



**SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL
AGENDA
FEBRUARY 13, 2024
110 EAST MAIN STREET AND TELECONFERENCE
TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBERS
7:00 PM**

*Mary Badame, Mayor
Matthew Hudes, Vice Mayor
Rob Moore, Council Member
Rob Rennie, Council Member
Maria Ristow, Council Member*

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This is a hybrid meeting and will be held in-person at the Town Council Chambers at 110 E. Main Street and virtually through Zoom Webinar (log-in information provided below). Members of the public may provide public comments for agenda items in-person or virtually through the Zoom Webinar by following the instructions listed below. The live stream of the meeting may be viewed on television and/or online at www.LosGatosCA.gov/TownYouTube.

HOW TO PARTICIPATE

The public is welcome to provide oral comments in real-time during the meeting in three ways:

- **Zoom Webinar (Online):** Join from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone or Android device. Please click this URL to join: https://losgatosca.gov.zoom.us/j/86525163665?pwd=nJySutedkCrpPIKWJFEHvYm3Trs_Q.EEa4fP-P1M77s56i
 - Passcode: 883952 You can also type in 865 2516 3665 in the “Join a Meeting” page on the Zoom website at and use passcode 883952.
 - When the Mayor announces the item for which you wish to speak, click the “raise hand” feature in Zoom. If you are participating by phone on the Zoom app, press *9 on your telephone keypad to raise your hand.
- **Telephone:** Please dial (877) 336-1839 for US Toll-free or (636) 651-0008 for US Toll. (Conference code: 1052180)
 - If you are participating by calling in, press #2 on your telephone keypad to raise your hand.
- **In-Person:** Please complete a “speaker’s card” located on the back of the chamber benches and return it to the Town Clerk before the meeting or when the Mayor announces the item for which you wish to speak.

- NOTES:** (1) Comments will be limited to three (3) minutes or less at the Mayor’s discretion.
(2) If you are unable to participate in real-time, you may email to Clerk@losgatosca.gov the subject line “Public Comment Item #__” (insert the item number relevant to your comment). All comments received will become part of the record.
(3) Deadlines to submit written comments are:
 - 11:00 a.m. the Thursday before the Council meeting for inclusion in the agenda packet.
 - 11:00 a.m. the Monday before the Council meeting for inclusion in an addendum.
 - 11:00 a.m. on the day of the Council meeting for inclusion in a desk item.(4) Persons wishing to make an audio/visual presentation must submit the presentation electronically to Clerk@losgatosca.gov no later than 3:00 p.m. on the day of the Council meeting.

CALL MEETING TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

APPROVE REMOTE PARTICIPATION *(This item is listed on the agenda in the event there is an emergency circumstance requiring a Council Member to participate remotely under AB 2449 (Government Code 54953)).*

VERBAL COMMUNICATIONS *(Members of the public are welcome to address the Town Council on any matter that is listed on the agenda. To ensure all agenda items are heard, this portion of the agenda is limited to 30 minutes. In the event additional speakers were not able to be heard during the initial Verbal Communications portion of the agenda, an additional Verbal Communications will be opened prior to adjournment. Each speaker is limited to no more than three (3) minutes or such time as authorized by the Mayor.)*

OTHER BUSINESS

1. Affirm and/or Refine Existing Strategic Priorities and Determine the Priorities for New Ordinances.

ADJOURNMENT *(Council policy is to adjourn no later than midnight unless a majority of Council votes for an extension of time)*

ADA NOTICE In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, if you need special assistance to participate in this meeting, please contact the Clerk’s Office at (408) 354- 6834. Notification at least two (2) business days prior to the meeting date will enable the Town to make reasonable arrangements to ensure accessibility to this meeting. [28 CFR §35.102-35.104]

***Town Council Meetings Broadcast Live on KCAT, Channel 15 (on Comcast) on the 1st and 3rd Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.
Rebroadcast of Town Council Meetings on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays at 7:00 p.m.
Live & Archived Council Meetings can be viewed by going to:
www.LosGatosCA.gov/TownYouTube***



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 02/13/2024

ITEM NO: 1

DATE: February 9, 2024
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Affirm and/or Refine Existing Strategic Priorities and Determine the Priorities for New Ordinances.

