

TOWN OF LOS GATOS

General Plan Update



COMMUNITY PANEL

FOCUS AREA WORKING PAPER

YOUTH NEEDS

Introduction

The Town of Los Gatos is conducting a focused update of its General Plan that addresses four key focus areas in the Town: Environment and Sustainability, Parks and Recreation, Youth Needs and Senior Needs. As part of the update process, the Town hosted a series of community panel discussions on Saturday, May 2, 2009, for each of the focus areas. The goal of the panels was to engage residents, experts and service providers in conversations about the community's needs and to identify potential solutions. This summary provides an overview of the discussion and suggested strategies that came out of the panel on Youth Needs.

Panelists

Five panelists participated on the Youth Needs panel discussion.

Jacqueline Horejs, Superintendent, Union Elementary School District. Dr. Jacqueline Horejs has been an educator for over 30 years, and is currently the Superintendent of the eight-school, 4,400-student Union School District. She has worked at all levels of education, from preschool to higher education, and has served as a classroom teacher, a site administrator, a District and County office administrator, and a regional director prior to becoming the Superintendent of Union Elementary School District three years ago. Dr. Horejs is especially proud that Dartmouth Middle School was recognized as a National Schools To Watch school, and Union Middle School received the California Distinguished School Award. All of the Union Elementary Schools have been recognized as California Distinguished Schools.

Mike Loya, Recreation Supervisor, Los Gatos-Saratoga Community Education and Recreation Department. In 2000, Mr. Loya joined the staff at the Los Gatos-Saratoga Community Education and Recreation Department (LGS Recreation), and has been the Recreation Supervisor of Teen Programs since 2006. Mr. Loya also acts as a staff advisor to the Town of Los Gatos' Youth Commission. He is also the Director of The Venue, A Place for Teens. He began working in recreation and the non-profit field with the YMCA of Santa Clara Valley at the age of 14, working there for 12 years. Following his YMCA work, Mr. Loya was a State Licensed School-Age Director working in the Morgan Hill Area

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and a Field Coordinator for Aramark Educational Services, supervising programs in the Gilroy, South San Jose, Galt and Stockton areas.

Cary Matsuoka, Superintendent, Los Gatos Saratoga Union High School District. Mr. Matsuoka has nearly three decades of local teaching experience and has been Superintendent for the Los Gatos-Saratoga Joint Union High School District since 2006. He came to the District from nearby Fremont Union High School District where he had served as high school principal, district coordinator of guidance and assessment, and high school assistant principal.

Brandy Pech, Chairwoman, Los Gatos Youth Commission. Ms. Pech is a junior at Los Gatos High School. Having served three years in the Leadership Class, she is currently the Associated Student Body (ASB) Vice-President and the ASB Community Outreach Commissioner. She is also known for rallying her school behind the Invisible Children Cause, where she has lead her school in raising over \$26,000 for children in Northern Uganda in the past two years. She has served on the Los Gatos Youth Commission for two years. Ms. Pech has recently been appointed to the California Association of Student Council's 2009-2010 State Council where she holds the position of Youth Action Summit Conference Director. Last year she was awarded Youth Citizen of the Year.

Richard Whitmore, Superintendent, Los Gatos Union School District. Superintendent Whitmore has played a leadership role in California's finest educational organizations for the past 15 years, and is currently the Superintendent of the 2,800-student Los Gatos Union School District. He also served as the interim Superintendent for the Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) for most of 2007. He served as Chief Deputy Superintendent at the California Department of Education under State Superintendent of Public Instruction Delaine Eastin. Superintendent Whitmore's professional experience includes two years at University High School in San Francisco, and he currently serves on the governing board of the Acalanes Union High School District.

Discussion Summary

This section summarizes the key topics discussed during the panel on Youth Needs. The panel was conducted informally. Panelists responded to questions from moderator Joanna Jansen of Design, Community & Environment, and community members in attendance.

General Youth Services in Los Gatos

- ◆ LGS Recreation is a valued, successful organization that is doing more than equivalent organizations in other Towns. It is known for reaching out to teens with strong sports and cultural programs.
- ◆ LGS Recreation is a Joint Powers Authority of local school districts and is independent of Town budget restrictions.

- ◆ LGS Recreation can “buffer” school programs and classes that have been cut due to budget limits.
- ◆ Schools generally have strong traditional sports programming for kids, but not enough alternative programs, such as music, theatre arts, etc.
- ◆ The schools are currently near capacity, so the Town needs to plan carefully for additional growth and how it will affect the schools ability to provide services. The best way to maintain good schools is to keep them well funded.
- ◆ No one is sure what will happen to property tax revenue in 2009/2010. However, the Town needs to consider that every additional 25 students require \$100,000 in staffing and \$50,000 in supplies.

Relationship of Youth and Adults

- ◆ Adults and the Town do care about Youth issues and acknowledge kids in the community.
- ◆ Volunteering is a valuable tool to improve relations of the youth and adults because kids get to work with, and be acknowledged by, Police Chief, Town Council, business owners and other adults in the community.
- ◆ Youth may feel uncomfortable with formal interaction with adults, including police officers and teachers. Peer mentoring would be a valuable support system to supplement traditional adult support.
- ◆ Sports are the major driver of family interaction since many parents are involved in their kids athletic endeavors.

