



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS  
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 12/17/2024

ITEM NO: 20

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DATE: December 12, 2024  
TO: Mayor and Town Council  
FROM: Chris Constantin, Town Manager  
SUBJECT: Discuss Options for a New Annual Town Event for Fall 2025 and Provide Direction

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Discuss options for a new annual Town event for Fall 2025 and provide direction.

**BACKGROUND:**

The Town of Los Gatos embraces the opportunity to celebrate with the community through its four annual Town events and continues to include special events and community vitality within its annual Strategic Priorities. Events that take place in Los Gatos typically fall into two categories, Town events (those coordinated and implemented by Town staff) and Community Special Events (those coordinated and implemented by a third-party community stakeholder which require Town approval through the special event permit process). The Town's events are adopted annually through the budget process and include the following:

- **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

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

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- **Los Gatos Celebrates the Fourth of July** is celebrated on the Fourth of July each year, at Oak Meadow Park. The event began in the early 2000s at the Civic Center and Los Gatos High School lawns and has since evolved into the celebration it is today, also known as Symphony in the Park. The event features a flag-raising ceremony, Veterans recognition, and a 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 2000s. 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 its 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 on 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, the Town supports Music in the Park, two neighborhood Halloween road closures, and the Los Gatos Children's Holiday Parade with funding and significant staffing and operational resources.

On October 1, 2024, the Town Council discussed the Town events, with a particular focus on Spring into Green and Screen on the Green, given the evolving landscape of events and the Community's desire to be engaged through these events. During this discussion, it was noted that Spring into Green is a tremendously popular for event guests and community partners/vendors wanting to participate with an outreach booth. The format of the event, on a Sunday in Town Plaza Park alongside the 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 the 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.

It was also discussed that Screen on the Green has seen a decline in attendance over the last several years, likely due to the availability of outdoor movies and similar events taking place frequently through schools, neighborhoods, and other community groups.

Through its discussion, the Town Council expressed a strong interest in expanding upon the current Screen on the Green format, or replacing it completely with a new community event, allowing opportunities for a variety of community stakeholders to participate in an event while refocusing Spring into Green's booth participants to the original intent of waste diversion, Earth Day, and similar sustainability efforts.

The Town Council directed staff to come back with options for a new Town event that included the following key considerations:

- Three options for a new fall event beginning in 2025, focused on celebrating the fabric of the Los Gatos Community including interests such as art, music, dance, culture, lifestyle, and community service organizations.
- Options should include the event locations of Oak Meadow Park, Plaza Park, and the Civic Center Lawn.
- The option at Oak Meadow Park should blend new event components with the traditions of Screen on the Green and include an outdoor movie, while the options for Plaza Park and the Civic Center should not include an outdoor movie.
- Options at Plaza Park should consider an event alongside the Farmers Market as well as a standalone event that takes place on a different day and time as the Farmers Market.
- Considerations should be given for each location as they relate to parking capacity and availability, pedestrian access, synergy between the event and neighboring businesses, a feeling of being a central location, and the ability for the event to evolve over time.
- The event should include a variety of engaging elements that attract a wide range of community members and be inclusive of all age groups.
- A budget should be outlined that is realistic for achieving the proposed scope of the event.

DISCUSSION:

To help organize the conversation, staff is providing general and location specific recommendations. It is important to note that events are dynamic and require flexibility from the planning stage through event completion. Especially with new events, there are often unforeseen variables and issues that arise requiring event elements to be adjusted as the planning and implementation unfolds. Given this, staff is recommending that the Town Council provide high-level direction on the location, scope, and framework for the event, giving the staff latitude to adjust the finer details as the event is planned and ensuring it meets the intended goals within the adopted budget.