RECOMMENDATION:

Affirm and/or refine existing Strategic Priorities and determine the priorities for new ordinances.

BACKGROUND:

Every year, the Town Council considers its Strategic Priorities for the next two years. In past years, Strategic Priorities consisted of specific policy efforts that could be completed within a relatively short time frame of a few months. More recently, Strategic Priorities have evolved to address more complex, on-going issues facing the Town that may involve multifaceted approaches (see Attachment 1). The Strategic Priorities are organized under the major topics of Safety, Prudent Financial Management, Quality of Life, and Traffic/Transportation. Per Council direction, the depiction of the Priorities shows the interconnectedness of the major topics.

The Council's identification of Strategic Priorities is a critical step in the budget process for the next fiscal year by determining the policy priority areas. The Strategic Priorities also guide the work of the Town's Boards, Commissions, and Committees.

The goal of the session is to affirm and/or refine existing Priorities. Dr. Shawn Spano will be facilitating the session. Given the work that is underway with existing Priorities, the Town organization has no staff capacity to add new items on top of the existing ones; however, there is capacity for refinements of existing Priorities as discussed in this report. In addition, the Town has limited financial capacity to add significant new items.

This report discusses the Town's existing Strategic Priorities, accomplishments, work in progress, opportunities for refinements, and a list of recommended ordinances.

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

DISCUSSION:

Existing Strategic Priorities and Context

The Town of Los Gatos is a beautiful community, situated at the base of the Santa Cruz Mountains, where people enjoy a good quality of life with opportunities to thrive. The Town government is responsible for providing a range of municipal services under the leadership of the Town Council. The government services are Public Works, Parks, Library, Police, and Community Development with the necessary support services of Information Technology, Finance, Clerk, and Human Resources. The Town Manager's Office leads and guides these administrative duties and closely collaborates with the Town Attorney's Office to support the work of the Town Council. From the Council's priority setting, the work of the Town Departments and Commissions is aligned to meet these Priorities.

The Town's municipal services are critical to ensuring and maintaining the special characteristics of Los Gatos (or "Core Goals") of Public Safety, Quality Public Infrastructure, Community Character, Fiscal Stability, Civic Engagement, and Good Governance. In 2022, the Town Council redefined the Core Goals of the Town of Los Gatos. The Goals inform the Council's adopted Budget and Capital Improvement Plan as well as the Strategic Priorities. For each Core Goal, a key projects and performance/activity metrics are identified in Attachment 2.

The existing Strategic Priorities (Attachment 1) are organized under the major topics of Safety, Prudent Financial Management, Quality of Life, and Traffic/Transportation.

As a service organization, each Department devotes approximately 90% of its staff time and other budget resources providing municipal services to the community. The remaining 10% or so of Department resources are allocated to special projects, such as Strategic Priorities. All of these services and projects are supported by the Town's Operating and Capital Improvement Budgets.

This 10/90 split can be depicted through an "iceberg" model (see Attachment 3) to depict the strategic work of the Town (10%) and the vast amount of "under the water line" work of the Town organization, including new work absorbed through unfunded State mandates. This model may prove useful for the Town Council because in some instances, the completion of a Strategic Priority may mean that the related ongoing work has become incorporated into the base budget and fundamental operations of the Town. From staff's perspective, this could be said of the Town's efforts with community policing.

DISCUSSION (continued):

Accomplishments

Several items were accomplished during 2023, including the:

- Firm foundation of community policing (now an integral part of the Town's operations)
- Endorsement of the Senior Services Roadmap
- Completion of all semi-permanent parklets
- SB 9 implementation
- Economic vitality changes to the Town Code
- Acceptance of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan
- Implementing a pilot hotel program for unhoused residents
- Installing a temporary public restroom at Plaza Park
- Alignment of Town Commissions with Strategic Priorities
- Updated Transportation Impact Fee and related documents

While these accomplishments address the larger efforts, Town Departments continue to make great strides at a more detailed level. These finer grain accomplishments include, and are not limited to:

- Rebranding the Annual Tree Lighting to a more inclusive and diverse Winter Celebration
- Developing Library programs in partnership with local non-profits (e.g., Plant-Based Advocates)
- Offering new services, such as weekly County Behavioral Health drop-in navigation hours at the Library
- Installing a back-up battery at the Library
- Completing an Emergency Procurement Policy
- Obtaining grant funding from the County for senior and unhoused resident services

Work in Progress

There are important efforts underway in each category. A summary of key projects can be found in Attachment 2. For **Traffic/Transportation**, these efforts include wayfinding for downtown parking; continuing to implement employee parking in the downtown and Olive zone; several active transportation improvements that are in the design and/or bidding phase; and traffic safety using the new federal grant.

