accounts will be managed and maintained by the Committee's Town staff liaison. Committee members may be granted editing rights to certain social media pages, and the liaison will maintain page administrative rights.
4. Use of social media accounts by Town Boards, Committees, and Commissions is subject to the Ralph M. Brown Act (California's open meeting law).

ii. Authorized Social Media Users:

1. Only authorized staff may post on official social media accounts as authorized social media users. Social media users are authorized by the Department Director and Town Manager.
2. Authorized social media users will regularly review and comply with the Town's policies on use of official accounts including the Social Media Policy.
3. Authorized social media users should monitor, use, and interact on official accounts only during regular work hours. This restriction does not apply to employees that are classified as FLSA "Exempt." In the event of an emergency incident, social media users may be asked to monitor, use, and interact on official accounts outside of regular work hours.
4. Social media requests for posting content on pages managed by the Town Manager's Office should be submitted by staff, in writing using the Social Media Request form, to their Department Director. Once approved by the Department Director, social media requests are routed through the Town Manager's Office for posting. Please see the "Social Media Request Form" Appendix and this form is available on the Town's Shared Drive.
5. Authorized Department staff may post on official social media accounts using the Tier System outlined below as a guide:

Tier 1 (Post freely as needed)

- b. Safety – Road closure, inclement weather, public health and safety concerns, upcoming construction, etc.
- c. Town Information/Meetings/Programming/Events – Special events, Town programs and services, upcoming meetings, recognition, recruitment, etc.
- d. Community – Parks and trails, Los Gatos history, available Town services, etc.
- e. How to – Contact a specific Department, apply for a permit, view a Council meeting, etc.

Tier 2 (Requires Supervisor/Director/Potentially Town Manager Approval)

- f. Information that requires research and interpretation or is highly controversial or politically charged.

Tier 3 (Requires Town Manager Approval)

- g. Critical Incident
- h. Press Release

iii. Interacting with Other Social Media Accounts

1. As a general rule, the Town social media accounts only follow social media accounts associated with Town business. The Town should not endorse individuals or specific businesses. However, interacting with other social media accounts can be a useful tool in informing residents about Town activities, policies, and issues. Authorized

social media users should use sound judgment when interacting with other social media accounts because those interactions may be easily misinterpreted. Interacting or sharing, as used in this document, includes, but is not limited to: “likes,” “tweets,” “posts,” or “following” on social media platforms.

- a. The Town should not like or follow the accounts of individual community members or campaign accounts.
 - b. It is acceptable for the Town to follow social media accounts of other public municipalities, public agency partners (i.e., County Fire Department), local non-profit groups or organizations providing housing or philanthropic services in Los Gatos, or local businesses.
2. When considering interacting with non-Town social media accounts consider the following:
 - a. Read all information in the original and any other relevant post, tweet, or link thoroughly before interacting with it to ensure that it accurately enhances community knowledge about Town activities, issues, policies, and priorities. If the content does not specifically address the Town, it should be of relevant regional interest to the particular official account’s audience.
 - b. Provide information that is consistent with the Town’s goals.
 - c. Clearly identify the external source of the information (post, tweet, link, etc.)
3. Authorized social media users are encouraged to interact with other social media accounts operated by the Town, other government agencies, or businesses that are promoting the Town’s projects or goals. The following are some examples of appropriate accounts for comments, likes, or post sharing:
 - a. Other governments or quasi-government agencies relevant to the subject matter.
 - b. Individual pages of Town Departments (i.e., Police Department, Library), Town government agency partners, and/or organizations that are under contract with the Town for programming (e.g., Music in the Park, Los Gatos-Saratoga Recreation, etc.
 - c. Non-profit organizations providing housing or philanthropic services in Los Gatos (The Town may post information from non-profits providing housing or philanthropic services in Los Gatos with whom the Town has a contractual partnership. Information from non-profits providing housing or philanthropic services in Los Gatos that are not in a contractual partnership with the Town may be “shared” on the Town’s social media accounts, but not posted directly to the Town’s social media accounts.).
 - d. Relevant media outlets (local, regional, state).