### **Event Date**

For each of the event options being provided, it is recommended that the event be held the second weekend of October. Historically, Screen on the Green is held on the third Friday in September, except when the date conflicts with Rosh Hashanah or Yom Kippur. In which case, the event is moved to the second or fourth Friday of September. This date could continue to be an option should the Town Council choose to expand on the current format of Screen on the Green rather than sunseting it and creating a new event. Otherwise, the recommendation is to hold the event within the second weekend of October. Fall is a busy event time for annual community events hosted by local non-profits; thus, staff is sensitive to not recommending a weekend that is typically utilized for such recurring events. For reference, Attachment 1 provides a list of the Town and Community Events that took place in 2024.

### **General Event Elements**

The recommendation for all event options is to create a warm, inviting, and vibrant fall festival that celebrates the fabric of the Los Gatos Community including activities and entertainment focusing on games, art, music, dance, culture, and lifestyle, shared through the participation of local community and non-profit organizations. Event components will vary in an effort to create options that are attractive to many community members with a variety of interests, ultimately creating an event where the community feels welcomed and included to gather together and connect with one another.

The event will be decorated in fall colors with bales of hay as seating around a community stage and in clusters throughout the venue to encourage gatherings, conversations, and shared meals. Additionally, there will be tables with chairs, and standing/cocktail-height tables offered in various locations to appeal to a variety of comfort levels as folks gather, converse, enjoy the entertainment, and dine.

The event elements will include fall themed festival games, rented from a professional vendor; organic backyard-type lawn games scattered throughout the event as space allows; activity tables/booths where groups can provide their own custom activity; a community stage with both hired entertainment and local community groups performing music, dance, and art; food trucks; and other elements that align with the community stakeholders participating.

### **Community and Non-Profit Group Participation**

As with Spring into Green, the event will be open to community groups that are located within or serve the Los Gatos community. Groups will be able to sign up and participate free of charge and have the opportunity to offer either a game, activity, or performance on stage. The local community groups would participate by selecting one of the following three options: run a festival game booth, create an activity or game of their own in a booth, or choose to perform

on the community stage. Staff believes this model allows for the community groups to connect with the community in ways that resonate with their goals and services as they could with a traditional tabling-type event while being more engaged with event guests through an activity or performance.

Staff recommends renting fall themed festival games that some community groups may sign up to operate. For example, a service group could request to operate one of the rented games, such as a ring toss. Staff would rent, set up, and provide the supplies for the game, then the community group would have volunteers staff the game at the event. While operating it, they could have the opportunity to share their good work with the community members participating including handing out information or talking about the services they provide.

Another option for a community group to participate would be to create their own game or activity for event guests. For example, a group could provide an activity that relates to the services they provide in the community such as planting a specific vegetable, learning an artistic technique, or practicing a wellness or culture related skill. In this case, staff would provide a table or designated area that fits the selected activity, and the group would provide their own supplies and volunteers to engage with event guests.

The third option for a community group to participate would be through a performance on stage. For example, a local dance or music group could opt to select a performance slot and would be featured on the community stage. With this option, the performances would be by non-profit, community recreation, or school groups rather than by for-profit businesses.

Staff also recommends hiring two to three professional musical or dance entertainment groups to weave in between community performances.

The activities and performances would be going on simultaneously, along with the organic lawn games, food trucks, and other activities such as decorate-a-pumpkin patch and selfie or photo booth stations. Staff would organize an online program, linked by a QR code on display at the event, that highlights all of the community groups participating and links to their online resources.

### **Event Specifics by Location**

Oak Meadow Park: For this location, staff would build the event around Screen on the Green, rebranding it as a fall festival and movie night. The event would remain on a Friday evening, either the third Friday in September, or the second Friday in October. It would begin in the late afternoon (approximately 4 p.m.), with activities, games, and performances, leading up to a movie that begins at sunset (approximately 6:30 or 7 p.m.). The benefits of choosing Oak Meadow Park include the ability to expand upon and enhance a known Town event. This park is central to the Town limits and is large enough to support a growing event each year. The Town

would continue to partner with Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad for train and carousel rides, and their snack shack as one of the dining options. Additionally, there are some bathroom facilities located on-site, although porta-potties would be necessary to support the crowd size as is done for the Fourth of July event.