Under **Prudent Financial Management**, the Town continues to put funding aside for future pension and Other Post-Employment Benefits obligations; the Finance Commission is discussing the Five-Year Forecast and would be involved in a potential revenue measure pending Town Council direction; and the Town is continuing to work through its property portfolio, including the potential transfer of New York Avenue and other streets to the High School District.

SUBJECT: Affirm and/or Refine Existing Strategic Priorities and Determine the Priorities for New Ordinances.

DATE: February 9, 2024

DISCUSSION (continued):

With respect to **Safety**, the Police Department has made great strides in many aspects of public safety as discussed at the January 16, 2024 Council meeting. In addition, the Town is continuing to manage roadway vegetation to reduce the Town's risk of wildfire and seek funding for a siren system as identified in the Ad Hoc Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Emergency preparedness activities, including Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) recruitment and training, are ongoing.

A variety of efforts are underway in the **Quality of Life** category. Housing Element certification remains a top priority of the Town with the Council continuing its work. The Town's Economic Vitality efforts are strong with the continued, extraordinary rebounding of community events and technical assistance to businesses seeking to locate or expand in Los Gatos. Town staff continue to enhance the variety of communication methods with the community to foster engagement in Town projects, including but not limited to Farmers Market booths, expanded social media presence, website redesign, and pushing out information regarding community workshops, Council meetings, and other participation opportunities.

Opportunities for Refinements

Attachment 4 contains Draft 2024-2026 Strategic Priorities as a starting point for Council discussion, removing the items that have been completed. Staff also suggests removing Affordable Housing Partnerships as this would be part of the work associated with the Housing Element Implementation. General Plan 2040 Implementation is included due to the need to resolve the Land Use and Community Design Element Referendum after Housing Element certification per prior Council direction.

The Council is welcome to refine the existing Priorities, clarify its objectives, and/or provide additional direction.

List of Ordinances

During the last calendar year, the Town Attorney worked with Departments and Commission(s) to complete the following major ordinances:

- Accessory Dwelling Unit
- SB 9
- Economic Vitality
- Ebike
- Concealed Carry Weapons (CCW)

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SUBJECT: Affirm and/or Refine Existing Strategic Priorities and Determine the Priorities for New Ordinances.

DATE: February 9, 2024

DISCUSSION (continued):

- “Sensitive places” (prohibiting CCW’s at specified locations)
- Bingo ordinance

In coordination with all Town Departments, the Town Attorney has provided a list of potential ordinances to amend the Town Code:

- 1) Sign ordinance update
- 2) “Free speech zone” ordinance to provide specified locations for demonstrations
- 3) Updating existing peddler ordinance to comply with current state law re: street vending
- 4) Updating organic waste ordinance to comply with state law and solid waste JPA requirements

The Council is welcome to adjust the priorities for this work.

Priority Setting Process

Dr. Shawn Spano will be facilitating the Strategic Priorities Session. After verbal communications, he intends to:

1. Ask each Council Member to identify one or two top accomplishments of 2023,
2. Have the Council consider the prioritization of the ordinances,
3. Review the existing Strategic Priorities (Attachment 1), and
4. Affirm and/or refine the current Strategic Priorities (Attachment 4).

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

The completion of the Strategic Priorities aligns the work of the Town Departments, Boards, Commissions, and Committees. The Council’s affirmation of existing Priorities and any refinements inform the preparation of the Proposed Fiscal Year 2024/25 Operating and Capital Budgets for Council consideration in May.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Attachment 5 contains public comments received prior to 11:00 a.m. on Friday, February 9, 2024.

COORDINATION:

The preparation of this report was coordinated with all Town Departments.

