



TOWN OF LOS GATOS
DEI COMMISSION REPORT

MEETING DATE: 05/09/2024

ITEM NO: 3

DATE: May 3, 2024
TO: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission
FROM: Monica Renn, Economic Vitality Manager
SUBJECT: Begin Discussion of the Four Annual Town Events (Goal B., Item 1.a.).

RECOMMENDATION:

Begin Discussion of the Four Annual Town Events (Goal B., Item 1.a.).

BACKGROUND:

Two types of events take place in the Town of Los Gatos: (1) Town events, those funded and implemented by the Town; and (2) community events, those funded and implemented by non-profits, businesses, community groups, and other community and neighborhood stakeholders, requiring an approved permit from the Town of Los Gatos to plan and implement.

The Town events consist of four annual events, including Spring Into Green, 4th of July Symphony in the Park, Screen on the Green, and the Winter Celebration. These events are fully funded within the Town's annual Operating Budget, implemented by Town staff, and offered free of charge to the community. While these events have been in place for years, each has evolved to meet the needs of the community.

Town staff continuously evaluates event components to ensure the events remain fresh, relevant, inclusive, and welcoming. During the COVID-19 pandemic, events were suspended for a period of time to maintain health mandates and community comfort levels. When events were able to be planned again, the Los Gatos community enthusiastically welcomed the opportunities to gather and celebrate with one another. This break also created an opportunity for rethinking the programming of the Town events to create more engaging, inclusive, and welcoming events.

PREPARED BY: Monica Renn
Economic Vitality Manager

DISCUSSION:

As the DEI Commission begins its work on the elements adopted in the Commission's workplan, staff looks forward to discussing the Town's events with the Commission, and identifying further opportunities to incorporate diversity, equity, and inclusion. Below is a high-level glimpse at each of the four Town events, examples of programming included recently or planned for this year, and opportunities for the Commission to engage with the community at the events.

Spring Into Green

Each April the Town celebrates Keep Los Gatos Beautiful Month, in honor of Earth Day, Arbor Day, and the Town's designation as a Tree City USA. This event creates an opportunity to convene community stakeholders with a shared goal of creating a cleaner, healthier, and more sustainable community. Keep Los Gatos Beautiful Month began in the early 2000s as a newsletter and community-wide garage sale. Around 2015, Spring Into Green was created as a way to bring Keep Los Gatos Beautiful Month to life, and invite the community to celebrate together. The event has evolved over time; however, the root celebration of community, sustainability, Earth Day, and Arbor Day remain as the focus. Currently, the Town hosts its annual Spring Into Green event on the Sunday closest to Earth Day at Plaza Park, alongside the Town's weekly Farmers' Market. The blend of the two events has been successful in engaging visitors and residents in community sustainability initiatives and engaging earth-friendly activities, while showcasing the robust offerings of the Farmers' Market.

This event typically features dozens of sustainability and community focused non-profit groups, set up at booths, sharing their services and initiatives with the community. While each year is slightly different, typical event elements include activities such as live music, flower crowns, a photo booth, tree planting, bike rodeo, bike valet, and other community focused activities.

The 2024 event welcomed over 30 local non-profits, committees, Town Commissions, and community stakeholder booths offering information and activities to community members; Mosaic America, a local non-profit storytelling through live music and dance that spans generations and cultures; Trike-a-pose mobile tricycle photo booth; a bike valet with obstacle course; flower crown making; annual Arbor Day tree planting with preschool-aged youth; a Mayor's welcome; poetry reading by the Town's Poet Laureate; and more. The DEI Commission had a booth and a separate agenda item provides an opportunity for the Commission to debrief its participation at the event.

DISCUSSION (continued):

Symphony in the Park

Symphony in the Park, formerly known as Los Gatos Celebrates the 4th of July, is the Town's Annual 4th of July event, held on July 4 each year. When this event began in the early 2000s, it was hosted at the Civic Center and Los Gatos High School, with the High School band being heavily involved in the set up and organization of the San Jose Wind Symphony, and Music in the Park kicking off its summer concert series as a part of the event.

Through the years, the High School opted out of the programming, and Music in the Park shifted its program model leaving a need to refresh the event. What has remained clear through the years is the community's love for the San Jose Wind Symphony concert, traditional flag raising ceremony by a Los Gatos Scout Troop, and Yellow Ribbon Ceremony coordinated with Operation Yellow Ribbon and the Los Gatos Veterans Memorial and Support Foundation, honoring community veterans and those who have perished in the line of duty.

Now hosted at Oak Meadow Park, the event has been rebranded as Symphony in the Park, featuring the traditional San Jose Wind Symphony Concert with the flag raising and Yellow Ribbon Ceremonies; food trucks; a beer and wine garden hosted by community service organizations; children's activities such as crafts, bounce houses, magicians, and face painting; a partnership with Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad for train rides, carousel rides, and snack bar treats; a bike valet, and more.

Staff has begun planning the 2024 event and looks forward to bringing back the traditional San Jose Wind Symphony concert with flag raising and Yellow Ribbon honors, refreshed children's activities, more robust food options to meet broader range of dietary preferences, and more. Staff would welcome the DEI Commission to join this event with a craft or activity booth to be included with the children's activities, or similar community engagement activity.

Screen on the Green

This annual family movie night at Oak Meadow Park is a family-fun tradition offering an outdoor movie with treats and activities on a Friday evening in September. The event is typically held on the fourth Friday of September, except when in conflict with Rosh Hashanah, in which case the event date shifts. It is the tradition that the Mayor selects a family-friendly movie to be featured, and activities within the theme of the movie are added to enhance the guest experience. Staff also coordinates with Billy Jones Wildcat Railroad for train and carousel rides. The most recent featured films have included *Mario Brothers*, *Encanto*, and *Soul*. Opportunity also exists for the DEI Commission to join the activities at this event.

DISCUSSION (continued):

Winter Celebration

The Town's Winter Celebration was reimagined for 2023 with great success. Formerly known as the Holiday Tree Lighting, this Town event now focuses on a winter kick-off celebration with exciting family-friendly activities including a snow machine, light show, various photo opportunities, story walk, and Fisher Middle School musical and choir groups while continuing to embrace the traditions that many Los Gatos community members have loved for generations such as a visit from Santa Claus arriving by an antique fire truck, and a countdown to lighting up the holiday tree in Plaza Park.

The formerly branded Tree Lighting event began decades ago and used to be hosted by the Los Gatos Community Foundation. As available resources shifted for the Foundation, the Town stepped in to support the event, eventually taking it on about ten years ago. Since returning from the COVID pandemic, staff began reshaping the event with a full rebrand taking place in 2023. At the event, staff placed several signs in and around Plaza Park wishing community members "Happy Holidays" in various languages. Staff would embrace the opportunity to engage with the DEI Commission on this component moving forward, to be more inclusive of languages spoken in the Los Gatos community.

Community (Non-Town) Events

The Town of Los Gatos embraces the community's enthusiasm for events and has created a streamlined permit process, with dedicated staff support, to assist event coordinators with smoothly implementing successful events in Los Gatos. The Town recognizes that our community is diverse in the traditions, cultures, and holidays celebrated, thus continues to prioritize: a streamlined process; community vitality which encompasses special events; and a special event permit subsidy through the annual Operating Budget for non-profit event organizers. Through these efforts, community members and event organizers are able to produce events and celebrations with cultural significance and inclusivity. The Town regards these community event organizers as the subject matter experts for such celebrations. In 2023, Town staff processed and supported twenty-three special event permits and is on track to support a similar number for 2024.

CONCLUSION:

Staff looks forward to the Commission's discussion.