- e. Utility, energy, water, recycling, waste management and/or other Los Gatos service providers. Examples include: PG&E, Silicon Valley Clean Energy, West Valley Collection & Recycling, etc.

iv. Managing Public Comments:

1. The goal of utilizing social media accounts is to keep the community engaged, and to position the Town as a reputable and reliable source of timely and accurate information. Therefore, questions, comments, and direct messages via the Town's social media channels should be responded to as promptly as possible. When comments appear rude in nature, one polite response should be provided; do not engage in a back and forth with the user.
2. Public comments are allowed on official accounts. To the extent possible, an appropriate legal disclaimer should be posted to the account. An example of the legal disclaimer is as follows:

"This page and/or account is intended to serve as a means of communication between the public and the Town of Los Gatos. Comments posted to this page and/or account will be monitored during regular Town business hours only. The Town reserves the right to remove comments that include any of the following: language that is profane, discriminatory or sexual in nature, or threatens or defames any person or organization, or violates the legal ownership rights of another party, or supports or opposes political candidates or ballot measures, or encourages or promotes illegal activity, or solicits or promotes commercial services or products, or contains comments that are not typically related to the particular post being commented upon, or compromises the safety or security of the public, public systems, or Town employees. Any content posted to the page and/or account is subject to public disclosure. Town of Los Gatos Facebook page is a department (or an office) of the Town of Los Gatos, www.losgatosca.gov. This page and/or account is intended to serve as a means for communication between the public and department/office. Any comment submitted to this page and/or account and its list of fans, followers, and/or likes may be considered a public record that is subject to disclosure pursuant to the California Public Records Act."

3. Individuals shall not be blocked and content on official accounts shall not be deleted simply because they are critical of the Town, its officials, or employees, or because the agency or authorized user otherwise dislikes what the content says or represents. Content may be deleted only when it violates the Town Social Media Policy. Any content removed from an official account must be approved by the Town Manager in conjunction with the Town Attorney and retained in accordance with the California Public Records Act.
4. Freedom of speech should be protected on all posts. In general, comments should not be deleted unless absolutely necessary. Threats should not be deleted and should instead be forwarded to law enforcement. Comments should generally be allowed on all posts. Keywords should not be blocked. Hiding comments decreases

public transparency and should not be done. Keep in mind that the public is able to recognize internet “trolls.”

5. Content that violates the social media platform’s guidelines may be reported directly to the platform.
6. Any content published on an official account may be considered a public record for purposes of the California Public Records Act and subject to the Town’s Records Retention Policy.

v. Use of Images:

1. Any photos of the public posted to Town social media accounts must be taken in a plainly visible public space without a reasonable expectation of privacy, unless consent for the photo to be used on social media has been given. People may be asked for permission to use their photos on Town social media when possible. A Photo Release Form may also be signed when appropriate. Please see “Photo Release Form” Appendix.
2. No images should be posted that infringe on property rights, such as those protected by copyright.
3. Town events, activities, and programs should have the following information posted so that photographs may be used on social media:

“By entering event premises you consent to photography, video, and audio recording and their release to be used for print, website, advertising and/or social media for promotional purposes by the Town of Los Gatos staff or representatives. Images and video may be used to publicly highlight events or promote similar future events for the Town of Los Gatos. By entering the event premises you waive all rights you may have to any claims in connection with use, publication, print distribution, and/or digital distribution, of these images or recordings for promotional purposes. You release the Los Gatos Library and the Town of Los Gatos, its officers and employees, and all persons involved from any liability connected with the taking of images, the recording of audio and video, and their publication. You have been informed of your consent, waiver of liability, and release before entering the event.”

vi. Emojis, Hashtags and Other Trends Unique to Social Media:

The Town is walking a delicate line between professionalism and engagement, using the clearest method available to convey the message. Some trends (i.e., hashtags) are beneficial for users and staff to search for content or to share content with an appropriate audience, so it’s acceptable to use them when appropriate.

vii. Best Practices:

1. The Town’s social media communications should drive people to the Town’s website for more in-depth information.

2. If a question or comment is common knowledge or within the social media user's area of expertise, they should answer the question or respond to the comment.
3. If a question would be better answered by another staff member, refer the question to that person. If a timely response is received, provide both the response and contact information for the appropriate Department in the reply. If a timely response is not received, provide the appropriate Department's contact information and alert them to the question.
4. In the case of a controversial comment, highly-charged political comment, or a comment that requires a response from a Director level or above, forward the comment to the Director and copy the Town Manager.
5. Give credit where credit is due - if citing other site's content, indicate where the content came from.
6. Social media passwords should be changed at least once per year for security.
7. All social media accounts should include a link to the Social Media Policy.
8. The Town should adhere to all rules/guidelines of the social media platforms used for Town social media accounts. For example, Facebook does not allow "dummy" accounts to be used to manage official Government pages. If the platform's guidelines are not followed, the Town risks losing access to its Town social media accounts.

viii. Personal Use of Social Media:

While the Town does not monitor employees' personal social media accounts, the following are suggested guidelines to follow when referring to the Town in order to ensure a distinction between sharing personal and agency views/information.