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SUBJECT: Affirm and/or Refine Existing Strategic Priorities and Determine the Priorities
for New Ordinances.

DATE: February 9, 2024

FISCAL IMPACT:

The work of this session together with the Council's budget direction in February informs the preparation of the upcoming Fiscal Year 2024/25 Operating and Capital Budgets. The Priority setting session itself has no fiscal impact.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

The Council's work associated with Strategic Priorities is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

Attachments:

1. 2023-2025 Strategic Priorities
2. Los Gatos At-A-Glance
3. Iceberg Model
4. Draft 2024-2026 Strategic Priorities
5. Public Comments received prior to 11:00 a.m. on Friday, February 9, 2024



Ongoing Strategic Priorities 2023-2025

SAFETY

- Community Policing
- Emergency Preparedness
 - CERT Recruitment & Training
 - Communications, EOC Readiness & Emergency Plan Development
- Fire Protection
 - Implementation of Ad Hoc Wildfire Mitigation Plan
- Vegetation and Hazardous Tree Management

PRUDENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

- Address Pension & OPEB Obligations
- Sell or Lease Certain Town Properties
- Develop a Five-Year Structurally Balanced and Sustainable Operating Forecast
 - Explore New Revenue Opportunities
 - Cure Forecasted Structural Deficit
- Develop a Five-Year Full Funded Capital Plan

TRAFFIC/TRANSPORTATION

- Comprehensive Parking Study
 - Short, Medium, and Long-Term Actions
- Transportation Demand Management
 - Measure B Transportation Projects
 - Bicycle & Pedestrian Improvements
 - Community Shuttle
 - Summer/Rush Hour/School Traffic
 - Regional Transportation Issues
- Traffic Calming/Safety for All Users

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Community Vitality
 - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Efforts
 - Community Where Older Adults Thrive
 - Adopt a Senior Road Map
 - Events & Other Town-Wide Efforts
 - Community Engagement
 - Environmental Sustainability/Climate Resiliency
- Economic Vitality & Pandemic Recovery
 - Policies & Ordinances
 - Semi-Permanent Parklets
 - Streamline Permit Process
- Land Use Planning
 - General Plan 2040
 - Housing Element
 - Affordable Housing Partnerships
 - SB9 Implementation
- Work with Town Partners to Support Needs of Unhoused Residents
- Redefine Town Commissions in Alignment with Strategic Priorities

Los Gatos At-A-Glance: Achieving the Town’s Core Goals

Public Safety: Ensure public safety through proactive community policing, effective emergency response, community-wide emergency preparation, education, and a community design that is responsive to the full range of potential natural and humanmade hazards and safety issues.

Key Projects

- Community policing and partnerships
- Crime prevention
- Reduce crime and Improve traffic safety
- Appropriate use of technology
- Organizational wellness
- Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan includes Los Gatos (submitted for CalOES/FEMA review)
- Participated in the County’s Community Wildfire Protection Plan update and now preparing the Los Gatos Annex

By the Numbers

- 10,668 9-1-1 calls received by Dispatch
- Less than 5-minute Patrol response time to Priority I calls (immediate emergency with threat of life and public safety hazard)
- Responded to 175 Priority I calls, 6,450 Priority II calls (urgent emergency), and 10,500 Priority III calls (non-emergency)
- 1,400 cases investigated

Quality Public Infrastructure: Maintain the condition and availability of public facilities, infrastructure, and a well-connected transportation system that enables safe access for all transportation modes, including pedestrians, people with access and functional needs, bicyclists, motorists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities.

Key Projects

- Roadway, curb, gutter, and sidewalk improvements
- Temporary reconstruction for upper Shannon Road
- Permanent design for the upper Shannon Road repair
- Final design for the Shannon Road bicycle pedestrian project
- HVAC at Police Operations Building
- HVAC repairs at Library
- Installation of an emergency back-up battery at Library
- An accessible restroom at the Adult Recreation Center
- Storage building at Parks and Public Works yard

By the Numbers

- Handled 2,576 work orders for parks and streets in addition to the 627 daily park opening tasks and the 2,602 park patrol tasks
- Completed 754 work orders for service and maintenance in Town-owned buildings
- Fulfilled 414 work orders on Town vehicles (the Town’s fleet includes 80+ vehicles)

Los Gatos At-A-Glance: Achieving the Town’s Core Goals

Community Character: Preserve and enhance the Town’s historic resources and smalltown character; foster the economic vitality of all business locations; maintain and enhance diverse neighborhoods, promote sustainability practices, and protect and conserve the natural environment for present and future generations.