There are some challenges that should be considered for Oak Meadow Park, including a lack of sufficient on-site parking for a large crowd. For the Fourth of July, the Town has an agreement to use a nearby commercial lot where the office it supports is closed on holidays to help alleviate parking congestion, however on a business day such a Friday, this is likely not an option. Staff explored the option of a shuttle service that could be added to the event to move folks from off-site parking locations to the park; however, the Town would need to identify and staff locations with ample off-site parking and provide logistics for safe shuttle queuing, loading, and unloading. Another consideration is the need to bring in lighting for the event given the park typically closes at sunset and is not equipped with lighting sufficient for large evening events. Finally, the Town Council may want to consider that a community event that begins in the afternoon on a weekday may pose a challenge for many community members to attend.

Plaza Park, with Farmers Market: The location and popularity of Plaza Park lends itself to being a natural option for the fall festival. It is staff's recommendation that if Plaza Park is the choice of the Town Council that the event be a stand-alone event, not taking place in tandem with the Farmers Market. While this partnership provides for a boost in exposure and event guests, it limits the amount of available space for the event to take place and grow. Also, it may be difficult to give this event a distinct personality that is not confused with Spring into Green. That said, should the Town Council choose to have an event that is smaller in scope and budget, implementing it on a Sunday with the Farmers Market would be a good option. With this format, participation would be limited for community groups hosting games/booths, while the community stage could function as described previously in this report. The portion of Main Street between N. Santa Cruz Avenue and University Avenue would need to be closed as it is with Spring into Green to provide enough space for the activities. This road closure would require an increase in staff resources to implement and monitor.

Plaza Park, without Farmers Market: When considering the event in Plaza Park without the Farmers Market, staff is recommending it be held on Saturday, October 10, either as a daytime or evening event, with the main consideration on time of day being the budget for lighting during an evening event. In this proposed format, staff recommends closing Montebello Way and Broadway Avenue, between Main Street and S. Santa Cruz Avenue as the area to support the game and activity booths, a few lawn type games, and some casual seating. With the anticipated bollard project on Montebello Way and Broadway Avenue in process, closing these roads would require much less staff resources than closing portions of Main Street.

The lawn of the park would host the community stage with hay bales and table options for seating. Additional lawn games and activities could be scattered at the park to allow for a variety of gathering opportunities.

This location would be a great fit for a fall festival in this format for several reasons. The space can be arranged to feel cozy and accessible while allowing enough space to rearrange activities as the event evolves over time. Staff has experience with staging and lighting this space for evening events (Winter Celebration) should the Town Council opt for an evening event, as well as setting up the space for a fun, lively, and successful daytime event to maximize shaded areas for guests. Often October weekends can be warm in Los Gatos and the park has tree shade that could be augmented with umbrellas or a canopy depending on the weather for the year. This would be an element of the event that would remain fluid and be adapted as the weather forecast more predictable. Additionally, through previous conversations with the Town Council regarding the Town's Facility Use Policy, the Town Council articulated that Plaza Park, including Montebello Way and Broadway Avenue, was a highly desirable location for community events and wanted to continue to support events in this location, thus directed staff to pursue a bollard project here that allows for a safe and efficient way to close the street for events.

Parking is available throughout downtown with ample public parking, the park is accessible by pedestrians and bikes, and it is embedded in the heart of downtown allowing for event guests to also enjoy the nearby businesses and community amenities surrounding the park. This location would require porta-potties to support the crowd size. One aspect to consider is that two other annual Town events already take place in this location, thus selecting Oak Meadow Park or the Civic Center may be more appealing to the Town Council should they have the desire to spread out the Town event locations.