1. While employees may voluntarily choose to engage with the Town on its official social media accounts, the Town does not require any employee to follow or "like" official social media accounts.
2. The Town does not condone the personal use by employees of social media during the working hours by any means, including by using Town-owned equipment. Employees have no right or expectation of privacy when using Town-owned devices or systems. The Town reserves the right to monitor, search, or disclose employee use of Town resources.
3. When an employee uses social media in a personal capacity, they are doing so for themselves and they are not speaking nor communicating on behalf of the Town. Employees should make certain that it does not appear that they are speaking or posting for the Town unless authorized to do so.
4. The personal use of social media by an employee in a manner that violates any Town policy or procedure will not be tolerated and may be grounds for disciplinary action. Employees are expected to comply with the same ethical and performance standards

online as in the workplace. Using social media in a way that adversely impacts a job, co-workers, the Town, or the public is prohibited. Employees may not use their official Town email address to create or maintain any personal social media accounts or sites.

5. Employees may not post any content on the internet or social media that constitutes or contains Town confidential, proprietary, privileged, private, personal, or other non-public information.

6. Employees are prohibited from using the Town logo or seal, representing the Town, or representing that they speak on behalf of the Town within their personal social media accounts or sites. Employees must also make clear in any online activity that the views and opinions they express about work-related matters are their own, have not been reviewed by the Town, and do not necessarily represent the views and opinions of the Town.

E. Staff Reports:

Staff reports should demonstrate skills in strategic and creative thinking, analysis, and communication. They should tell the Town's story and serve as a legacy. Available online, staff Reports are read by Town Council, Board/Committee/Commission members, Town staff, and the general public. Staff reports should also serve as the primary way for employees to communicate with the Town Council. Any email communications with Council Members should go through the Town Manager with copy to the appropriate Department Director.

Before beginning to write a staff report, employees should consider the topic, the audience, and the required action. Examples of required actions could be for the Council to receive information, approve or deny a request, adopt resolutions or ordinances, or act on other Town business.

Staff reports should be written using the staff report template with subheadings. A question and answer format may be best for complex items. All relevant topics should be referenced, including analysis, alternatives, recommendations, coordination with other Departments, environmental review, and community input. The overall goal of the staff report should be to "tell the story" and help the Town Council make the informed decisions for the community. For a sample template, please refer to the Clerk Department.

F. Media Inquiries:

Per the Town Council Code of Conduct Policy, the Mayor is acknowledged as the official Town spokesperson. When media inquiries are received, they should be forwarded to the Town Manager who in turn will reach out to the Mayor. Depending on the nature of media inquiry, the Mayor may opt to delegate a response to the Town Manager who in turn may delegate a response to subject matter experts within the Town.

6. Current Communication Tools – Internal

Internal communications form a foundation that impacts the total performance of an organization. An open culture that encourages dialog, trust, and camaraderie at all levels fosters enhanced staff effectiveness, improved morale, and increased engagement with external stakeholders.

i. Organizational Values:

The Town's organizational values form a basis for internal and external communications. These are:

Mission

The Mission of the Town of Los Gatos is to enhance the quality of life in Los Gatos by providing the highest quality leadership and most efficient services and facilities. The Town strives to provide a working environment which promotes excellence; fosters cooperation; values volunteerism; and seeks to meet the needs of the community and the Town Council, employees, Commissions, Committees and Boards.

Customer Service Commitment

All Town employees consistently go the extra step to deliver highly competent and professional services in a respectful, effective, and transparent manner. We engage in open communication, relationship building, and problem solving to provide the best service possible.