Key Projects

- Housing Element
- Story Pole Policy Update
- Creation of an Analytics Dashboard to measure cycle time and other indicators for Building Permits, Planning Applications, and Code Compliance Violations
- Expand the scope of the Parks Commission to the Parks and Sustainability Commission
- Streamline processes

By the Numbers

- Issued 1,106 Downtown Employee Parking Permits and 112 Olive Zone Employee Parking Permits
- Continue to provide next day inspections approximately 99 percent of the time and completed 14,084 total Building Inspections
- Issued 1,735 Building Permits in 2023
- Processed 385 Planning applications in 2023 (not including Tree Removal Permit applications)
- Received 885 Code Compliance violations in 2023 and bi-annually resolved more than 93 percent of the violations
- Processed 662 Encroachment Permits for work in the Town roads, 33 Architecture and Site applications and 31 Grading Permits, and 43 “mapping exercises” such as subdivision mapping, lot line adjustments, and urban lot splits
- Handled 214 tree permit applications in 2023 for removal of trees on private property
- Supported 29 Special Event Permit, Free Speech Permit, and Block Party Permit applications submitted by the community.

Fiscal Stability: Maintain current and long-term fiscal stability while striving to deliver high-quality, cost-effective, and efficient municipal services that meet the current and long-term needs of the community.

Key Projects

- Balanced Budget
- Clean Audit
- Update Five-Year Forecast
- Continued to leverage Town resources with outside agency grants
- Implementing new financial management system (ERP) for improved efficiency and reporting

By the Numbers

- 185 payroll checks issued bi-weekly
- 65 accounts payable checks issued bi-weekly
- 8,000 invoices processed annually

Los Gatos At-A-Glance: Achieving the Town’s Core Goals

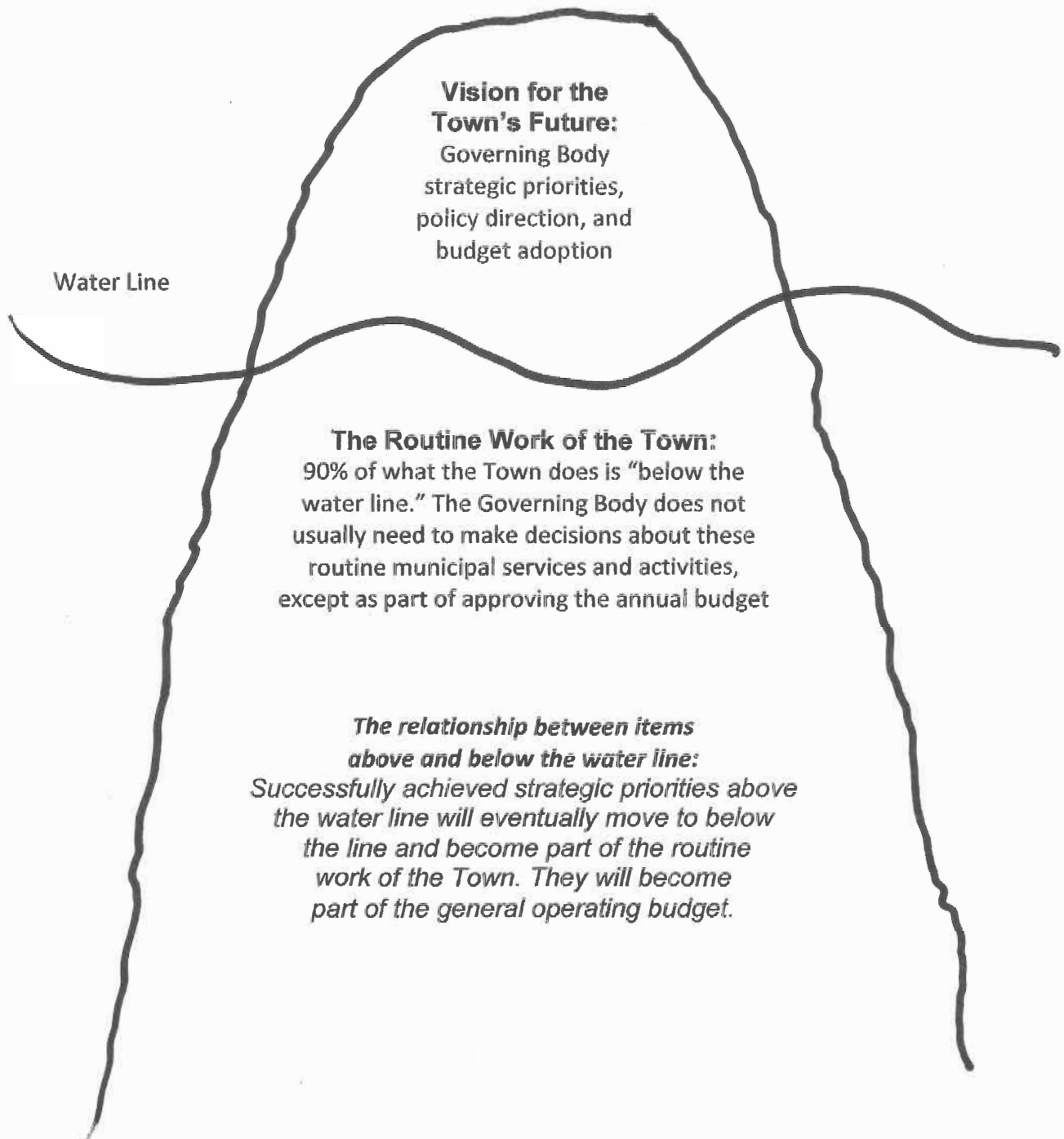
Civic Engagement: Foster opportunities for meaningful community involvement in government processes, encourage recreational and personal enrichment, and promote ethnic, cultural, and socio-economic diversity and equity to enhance the quality of life in Los Gatos.

