

Adhoc Communications Subcommittee:
Consolidation of Communications

The function of the DEI Commission shall be:

- To serve in an advisory capacity to the Town Council regarding matters pertaining to increasing cooperation, understanding, and dialog among residents of diverse cultural, religious, socio-economic, racial, and ethnic backgrounds
- To promote inclusion, equitable opportunities and a sense of belonging within many diverse institutions and events, for people who live, work, go to school, participate in a faith community or visit.
- To help eliminate racial inequities, improve outcomes for all groups, and promote the benefits and enrichment that can be enjoyed by an inclusive town.
- To help drive the implementation of strategies and policies that realize the vision of a diverse, equitable, inclusive and welcoming culture in Los Gatos
- To derive the strategies and policies from collective processes that engage many different organizations, clubs and sub-communities throughout Los Gatos
- Create opportunities for diverse communities to facilitate learning and mutual engagement, particularly lifting up underrepresented members of the community.

Why was the Commission created?

Like many towns across the United States, Los Gatos has a history of systemic inequities, the effects and existence of which we continue to see today. We continue to grapple with the historic origins of the Town's racial segregation, and how certain laws, policies, and behaviors have shaped the composition and nature of the Town. Los Gatos is identified as among the ten most racially segregated communities in the Bay Area. Following the country's racial reckoning in the Summer of 2020, to confront its past and present, it was clear the Town needed to intensify its own efforts to look within and address its current conditions and practices, as well as developing of actions to advance organizational culture, equity, inclusion and a sense of belonging.

While this history is known to some but not all, the need to take local, concrete action came to a head in the fall of 2021, when multiple, overt instances of discrimination brought the town government to a standstill, and the LGPD was handling frequent attacks on minority communities. Racial and homophobic attacks were directed at the mayor of the Town, anti-Semitic graffiti was painted on the JCC and on sidewalks, and racist and homophobic incidents were reported in the local schools.

Diverse programs were initiated to begin to repair and create a welcoming environment. Over 30 Town partners joined together for the Los Gatos United Against Hate Walk on

November 14, 2021, with over 2,000 individuals walking with signs expressing unity. In 2022, the Council adopted the 2040 General Plan which included a new Racial, Social, and Environmental Justice Element. The Library joined the effort with a number of programs, such as the A to Z World Food food culture database, programming on affordable housing and the intersection of environmental sustainability and equity, and with the Represent Los Gatos Oral History Project to fill the gaps in the Local History Room's stories of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. Parks and Public Works developed, with the help of the Arts and Culture Commission, utility box artwork that integrates DEI values.

Most extensively, the Town engaged in a year of work guided by American Leadership Forum Silicon Valley Insights from 2021-2022, which resulted in a set of recommendations that would integrate and grow these separate DEI initiatives. In responding to those recommendations, the Town Council sought an advisory body to guide in accomplishing the goals of integrating and growing these initiatives.

The Town Council and many of the Town's residents believe in the benefits and importance of creating a more diverse and welcoming community. We are focused on engaging with community members, and understanding what the Town must do to overcome such problems and to prepare the Town for a more diversified future. We believe that a more welcoming and inclusive environment lifts up the entire community, benefits all of its members and makes the Town of Los Gatos better.

The Work Plan to Achieve These Goals (speaks for itself):

The Commission adopted aspects of Goals A, B, C and D as defined by the Town Council for the DEI Commission. These are summarized as:

Goal A, 1a: Review the Community Grants Rubric through an equity lens

Goal B, 1a: Review the 4 Town Events with an equity lens

3a: Develop a community learning opportunity that explores historical inequities and the history of Los Gatos.

Goal C, 1a: Collaborate with community groups on equity activities

2a: Work with school and youth leadership to plan joint initiatives with community partners and the Town on equity issues.

Goal D, 1a: Develop a yearly communications campaign, eg signage, arts, etc. to promote equity ideas.

FAQs

Why does Los Gatos Need Affordable Housing?

From the CalMatters website, just more than half of the state's households own their homes — the third lowest rate in the country and the lowest rate within the state since World War II. And those homeowners skew significantly white. White Californians are twice as likely as Black Californians to own their home, according to 2019 Census data. The racial gap in homeownership has widened over the years, which also means Black Californians are less likely to build wealth over time.

De jure racism attitudes continue to create segregated communities, and thus California has legislated intentional efforts to change the situation by requiring the development of affordable housing. In PolicyLink's Bay Area Equity Atlas (see <https://bayareaequityatlas.org/mapping-segregation>), Los Gatos is listed as one of the 20 Most Segregated Neighborhoods of White Wealth. Segregation (re)produces social inequality, as residents in neighborhoods of concentrated wealth experience compounded advantage and those in concentrated poverty experience heightened disadvantage. To remedy the enduring legacy of segregation and create a region where all can participate and prosper, we must address restrictive land use policies that allow exclusionary neighborhoods to remain disproportionately rich and white. Communities can be enriched when essential workers in the community, especially those involved in supporting a community's infrastructure in schools, public services, law enforcement and other emergency services, first responders, healthcare services, restaurants and grocery stores, also live where they work.

