



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 10/01/2024

ITEM NO: 7

DATE: September 26, 2024
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Katy Nomura, Interim Town Manager
SUBJECT: Discuss and Provide Direction on a New Town Event for Fall 2025 That Expands Upon the Town's Annual Movie Night (Screen on the Green)

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss and provide direction on a new Town event for fall 2025 that expands upon the Town's annual movie night (Screen on the Green).

BACKGROUND:

The Town of Los Gatos embraces the opportunity to celebrate with the community through its four annual Town events, which are described below.

- **Spring into Green** is celebrated on a Sunday in April, typically on the weekend of Earth Day, at Town Plaza Park alongside the Farmers Market. This event is focused on sustainability, waste diversion, environmental protection, clean water, and related community organizations. This event started in 2015, replacing the Town's former annual Garage Sale and Keep Los Gatos Beautiful Month Newsletter. The event is one of the efforts the Town implements to meet community outreach and education goals for waste diversion and sustainability initiatives. Spring into Green provides the Town's partners opportunities to participate in the event through a booth with an activity or information that highlights sustainability, waste diversion, and environmental stewardship. The Town also celebrates its Tree City USA designation during Spring into Green with a tree planting led by the Mayor, accompanied by fellow Town Council Members and youth members of the Los Gatos community.

PREPARED BY: Monica Renn
Economic Vitality Manager

Reviewed by: Interim Town Manager, Town Attorney, Parks and Public Works Director, and Finance Director

- **Los Gatos Celebrates the 4th of July** is celebrated on the 4th of July each year, at Oak Meadow Park. The event began in the early 2000's at the Civic Center and Los Gatos High School lawns, and has since evolved into celebration it is today, also known as Symphony in the Park. The event features a flag raising ceremony, Veterans recognition, and patriotic concert by the San José Wind Symphony, along with food trucks, a beer and wine garden, games, family activities, and more.
- **Screen on the Green** is an outdoor movie night typically celebrated on the third Friday in September at Oak Meadow Park. The event began in the early 2000's. Traditionally, the Mayor selects a family friendly film to be shown on a large outdoor screen. Event guests bring their own chairs, blankets, and snacks. The Town provides the movie and pre-event activities, including a Mayor's Welcome at the start of the film. Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad opens their snack shack, train, and carousel for guests to enjoy before the show. During the time of COVID-19 recovery, the Town offered multiple Screen on the Green events at both Oak Meadow Park and the Civic Center in lieu of other events as a way for the community to come together in a time when only outdoor gatherings that permitted ample social distancing were acceptable.
- **Los Gatos in Lights, a Winter Celebration**, is held the first Friday in December at Town Plaza Park. This community celebration blends the decades long tradition of lighting a tree in Town Plaza Park and Santa Claus arriving by fire truck, with the new traditions of a winter celebration that lights up the entire park, delivers snow flurries, offers live music from Fisher Middle School Students and community members, and more to kick off a festive season of celebrations in Town.

In addition to the four Town events coordinated and implemented by Town staff, the Town supports Music in the Park, two neighborhood Halloween road closures, and the Los Gatos Children's Holiday Parade with significant staffing and operational support.

DISCUSSION:

During the last few years, the events landscape has evolved. With ample services and items available online, special events have become a popular outlet for people in the community to gather in person to celebrate and connect with one another. There has been an increased interest from community members to both implement their own special events and take part in those implemented by the Town. Staff works to continuously evaluate, improve, and polish Town events to create an experience that is inviting, inclusive, welcoming, relevant, and enjoyable for community members of all ages and backgrounds.

When evaluating Town events based on experiences of the last couple of years, staff noted two key points.

