



TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT

MEETING DATE: 02/13/2025

ITEM NO: 2

DATE: February 7, 2025
TO: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission
FROM: Monica Renn, Economic Vitality Manager
SUBJECT: Receive a Report on Framework and Options for the Town's Proposed Fall Festival Event and Provide Comments for Town Council's Consideration (related to DEI Plan Goal B., Item 1.a.).

RECOMMENDATION:

Receive a report on framework and options for the Town's proposed Fall Festival event and provide comments for Town Council's consideration (related to DEI Plan Goal B., Item 1.a.).

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 of Los Gatos welcomes community stakeholders to coordinate community events on a first come, first served basis in compliance with the Town Code and Special Event Permit process, and subsidizes permit and park use fees for non-profit event organizers to provide the opportunity for community special events to take place more frequently, be implemented by a variety of organizations, and celebrate the diverse interests of the Los Gatos community.

The Town's events are adopted annually through the budget process and include the following:

- **Spring into Green**, 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.
- **Los Gatos Celebrates the 4th of July**, celebrated on the 4th of July at Oak Meadow Park. The event began in the early 2000s and has since evolved into the celebration it is today, also known as Symphony in the Park, featuring a flag raising ceremony, Veterans

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recognition, and 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**, an outdoor movie night typically celebrated on the third Friday in September at Oak Meadow Park. The event began in the early 2000s and features a family-friendly film selected by the Mayor and shown on a large outdoor screen.
- **Los Gatos in Lights, a Winter Celebration**, is held 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, live music 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, and December 17, 2024, the Town Council met to receive reports on the Town's annual events and consider options for a new fall event to either expand upon or replace Screen on the Green.

On October 1, 2024, the Town Council discussed the Town's special events, with a particular focus on Spring into Green and Screen on the Green. 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.

During its discussion, the Town Council expressed a strong interest in considering a reimagined fall event that allows opportunities for a variety of community stakeholders to participate so that Spring into Green's booth participants may be refocused to the original intent of waste diversion, Earth Day, and similar sustainability efforts. The Town Council directed staff to come

back with a menu of options for a new Town event focused on celebrating the fabric of the Los Gatos Community including interests such as art, music, dance, culture, lifestyle, and community service organizations.

On December 17, 2024, staff returned to the Town Council with a discussion focused on framework for the event and how it could be implemented at either Oak Meadow Park, the Civic Center Lawn, or Plaza Park. During this discussion, the Town Council agreed that a daytime event at Plaza Park appeared to be the best fit and was supportive of the elements and structure of the event as presented by staff.

The Town Council then directed staff to return with details including hard costs, staffing resources, and road closure considerations for the event at Town Plaza Park, specifically requesting that one option be similar to Spring into Green, taking place on a Sunday, alongside Farmers' Market, and the second option should consider a standalone event on a Saturday. The Town Council also requested that staff seek input from the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Commission on the considerations for the new Fall event.

DISCUSSION:

Staff is seeking input from the DEI Commission on the elements of the proposed event outlined within this report. Following this discussion, staff will finalize a staff report for the Town Council to consider and provide additional direction. While the event would be adopted within the FY 2025/26 budget, planning for the event would need to commence by early spring. Given the dynamic nature of events, staff is seeking high-level Commission input and recommendations, as many of the event details will need to unfold as the event comes together.

General Event Elements

The recommendation 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 non-profit community organizations. Event components will vary to create options that are attractive to a variety of community members, ultimately creating an event where guests feel welcomed and included.

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, fashion, and art; food booths or trucks; and other elements that align with the community stakeholders participating.

Community and Non-Profit Group Participations

As with Spring into Green, the event will be open to non-profit community groups that are located within or serve the Los Gatos community. Groups will be able to sign up and participate free of charge to offer either a game, activity, or performance on stage. There would be a limited number of each option to ensure the event is balanced and offers a variety of entertainment and activity for the community.