Emotional and Family Health

- ◆ Kids and families are generally extremely busy. Many kids are left unsupervised when parents work long hours.
- ◆ The community needs to start building emotional health support networks early on, in elementary or middle school. These are stressful age groups, with family moves, fears of new school, socializing, etc.
- ◆ Town needs to focus on emotional health of youth and families. Youth have expressed the need to form relationships with adults other than their parents; many kids feel that they don't have an adult to communicate directly with.
- ◆ There needs to be more access to quick, short term intervention *before* problems become serious. Guidance counselors provide academic support, but kids need other counseling programs that include mentoring, stress management and family counselors.

Youth and Downtown

- ◆ Although the Downtown area has improved in terms of a youth focus, it is still considered to be more focused on adults rather than local youth.
- ◆ Youth were upset about the denial of American Apparel's bid for a Downtown location; this has become a symbol of frustration.
- ◆ The Youth Commission Subcommittee has set up a youth-friendly business campaign in Downtown in collaboration with Los Gatos Chamber of Commerce.
- ◆ Youth-friendly Downtown planning needs to avoid "tension" spots between kids and adults. For example, Pizza My Heart is located next to two bars, which can expose kids to inappropriate adult behavior.

Youth Focus

- ◆ Kids have voiced frustration with Downtown; they want something more; either on Los Gatos Boulevard or elsewhere. Improvements include a dance club and/or a better mix of retail.
- ◆ A more youth-friendly collection of businesses does not mean lower tax revenues; these businesses could be very successful for the Town.
- ◆ Many Los Gatos youth "hang out" outside of the Town. Popular spots include Valley Fair, ice skating rink in San Jose and In-N-Out Burger.

Youth Transportation

- ◆ Los Gatos is not bike-friendly, as compared to Davis or nearby Santa Cruz.
- ◆ Teens in Los Gatos tend to drive much more than they ride bikes or take public transportation.
- ◆ High school driving results in significant traffic impacts that need to be addressed.
- ◆ "Car culture" is an ingrained aspect of life of local high school students; many youth express themselves through their cars.
- ◆ Bus scheduling is limited, for example, the last bus returning to the mountain area in the afternoon is at 3:30 -4:30 p.m.
- ◆ Riding bikes is seen as socially unacceptable and not "cool."
- ◆ Scheduling and lifestyles of both youth and parents are stressful; parents are over scheduled and kids are often up late studying. Being on time in the morning means that driving is necessary. Parent behavior is as difficult to change as youth behavior.
- ◆ Dissatisfaction with school lunches and lack of lunch options near schools mean that teens drive to lunch.

- ◆ Traffic and lack of crossing guards around schools create dangerous circumstances, especially at busy intersections such as Winchester Boulevard and Daves Avenue.
- ◆ Most agree that there are not enough bike racks at and around schools.
- ◆ Bike riding and skateboarding on sidewalks can be dangerous since they must cross numerous driveways with cars entering and exiting.

Suggested Policies and Action Items

This section summarizes the panelists' suggestions for policies or actions that may be considered for inclusion in the General Plan Update process. These suggestions are organized by the topics discussed in the Panel Discussion section above.

General Youth Services in Los Gatos

- ◆ LGS Recreation has strong younger and teenage programs, but needs to work on programs for middle school students.
- ◆ Loop in Union School District into the efforts of LGS Recreation. There needs to be more collaboration and conversation between these groups. This will refine structures and work to eliminate crossover.
- ◆ Develop a program that will ensure that the Town will be able to meet the State RHNA, while taking into account the expected demographic changes in the school districts.

Relationship of Youth and Adults

- ◆ Develop a Town of Los Gatos Youth Master Plan, similar to that of the City of Temecula, California.

Emotional and Family Health

- ◆ Organize emotional support networks, such as mentoring and Big Brother programs, for younger kids in elementary and middle schools.

Youth and Downtown

- ◆ Downtown should strive for a blend of services that can serve both youth and adults.

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Youth Focus

- ◆ Integrate a “youth friendly” commercial area into the North Forty Specific Plan or another location. Focus on businesses such as attractive retail, cinema, youth recreation, etc.
- ◆ Allow for more businesses that can serve as youth hang-outs, for example In-N-Out Burger.

Youth Transportation

- ◆ Develop a sustainability education program concurrent with driver’s education, in order to highlight the environmental impacts of auto use.
- ◆ Implement an improved traffic safety program at Town schools, including improved pedestrian elements, increase in crossing guards, etc.
- ◆ Develop high school “transportation management plan” with driving controls in the form of carpooling requirements, drop-off/pick-up improvements, etc.
- ◆ Develop “bike friendly corridors” in youth-intensive zones such as around schools and Downtown.
- ◆ Encourage Los Gatos High School to consider a closed campus or no driving policy at lunch to reduce traffic congestion and increase student safety.