Civic Center Lawn: The final location for consideration is the Civic Center Lawn. While no Town events are currently scheduled here annually, it is the location of Music in the Park on Sundays in July and August, and two large scale multi-day community events (Fiesta de Artes and Oktoberfest) annually in September. The lawn at the Civic Center provides an expansive amount of space to spread out for an event and would be able to support future growth and event evolution. While not quite as accessible to the large public parking lots near Plaza Park, the Civic Center is still accessible to ample public parking within walking distance and supports both pedestrian and bike access. Parking in the front of the Civic Center and Library parking lot would be closed during the event to support space for food trucks, restrooms, and other event elements. Staff recommends that if the Civic Center is selected, no road closures take place for the event. For nearly twenty years, the Civic Center was the location of the annual Fourth of July event, until being moved to Oak Meadow Park about ten years ago. While at this location, the event worked and was well attended by the community. Staff has experience with implementing events here and feel confident that the fall festival could work well in this location, should it be the desire of the Town Council. That said, staff would recommend keeping the event during the day to allow for pedestrians at the event to be more visible to drivers on

Main Street, and to eliminate headlights of passing cars interfering with performances and activities.

### **Budget**

The events budget currently supports the Town events, Music in the Park, and the Halloween and Holiday parade road closures. Of the total budget, \$45,000 is expended to implement the four Town events. Each year, the exact amount for each event varies by a small percentage depending on the event needs for the specific year; however, staff remains committed to keeping the total expenditures for the Town events within budget. The approximate hard-cost breakdown for each event, exclusive of staff time, is as follows: Spring into Green \$8,000; Fourth of July \$25,000; Screen on the Green \$2,500; and Winter Celebration \$9,500

As staff secured estimates for the components presented within this report for a fall festival, it estimates that a budget of \$17,000 will be necessary to fully implement the fall festival as a standalone event, without an outdoor movie, evening lighting, or a parking shuttle service. Evening lighting will increase the budget \$2,000 - \$4,000 depending on how large of an area must be lit and the availability of electricity versus the need to rent generators. A shuttle service would be approximately \$1,000 per shuttle for the event. To rent an outdoor film and movie screen, an additional \$1,500 would be necessary (this is less than the budget for Screen on the Green, because the professional audio services are included in the original fall festival estimate).

However, if the Town Council would like to implement a new event that is smaller and more in-line with the scope of Spring into Green, the event could be implemented alongside the Farmers Market with limited community group participation. In this case, staff estimates that a budget of \$11,000 would be sufficient.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Staff recommends the Town Council discuss the fall festival event options including event elements, locations, scope, and budget, then provide staff with direction to move forward with planning the event for Fall of 2025. The Town Council may wish to use the following points to guide the discussion:

- Does the Town Council wish to incorporate a new fall festival into the Town's annual events beginning in 2025?

If so,

- Would the Town Council prefer to expand upon the existing Screen on the Green event, or sunset Screen on the Green to incorporate a new fall festival?
- What is the desired location of the event?
- Does the Town Council have a preference on time of day, i.e. daytime event versus evening event?



SUBJECT: Provide Direction on a New Annual Town Event

DATE: December 17, 2024

- On a high-level, which components would the Town Council like to see included in the event? Are there any that specifically should not be included?
- Considering the components desired by the Town Council and the estimated budget provided in this report, what is the budget for this event?

ALTERNATIVES:

Town Council may decide to not direct the implementation of an expanded Screen on the Green, or new fall festival, but rather direct that no changes be made to Screen on the Green.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The fiscal impact will vary based on the Town Council's direction, with a new event ranging from \$11,000 to \$25,000, dependent upon the scope of the event. It is important to note that this budget estimate accounts for hard costs of the event only, including rental items, vendor support, and entertainment. It does not account for the staff time required to implement the event. The scope of the event including road closures, event staffing, and other logistics will play a role in the amount of staff time necessary to support the event from planning through implementation. Whereas, directing no change to the current annual Town events would have no budget implications.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

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

ATTACHMENTS:

1. List of 2024 Town and Community Special Events