1. Spring into Green is a tremendously popular event for both event guests and community partners/vendors wanting to participate with a booth. The format of the event, on a Sunday in Town Plaza Park alongside another event (Farmers Market), creates the opportunity for the stakeholder experience to feel convenient, synergetic, lively, and enriched. Staff has found that there are increasing numbers of interested booth vendors that are incredibly valuable partners doing great work for the community, although are not necessarily organizations that fit within event's goal of educating and promoting Earth Day and related sustainability initiatives. To date, staff has made space for most vendors and partners to participate in Spring into Green. The event is now at capacity with additional interest for 2025.

In 2024, Town staff expanded the programming at Spring into Green to include live performances by Mosaic America, engaging cultures collaboratively through music, dance, and storytelling. The addition was well received by the community and inspired the thoughts of staff to expand the Town event offerings to include a new fall community celebration.

2. As the years have gone by, the attendance at Screen on the Green has declined. It is estimated that less than 200 people (30 to 40 families) have attended this event in recent years. Staff believes that this is due, in part, to outdoor movies becoming more obtainable for individual families and community groups to host, and that local schools are coordinating similar fall movie nights for their individual school communities. While this remains a beloved Town event, staff believes that expanding the event into a Community Celebration focusing on celebrating the Los Gatos community, could engage a broader cross-section of the community, while still concluding with an outdoor family movie to continue the tradition.

Considering the workload to plan and implement a large-scale event and the associated budget implications, staff is requesting that the Town Council consider expanding Screen on the Green into a new Community Celebration for Fall of 2025. The event would entail partner/vendor booths and concluded with an outdoor family movie. This is being considered well in advance of the proposed event to allow ample time for planning the event including building an appropriate budget for it. Not including staff time, Screen on the Green costs the Town approximately \$2,500, whereas the proposed new event would need a budget (exclusive of staff time) of approximately \$11,000, similar to the cost of Spring into Green. It would also require an increased amount of staff time from the current levels used for Screen on the Green, including additional support from Parks and Public Works and the Police Department. Departments will collaborate to find the correct balance of department engagement and staff workload, as the level of available staff will be a factor in the structure and scope of the event.

It is important to note that fall is one of the busiest times of year for event staff as it supports several large annual community events through the event permit process while planning Town

events; thus, simply adding another Town event without a trade-off would overly intensify the workload on staff and likely not be feasible. For this reason, staff is recommending expanding the existing fall event.

CONCLUSION:

Staff is recommending that the Town Council consider expanding Screen on the Green to become a Fall Community Celebration in 2025, with a format including partner/vendor booths as well as an outdoor movie, still located at Oak Meadow Park. The new event would have a broader focus on celebrating the fabric of the Los Gatos Community including interests such as art, music, dance, culture, lifestyle, and community service organizations, as it is these interests that can often weave a group of people together and create a strong and vibrant community.

This discussion is coming before the Town Council well in advance of the prospective event as the implementation of a new event with this scope would require the special events budget for FY 2025/26 to be increased and requires a large amount of lead time to shape and coordinate the event. Staff anticipates engaging a variety of community partners, including Town Commissions and Committees to create a well-rounded, engaging and exciting new event.

Staff is requesting that Town Council decide if they wish to expand Screen on the Green to become a new annual Fall Community Celebration, beginning in 2025, with the anticipated budget of \$11,000?

ALTERNATIVES:

Staff has identified two potential alternatives for Town Council to consider:

Alternative 1. Town Council may decide to direct that no changes be made to the current annual Town events.

Alternative 2. The Town Council may direct staff to sunset the Screen on the Green event and replace it with a new Fall Community Celebration (with commensurate budget adjustments) that would more closely mimic the format of Spring into Green, taking place on a Sunday in the Fall at Town Plaza Park, alongside the Farmers Market. There would no longer be a Town outdoor movie night with this alternative option.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact will vary based on the Town Council's direction. Expanding or replacing Screen on the Green with a new Community Celebration would entail adding \$8,500 to the events budget for FY 2025/26. Whereas, directing no change to the current Town Events would have no budget implications.

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SUBJECT: Consider Changes to the Town Event Program

DATE: September 26, 2024

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.