Organizational Values

We are committed to serving the COMMUNITY of Los Gatos

- Small Town service – responsive, timely, courteous
- Cost-effective, quality services
- Seamless service delivery
- Public service orientation

We are committed to working together in COLLABORATION

- Open and constructive communication
- Collective goals and shared purpose

We are committed to valuing and pursuing CREATIVITY

- Innovation and creative problem solving
- Future orientation and proactive efforts
- Organizational learning and continuous improvement
- Positive and enjoyable work environment

We are committed to approaching our work and each other with impeccable CHARACTER

- Ethics and integrity
- Honesty
- Trust and respect for one another
- Pride in work

ii. Objectives:

The key objectives of Town internal communications are:

- a. Trust: Create a culture of trust, transparency, and shared vision to enhance service performance.
- b. Culture: Develop communications that foster an atmosphere conducive to open, honest, and respectful communication among all employees.
- c. Resources: Provide employees with tools to support them as contributors to the Town organization and empower them to deliver service excellence to the community.
- d. Engagement: Build employee awareness and engagement through communication of the Town's vision and priorities, service and accomplishments, as well as legacy and history.

iii. Information Flow:

Information flow should be prioritized at all levels of the Town. The Town Manager should keep the entire organization and Town Council abreast of issues and policies which impact the Town organization.

Directors and managers should regularly communicate policy and big picture decisions that affect the Department to staff in a way that reflects the values and objectives mentioned above. Directors should ensure their staff is equipped with the information, training, knowledge, and tools they need to perform their duties as expected. Departments and Directors should meet on a regular schedule (at least monthly) to share information and work collaboratively.

Interdepartmental communication and collaboration is also an essential function of the Town. Departments should leverage technology as a productive internal communication tool (i.e., Microsoft Teams groups, chats, teleconference calls, email, etc.). Each Department should have at least one staff member present at regular Town Communication Team meetings to serve as a communication liaison for that Department.

iv. Training:

Department Directors should foster the career development of their employees through relevant training, support tools, and other resources. Staff members who regularly interact with the public should be supported with training to strengthen customer service, resolving difficult situations, and other key communication skills. Inter-Department mentoring and job shadowing is another option to promote growth. As circumstances permit, employees may consider regional training programs, such as the Santa Clara County Leadership Program and the Leadership Los Gatos Program. The Human Resources Department periodically offers Town-wide training and each Department is encouraged to find relevant training for its staff.

7. Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in Communications

The Town of Los Gatos is committed to inclusivity and all Town Departments shall use a lens of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in their work. This commitment to inclusivity should be reflected in all internal and external communications.

a. Gender Neutrality.

Gender-neutral language should be used to avoid word choices which may be interpreted as biased, discriminatory, or demeaning by implying that one sex or gender is the norm. References to binary male and female groupings can be alienating for those who don't fall neatly into one of those categories. Even for people who do identify as male or female, constant reminders of gender may have an impact and may change the perception of men and women as more different than they really are. Some examples of gender-neutral language are as follows:

1. Use the pronoun "they" for a single person instead of "he" or "she." Using "he" or "she" requires us to assign a gender to an individual and you cannot always guess someone's preferred pronoun by their appearance or name.
2. Refrain from using "Mr," "Ms," "Mrs," or "Miss." "Mx" provides an alternative to being identified by gender.
3. When referencing family members, use gender-neutral terms like "partner," "sibling," and "child."
4. Use gender-neutral form of occupations such as flagger, server, mail carrier, police officer, fire fighter, Council Member, or flight attendant.

b. Freedom of Speech and Hate Speech.

The Town welcomes differences of opinion and will work to ensure everyone's rights to free speech. However, hate speech in any form will not be tolerated. Hate speech is understood as any kind of communication in speech, writing, or behavior that attacks or uses pejorative or discriminatory language with reference to a person or group on the basis of their religion, ethnicity, nationality, race, descent, gender, disability, or other identity factor. This is often rooted in and generates intolerance and hatred and can be demeaning and divisive.

Hate speech is a menace to social stability and peace. As a matter of principle, the Town must confront hate speech at every turn. Addressing hate speech does not mean limiting or prohibiting freedom of speech; instead, it is critical to keep hate speech from escalating into something more dangerous, particularly incitement of discrimination, hostility, and violence.

Any observed hate speech should be immediately reported to the Town Manager and Town Attorney.

c. Graphic Design.