<p>Key Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completion and endorsement of the Senior Services Roadmap • Senior Roadmap implementation under way <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Interim Community Center work ○ HUB Brochures ○ \$1250k grant for adult day services and case management for seniors • Completion and acceptance of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan • Establishment of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Commission • Re-started the Leadership Los Gatos Program • Public Art Master Plan 	<p>By the Numbers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 28 total Council meetings (2022/23), including Study Sessions, Closed Sessions and Pension/OPEB Trusts • 153 total meetings of Town Commissions, Boards, and Committees • Library visits: 220,928 (2022/23) • Total Library check outs (includes all physical items as well as ebooks): 398,090 • Total Library check outs of children’s materials (subset of above): 246,195 • Total number of Library programs, events, and activities offered: 648
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Good Governance: Ensure open, responsive, accountable, transparent, accessible, inclusive, and collaborative government that encourages public involvement.

<p>Key Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved website and ease of accessibility by consolidating all Town meeting agendas to a single location • Enhanced weekly digital newsletter • Increased social media communications 	<p>By the Numbers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responded to 1,100 constituent requests • 250 total Public Record Act requests processed, of which 50 required legal review • 21 claims and 11 subpoenas processed
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The Iceberg Model of Municipal Work



Adapted from Nalbandian Consulting and Training



Ongoing Strategic Priorities Draft 2024-2026

SAFETY

- Emergency Preparedness
 - CERT Recruitment & Training
 - Communications, EOC Readiness & Emergency Plan Development
- Fire Protection
 - Implementation of Ad Hoc Wildfire Mitigation Plan
- Vegetation and Hazardous Tree Management

PRUDENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

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 - Community Shuttle
 - Summer/Rush Hour/School Traffic
 - Regional Transportation Issues
- Traffic Calming/Safety for All Users

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Community Vitality
 - Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Efforts
 - Community Where Older Adults Thrive
 - Implement the Senior Road Map
 - Events & Other Town-Wide Efforts
 - Community Engagement
 - Environmental Sustainability/Climate Resiliency
- Economic Vitality
 - Policies & Ordinances
 - Streamline Permit Process
- Land Use Planning
 - General Plan 2040 Implementation
 - Housing Element Certification and Implementation
- Work with Partners to Support Needs of Unhoused Residents

Laurel Prevetti

From: Mary Badame
Sent: Tuesday, January 9, 2024 11:11 AM
To: Richard Li
Cc: Laurel Prevetti
Subject: Re: Artificial Turf in the City of Los Gatos

Dear Richard,

Thank you for reaching out.
I have forwarded your concerns to our Town Manager for consideration.

