



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 04/19/2021

ITEM NO: 15

DATE: April 14, 2022
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Discuss and Provide Direction on Community Engagement Efforts for the General Plan and Housing Element Updates.

RECOMMENDATION:

Discuss and provide direction on community engagement efforts for the General Plan and Housing Element updates.

DISCUSSION:

The Institute for Local Government (ILG), the non-profit education affiliate of the League of California Cities, has a document entitled, "What is Public Engagement and Why Do it?" available online here: <https://www.ca-ilg.org/document/what-public-engagement>. In this document, the term "Public Engagement" is defined as, "a general term we are using for a broad range of methods through which members of the public become more informed about and/or influence public decisions. Given our work to support good public involvement in California, we are especially focused on how local officials use public involvement practices to help inform residents and help guide the policy decisions and actions of local government."

In another document titled "Planning Public Engagement: Key Questions for Local Officials" (available online here: <https://www.ca-ilg.org/PublicEngagementKeyQuestions>), ILG provides a description of what should be done to achieve more inclusive engagement, including reaching out to local media, clergy and congregations, leadership and advocacy groups, and others that serve less involved populations; co-sponsoring/hosting activities with trusted local groups on their site; and providing age appropriate and language accessible materials and activities.

PREPARED BY: Jennifer Armer, AICP
Planning Manager

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, Community Development Director, and Finance Director

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DISCUSSION (continued):

At the core of the discussion of public engagement is the importance of using varied methods and reaching out to the community through established channels. Practitioners have learned that an effective public engagement program also includes flexibility and adaptability.

Effective public engagement has been a priority component of the General Plan update process from its inception and continues to be a priority for the Housing Element update process.

Outreach activities conducted throughout the General Plan update process have included: the Town's website and weekly newsletter; social media posts; online engagement activities; newsletters; two in-person community workshops; numerous in-person and online community meetings; handouts and posters at the Library; information in the email signature of Planning Division staff; a Town-wide mailer; and informational booths at the farmers market, the Library, Spring into Green, and Music in the Park.

Staff has compiled some data to illustrate the efforts that the Town has employed to reach out to the community for input during the General Plan update process:

- 110 newspaper ads published about the General Plan update;
- 433 social media posts across five platforms;
- 17,320 notice cards sent to all residents in Town for 2021 community meeting;
- 26 pop-up tables at farmers market, library, or public events;
- 7 presentations at community group meetings;
- 369 sign-ups to receive email notifications about the General Plan update;
- 538 unique searches for "Los Gatos General Plan Update" or closely related in Google; and
- 29,343 unique visitors to the Los Gatos General Plan Update website since June 2021. Of the unique visitors, 92 percent originated in the United States.

Staff expects to continue this level of outreach and engagement throughout the remainder of the General Plan and Housing Element update processes including: information on the Town's website and weekly newsletter; newspaper ads; social media posts; email notifications; notice cards sent to all residents in Town for key events; pop-up tables at farmers market, library, and public events; community workshops; presentations at community group meetings; and custom websites for the General Plan update (logatos2040.com) and Housing Element update (engagelosgatoshousing.com).

CONCLUSION:

Because of the importance of flexibility and adaptability for effective public engagement, staff looks forward to Council's discussion and direction on outreach options within our budgetary and workload constraints.