Graphic design should represent the audience it is speaking to and be broad, diverse, and inclusive. Graphics that are used on the Town website, social media platforms, and elsewhere should represent people of different races, ethnicities, nationalities, cultures, disabilities, gender, sexualities, ages, economic status, and religions.

d. Diverse Outreach.

Any public outreach should be directed at all community members, regardless of income, religious or political affiliation, race, color, gender, disability, religion, or national origin. Diversity and inclusion efforts must be bolstered by a strong culture of civic engagement in the Town's decision-making processes. When applicable, communications should engage all members of the public, including individuals and groups who have not typically been involved in Town decision-making and civic life. Town staff should consider collaborating with local organizations and partners to share information and strengthen historically marginalized communities' capacity to participate in local planning, governmental affairs, and policy decision-making. Public outreach should convey that Los Gatos is a place where all should feel welcome and where the dignity, health, rights, and privacy of all residents, businesses, and visitors are respected. Public communications should promote equal treatment, equitable distribution of and access to resources, and engagement in issues affecting the lives of residents, workers, and visitors.

e. Accessibility.

Every effort should be made to ensure communications are as accessible as possible. The Town shall ensure that it complies with all applicable provisions of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Accessible communications benefit all audiences by making information clear, direct, and as easy to understand as possible. People have different communication needs, and by developing Town materials accordingly, the Town can reach a broader audience and give more people the opportunity to communicate with the Town. All Town communications should be as effective for individuals with disabilities so that they derive the same result, benefit, or level of achievement in Town programs, activities, and services as provided to persons without disabilities.

1. Face-to-Face Situations. When you meet a person who may have a disability that affects their communication, treat them with respect and make eye contact. Speak naturally and clearly. Always politely tell the person if you do not understand their message.
 - a. If the person is hearing impaired, make sure they can see your mouth and that you are in a well-lit environment.
 - b. If the person has a communication assistant, speak directly to the individual and not just the assistant.
 - c. If the person uses a communication device, be patient and wait for them to construct their message. Do not rush them.
 - d. If the person has difficulty understanding you, try writing the words down or using pictures or diagrams.

- e. You may ask what you can do to make communication go smoothly if it is not clear.
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- 2. Written Communications. Use plain language when producing written information. Plain language is a style of writing that uses everyday language at approximately a fifth-grade reading level. It uses short, simple words and sentences that are no longer than about 15 words. Some people may need reading materials in alternate formats such as large print or electronic copy. Some people may need human assistance to support them to read and understand a document.
 - 3. Public Meetings. The need for translation services at Town events and meetings can be provided if notified in advance, including the types of services and requested languages.
 - 4. Town Website. Website content must be robust enough that it can be interpreted reliably by a wide variety of user agents (browsers, software, etc.), including assistive technologies. For best practices regarding how to design the Town website content to be as accessible as possible, please see the Appendix “Website Accessibility Best Practices.”

8. Emergency and Crisis Communications:

Declared Emergencies and Emergency Operation Center Activation

1. In non-Police Department related emergencies and disasters, the Public Information Officers (PIOs) from the Management Section of the Town's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will assume management for communications. In these circumstances, emergency communications will be coordinated in alignment with Section 6 of the Town of Los Gatos Emergency Operations Plan (EOP).
2. In addition, the Town makes emergency preparedness information available to the Town of Los Gatos community through social media and the Town website. Further, the Town Manager's Office will provide special emphasis on specific hazards throughout the calendar year, aiding in the disaster preparation and education of the communities within the Town.
3. In emergencies that require mass notification the Los Gatos-Monte Sereno Police Department (LGMSPD) will utilize Nixle, AlertSCC, and Twitter following their internal protocols for mass notification.
4. In addition to the mass notification capabilities of the LGMSPD, in the event of emergencies the Town may request mass notification form the Santa Clara County Office of Emergency Management and Santa Clara County Fire Department.

9. Appendix:

- A. Formatting and Branding specifics
- B. Visual Brand Guidelines (colors and new logo)
- C. Writing Guide (from General Plan)
- D. Social Media Policy
- E. Accessibility Best Practices
- F. Social Media Request Form
- G. Photo Release Form
- H. Staff Report Sample Template
- I. Electronic Communications and Internet Technology Resources Procedure
- J. Communications Team Members Who Participated in the Preparation of this Plan