As a newly appointed Mayor, my schedule is very busy for the next few weeks.

Kind Regards,
Mary
Get [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: Richard Li [REDACTED]
Sent: Monday, January 8, 2024 11:11 AM
To: Mary Badame <MBadame@losgatosca.gov>
Subject: Artificial Turf in the City of Los Gatos

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Hi Mayor Mary Badame,

We hope you enjoyed the holidays. We are Aiden Chen and Richard Li, juniors representing Saratoga High School's Environmental Action Club. We would like to schedule a meeting with you to discuss the possibility of your city passing a ban on artificial turf.

We are sure that you are aware of the harms of artificial turf already, but if you are not, here is a quick rundown:

Artificial turf has innumerable issues, including toxic chemicals, environmental harm, and severe heat. Artificial turf also contains PFAs—a family of synthetic “forever chemicals” that are known to cause issues such as cancer, organ damage, and autoimmune disease—coating every blade of plastic grass. Thousands of tons of these blades shed from artificial turf fields every year, polluting waterways and spreading the breadth of PFAs exposure. Artificial turf is also prone to trapping excessive heat, reaching up to 160 degrees fahrenheit in warm weather whereas grass barely exceeds 80 in identical conditions.

For more information, check out our fact sheet: [Fact Sheet](#)

With the passage of [SB676](#), a new bill introduced in the 2023 California legislative season returning the power to ban artificial turf on private properties to city councils.

We would like to schedule a meeting over Zoom on any of the following times in January. The meeting will not exceed one hour:

-
-
- Saturday: 12:30pm to 6pm
-
-

-
- Monday to Thursday: 6pm, 7:30pm, 8pm
-

We may have a few other members or mentors attending the meeting with us to make sure any questions you may have can be answered.

Thank you for your time. We hope to hear from you soon!

Sincerely,

Environmental Action Club



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 02/13/2024

ITEM NO: 1

DESK ITEM

DATE: February 13, 2024
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Affirm and/or Refine Existing Strategic Priorities and Determine the Priorities for New Ordinances

REMARKS:

Attachment 6 contains Public Comments received between 11:01 a.m., Friday, February 9, 2024, and 11:00 a.m., Tuesday, February 13, 2024.

Attachments Received with the Staff Report:

1. 2023-2025 Strategic Priorities
2. Los Gatos At-A-Glance
3. Iceberg Model
4. Draft 2024-2026 Strategic Priorities
5. Public Comments received prior to 11:00 a.m. on Friday, February 9, 2024

Attachment Received with this Desk Item:

6. Public Comments received between 11:01 a.m. Friday, February 9, 2024, and 11:00 a.m. Tuesday, February 13, 2024.

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

From: Pam Bond

Sent: Tuesday, February 13, 2024 10:48 AM

To: Council <Council@losgatosca.gov>

Subject: Comments regarding 2/13/24 Special Meeting regarding Strategic Plan

[EXTERNAL SENDER]

Dear Los Gato Town Councilmembers,

Please see attached my letter regarding input on the Strategic Plan discussion.

Sincerely,

Pam Bond

February 13, 2024

Dear Los Gatos Town Councilmembers,

I am writing regarding Los Gatos' Strategic Plan and I would like to recommend that a discussion around limiting or banning artificial turf be highlighted for consideration in the 2024-26 timeline if it is not already. This is a pressing matter as people are inclined to install artificial turf as a drought saving measure, particularly in California, but the reality is that artificial turf is not going to help us if we enter a drought period again. I don't know if this might involve an ordinance and so I'd like to flag the possibility of an ordinance relating to the use of artificial turf.

