

From: Jim Foley

Sent: Friday, April 16, 2021 11:50 AM

To: Council <Council@losgatosca.gov>

Cc: Clerk <Clerk@losgatosca.gov>; Catherine Somers; Andrea Romano; Sue Farwell; Joe Pirzynski; Brian Bernasconi; Kevin Youkilis

Subject: Funding for Parklet Program and ARPA funds

Dear Honorable Mayor and Esteemed Council Members,

We would like to request you reconsider the proposal made by the Chamber of Commerce at the April 6th Town Council Meeting. We have made a few adjustments and clarifications to the request. Needless to say, there was a lot happening that night, so the Chamber would like to propose that at the Town Council Meeting next Tuesday night, April 20, when discussing the Parklet Program, you reconsider our requests that may not have gotten enough attention or discussion that evening.

As we understand the funding parameters, we fully support that you decided to use a portion of the ARPA funds to balance the 2020-21 budget in the estimated amount of \$3.2 million and to waive the rent for NUMU and the Los Gatos Saratoga Recreation Center and to mitigate some of the financial challenges facing a few of your non-profit partners. But even after you have fulfilled those identified needs, there are still additional funds to invest more into the recovery efforts we have outlined.

We want to modify our request to fund the parklet program from the remaining balance of the Town of Los Gatos Recovery fund that was allocated last year from the streetscape fund. In recent conversations it has become clear that a streetscape masterplan is 7-10 years away. The downtown could not handle a project such as that at this time anyway since the businesses need to recover over the next 12-24 months before any further major disruption. There is still in the neighborhood of \$1.5MM in the fund that we suggest using for the grant structure for parklets described below. The money from the fund that was previously spent on temporary parklets and emergency recovery efforts was the one of the best uses of money ever seen in this Town. In fact, that investment saved our Town as we navigated our way through this global pandemic. Since this money was originally intended for downtown improvements and streetscape, reallocating it to be used for parklets that will enhance the downtown is logical.

All of the businesses in the downtown agree that the parklets have revitalized downtown and draw visitors that spend money at all of the businesses, not just the restaurants that are operating them. We cannot afford to make a mistake here or waste any valuable time, this is the fastest way to get a vibrant new streetscape downtown that will benefit Los Gatos as a whole.

Our revised proposal:

1. **Invest** in the construction of parklets on No. Santa Cruz Ave. and Main Street in the downtown core of Los Gatos. Subsidize 75% of construction costs for each participating restaurant, up to a maximum of \$40K.
2. **Provide** the \$2500 allowances to each business with a temporary parklet that complied early on with the Town's ADA requirements during Covid and made the Town safe and accessible for all.

3. **Confirm** the grants for the semi-permanent parklets will be retroactive, to include the pioneers of the program that spent private money on the original five parklets. This laid the groundwork for the program and paved the way for everyone else to embrace the opportunity.
4. **Set aside** funding for additional outdoor dining improvements for restaurants that are unable to participate in the semi-permanent parklet program for various reasons (physical constraint, landlord cooperation, etc).

This proposal is fairly simple and will scale better than any other investment you can make at this time. The success, and frankly the broad introduction of outdoor dining in Los Gatos was the silver lining of the COVID- 19 crisis.

By investing the 75% per parklet, the Town gets:

1. **Buy in** and enthusiasm from the restaurants and the community. Without this investment, the restaurants will not be able to pull this off due to the fact that they are still just getting back on their feet financially.
2. **“Skin in the Game.”** The Restaurant owners will still have to come up with a portion of the investment, indicating their commitment to making it a success. They also have the burden of furnishing and maintaining the parklet above and beyond the hard costs being discussed.
3. With the assistance of the Chamber of Commerce, **we get these projects done efficiently and by the end of this year.** We may be able to get a lot of it done in the next few months since the restaurants will work with private contractors, and potentially the contractors that have already built parklets.
4. **The Town already has streamlined the architectural, engineering, and permitting process so this program is on the shelf and ready to go.** This maintains consistency for a first class look downtown as opposed to the existing cornucopia of designs. Alternatively, the businesses will implore you to keep the controversial and not attractive k-rails and tents in place for another 18-24 months as they recover.

When the time comes in five to seven years, the Town will be ready to fully “reimagine” the streetscape and do it the way it was meant to be done. We cannot afford to do that now for the reasons stated above. At some point though, we will have to embark on that major project. With the Town investment in the parklets between now and then, there is a greater partnership that is advantageous when it comes to repairs, utility issues beneath the parklets, and ultimately how the streetscape master plan unfolds.

Other proposed uses for the ARPA funds:

1. **Events.** We have to organize a few top tier events this summer and next fall. Please help us in this endeavor. The Chamber is offering up staff to help with facilitation. The Chamber will also solicit sponsorships to help offset Town’s investment. The Chamber has weathered the pandemic storm, but does not have the money to invest what is necessary into the events that need to happen. See special event permits for Thursday Promenades – with a No. Santa Cruz Ave street closure, music and security, etc. Also, see proposal for Picnic in the Parks “Celebrate Home”. Please consider some of our DEI projects and an investment into cultural celebrations and street art of all kinds to make for a more welcoming and inclusive community. And last, but not at all least, our Los Gatos in Lights was a huge success last year

despite the shelter in place order. Let's celebrate those lights in 2021. The Chamber has rough budgets to share for all of these efforts.

2. **Needs outside of downtown.** While downtown is a major draw for Los Gatos and its identity as a whole, and all areas of the Town benefit from the commerce driven by the visitors attracted by downtown, there are other needs for other areas of Town. We are working to identify what those may be and agree that some funds should be set aside for consistent messaging, improvements, beautification, signage, etc. that unifies the entire Town. We support any other specific requests coming from areas outside of downtown that support the overall unified recovery efforts.

We appreciate you taking the time to reconsider our requests.

Jim Foley
Director/Chair
Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce Board/Subcommittee on Legislative Affairs & Economic Vitality

CC:
Catherine Somers
Andrea Romano
Sue Farwell
Joe Pirzynski
Brian Bernasconi
Kevin Youkilis

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Principal

**Pennant
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