Why are there restrictive covenants?

Restrictive covenants are limitations put in title deeds that restrict the use or sale of property by owners of the property. For example, in some areas of the Town of Los Gatos, homes can only be single story buildings. Historically, some landowners wanted to "preserve" the character of the neighborhood by inserting discriminatory covenants that prohibited selling the property to non-white buyers.

These restrictions date back to a 1926 Supreme Court case, *Corrigan v. Buckley*, which ruled that the racially-restrictive covenant of multiple residences in Washington DC was a legally-binding document that made the selling of a house to a black family a void contract. Soon after this ruling, racially restrictive covenants flourished around the

country. This racism was also supported by the FHA which lowered the risk estimates for properties with restrictive deed language. The FHA even demanded that developers who received construction loans include racially restrictive covenants in the whole subdivision's property deeds.

These covenants are illegal under state and federal fair housing laws and are unenforceable, but they are reminders of the Town's racist past. Property owners can have these covenants redacted from their title documents under procedures provided by state law.

Why do we need to talk about uncomfortable events in the Town's history that we are not proud of?

We are not separate from our past, it is crucial to understand current events in light of their history. We believe the adage spoken by Martin Luther King, Jr - "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice". If we understand our past and the challenges still facing our community, we can all be inspired to be part of the solutions.

There is still a lot to uncover regarding the historic origins of the Town's segregated status, and the challenge for the Commission will be how to uncover that history. Some general explanation can be found in the Town's housing element regarding the origin of housing and other discrimination statewide. While the Town Library maintains a "collection of historically valuable documents that help tell the story of the Town of Los Gatos," the library acknowledges the lack of historical information of BIPOC members of the community. To help develop a more complete history of Los Gatos, the library has initiated the Represent Los Gatos Oral History Project, and has posted online a handful of digital recordings of interviews with former and current members of the Los Gatos community. The DEI Commission should become more familiar with the program and could find ways to assist the Town Library in these efforts.

Without a firm grasp of the incidents of racism and discrimination in the Town's history and actions to grapple with these incidents, we continue to see recent examples of hate speech that remind us of the need to improve the climate of belonging. For example, in December 2023, Superintendent Sanderson wrote to the Los Gatos High School community: We are disappointed to share that this morning, graffiti containing racist slurs were found on the marquee at Los Gatos High School, as well as at neighboring businesses and community organizations on Main Street. On March 6, 2024, Saratoga High School Administration received a WeTip message that a student was imitating soldiers from Nazi Germany with actions and hate speech during class. The incident was investigated and school staff are working directly with the student and their family

on discipline and consequences. And, on May 25, 2024, while we cannot confirm if the youth involved were students of schools in Los Gatos, these youth came honking and blowing horns from the streets and from the steps leading into the building during a community event celebrating Africa Day for all in Los Gatos. The perpetrators tried everything to get into the main building to shut down the celebrations and asked when Africa Day will be over but participants and supporters of all hues at the event prevented them from doing so.

How can we make sure covenants and other exclusionary items don't happen again?

- Communication, Building awareness and OneCommunity mindset
- Formation of DEI commission should help
- Attitude of openness and speaking up - getting comfortable with openness.

How can the Town celebrate its diversity?

- From the DEIC perspective, executing on the work plan we've already agreed upon.
 - Acknowledging and organizing (where possible) diverse festivals from different ethnic backgrounds.
 - Highlighting/celebrating/promoting businesses owned by people from different backgrounds
 - Publishing diversity related 'positive' stats in the town - age, ethnicity, businesses etc - celebrate success and efforts of all the players who are making the difference.
 - Work with local schools and students directly on DEI initiatives and importance. eg . Fisher Middle has a DEI club. Unaware if LGHS, SHS have one.. Explore!

To celebrate the diversity of Los Gatos, it would be helpful to have the specific demographic information on which the HCD Draft Revised 2023-2031 Housing Element Figures 10-6 through 10-10 are based and be able to identify increases in the diversity of not only Town residents but also people working in the Town and visitors to the Town. Are there creative ways in obtaining this data outside of census data?

Questions to Pose When We Speak with Local Groups and Underrepresented Members of our Community

- Do you have concerns about the issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Town of Los Gatos? What are you most hopeful for relative to these concerns?
- Do you see opportunities for the Town to do more to promote and ensure diversity, equity, and inclusion?

- What type of support could the Town and the DEI Commission provide to create a more inclusive community?