The local non-profit community groups would participate by selecting one of the following three options:

1. Run a festival game booth - The Town will provide a set number of rented carnival/festival style games where the community group would staff the game and while guests are playing, they will have the opportunity to share their organization's services; or
2. Create an activity or game of their own in a booth - The Town will provide a pop-up tent and table where community organizations can provide their own activity such as a cooking demonstration, art project, skill, craft, or similar activity that is related to, or creates interest around their organization's services; or
3. Choose to perform on the community stage - Organizations would be given a short performance window where they will be featured on the stage. Performances could include music, dance, fashion, storytelling, etc., related to the organization's mission or services. The event would also feature two to three professional dance or music groups performing in between the community performances.

The activities and performances would be occurring simultaneously, and the event would include an online program, linked by a QR code posted throughout the event, that highlights all of the community groups participating and connects to their online sources. Staff believes this model facilitates community connection and celebration and fosters a welcoming environment that allows for non-profit groups to share their resources in new ways.

Event Date & Location

Located in and around Plaza Park, the targeted date for the event in 2025 is Saturday, October 11 as a standalone event, or Sunday, October 12 alongside the Farmers Market, and the second weekend of October moving forward, unless there is a conflict with a holiday. Staff recommends this particular weekend as it is typically not one in which a community organization implements an annual community special event in Los Gatos. Fall is a particularly busy time for community special events in Town. For September and October of 2025, Town staff has already received four large scale special event applications and anticipates at least two more will be filed, in addition to this proposed Fall Town event.

Staff is considering concerns with the workload and impacts of adding this event during the busiest event time of year and will provide these concerns as part of the discussion with the Town Council.

As staff has been focused on developing a timeline and budget for the event in both formats (standalone event and alongside the Farmers' Market), it has become apparent that the major difference is layout and space; and may ultimately come down to the Town Council's preference and staffing resources. The budget between the two formats is relatively the same given that the Town Council directed staff to provide options other than a "tabling event." This set the stage for the framework developed by staff for non-profits to select a game, booth, or performance to host. Such a format requires a larger investment for event supplies and logistics. Town resources, including budget and staffing, needed to successfully implement the proposed event in either format is still be considered and compiled by staff. This information will be provided to the Town Council when it further considers the options.

The standalone event format would utilize Plaza Park and close Montebello Way and Broadway, from Main Street to South Santa Cruz Avenue. Using this entire area would allow for the event to be more spread out, feature a greater number of seating clusters and organic lawn games, include food trucks, and ultimately be able to grow should the event evolve over time. It may take a couple of years to shape the event and gain community interest to have event guests fill the area and would require a more robust marketing campaign to educate and promote the event, versus holding the event during the Farmers' Market in a format that has been more established.

The event format that is alongside Farmers' Market on Sunday would be laid out similarly to Spring into Green, utilizing Plaza Park and a portion of Main Street, while the Farmers' Market remains in its location on Montebello Way, Broadway, and South Santa Cruz. This would still use the format of combining games, booths, and a community stage, and require the Town to close Main Street between University Avenue and N. Santa Cruz Avenue, as is done during Spring into Green.

Differences with the event in this format would include: a smaller footprint for the Town's portion of the event that may both create a cozier atmosphere and limit availability for future event expansion; a potentially limited number of non-profit community groups able to participate; smaller sections of seating and gathering spots; and utilizing the existing food vendors from Farmers' Market as the food and beverage options. Given that this is a brand-new event, this format may be a great option to begin with as it leverages the community already visiting Farmers' Market and introduces them to the breadth of services offered by the Town's non-profit community organizations. It may make sense to launch the event in this format, then if capacity is reached in the upcoming years, reconsider moving the event to a standalone format.

CONCLUSION:

Staff is seeking the DEI Commission's input and recommendations on the framework and options presented within this report. Input and recommendations provided will be forwarded to the Town Council as it considers and directs staff on the proposed Fall event. This discussion with the Town Council is anticipated to occur in March.