In Section 6.14 Implementation Programs of the 2040 General plan, for the 2020-2025 timeline **Program A Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance** and **Program C Artificial Turf** are very much related and align with Valley Water's stance on use of artificial turf. See: [Valley Water Artificial Turf Fact Sheet](#). I won't go into the details around Valley Water's recommendation against the use of artificial turf, but the main points are that artificial turf is not a living landscape and so it does not contribute to a healthy environment, artificial turf uses water anyway, and there are environmental concerns with use of artificial turf.

As part of the Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance I think it is critical that artificial turf not be incentivized or promoted as a product for reducing water use. And ultimately, I would like the Town to consider banning artificial turf.

I have been involved in researching artificial turf since 2020 when the Los Gatos Union School District was considering whether to replace existing grass fields with artificial turf at several elementary schools. Since the decision in 2022 to keep grass fields at the elementary schools, I have remained active in the discussions and decisions in California and the East Coast regarding artificial turf. I and other local parents are in close communication with several non-profits who are advocating for natural grass or other drought tolerant natural landscaping. These non-profits have scientists, epidemiologists, chemists and grass experts and researchers at their disposal for help in getting the science right. And the science is telling us that artificial turf is an unregulated petrochemical with multitudes of environmental and human health issues. Here are just two of the organization's fact sheets on artificial turf to review.

Center for Health and Environment (CHE):

<https://www.healthandenvironment.org/join-us/blog/playing-on-plastic-artificial-turf-hazards-and-safer-alternatives>

Beyond Plastics:

<https://www.beyondplastics.org/fact-sheets/synthetic-turf>

In town, I have seen artificial turf used for gas station landscaping and I have seen it used in front yards that are unused. Residents just like the look of something green or they don't have time to maintain their yard. What no one thinks about is the heat emitted, the shedding of microplastic fibers over time, potential flow of plastic bits and chemicals into storm drains, what to do when you have to replace it, and the emission of greenhouse gases from the plastic for

the life of the product: See Sarah-Jeanne Royer's article. She "is a postdoctoral research fellow with the marine biology research division, Scripps Institution of Oceanography, University of California, San Diego."

<https://www.mvtimes.com/2019/02/20/synthetic-turf-will-contribute-greenhouse-gas-problems/>

Many think residential and commercial uses for landscaping don't use tire crumb rubber and so it's not as bad. The artificial turf industry is really good at greenwashing and this is incredibly important to keep in mind when you read about their products. The reality is that the artificial turf industry "improves" the plastic grass product by adding more unregulated chemicals to petrochemical-made plastic. And the artificial turf industry adds UV protectants, fire retardants, colorants, chemicals to make the plastic softer, and other unknowns to make their product sound better than the rest. Even if you get a "bio-based" plastic (meaning some percentage of the plastic is derived from plants and not petrochemicals), it almost always still contains petrochemical plastic. And bio-based plastic is still, in the end, plastic, and still contains all of those chemicals added to make the product seem better.

You can look to Millbrae for inspiration and technical advice. The City passed a ban on artificial turf soon after AB676 passed both houses and was signed by Governor Newsom. See more about SB 676 here:

<https://www.ijpr.org/environment-energy-and-transportation/2023-10-24/once-it-was-hailed-as-a-drought-fix-but-now-californias-moving-to-restrict-synthetic-turf-over-health-concerns>

Boston banned artificial turf in parks:

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/sep/30/boston-bans-artificial-turf-toxic-forever-chemicals-pfas>

As inspiration, I'd like to note that during a [Beyond Plastics](#) training session, a 12-year-old had registered and was in attendance for the training designed for groups who want to become affiliates of Beyond Plastics. My 11 year old read my public comments before the last Town Council meeting (and approved!), and a local Saratoga High School environmental club currently has artificial turf on its main agenda. Their capacity to try to move mountains in this area is inspiring and I believe their comments and letters have inspired more thought from decision makers. We should take direction from the youth who will inherit the decisions we make today.

I hope you will consider serious discussion regarding General Plan section 6.14 Programs A and C in the near term as laid out in the General Plan and take the wording of Program C a step further than determining the "appropriate use of artificial turf". I believe that any possible use of artificial turf can be addressed with much more environmentally friendly and healthy choices.

Sincerely,

Pam Bond
Los Gatos resident and parent