



## CONSENT CALENDAR

### Agenda Item # 8

#### AGENDA REPORT SUMMARY

**Meeting Date:** October 9, 2018

**Subject:** Los Altos Village Association Tree Lighting Funding Request

**Prepared by:** Anthony Carnesecca, Economic Development Coordinator

**Reviewed by:** Jon Biggs, Community Development Director

**Approved by:** Chris Jordan, City Manager

**Attachment(s):**

1. Request by LAVA
2. LAVA's proposed budget for tree lighting

**Initiated by:**

Los Altos Village Association Request

**Previous Council Consideration:**

None

**Fiscal Impact:**

One-time expenditure of \$9,000 from City funds

**Environmental Review:**

Not applicable

**Policy Question(s) for Council Consideration:**

- Does the City Council wish to provide Los Altos Village Association (LAVA) funds to support the purchase of LED lights to replace existing incandescent light bulbs used in the trees Downtown?

**Summary:**

- LAVA annually installs light strands in the trees along Main Street, State Street, and the parking plazas in Downtown Los Altos
- LAVA has requested funds to help offset the cost of purchasing new LED light strands that will be installed in Downtown trees

**Staff Recommendation:**

Approve the \$9,000 expenditure request by LAVA to be used towards the purchase of LED light strands for the trees along Main Street, State Street, and the parking plazas in Downtown Los Altos



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### **Purpose**

Provide funding to upgrade to more energy efficient LED light strands for installation in Downtown trees.

### **Background**

LAVA annually installs light strands in trees on Main Street, State Street, and within the parking plazas to enhance the unique character of Downtown Los Altos and brighten the streets for shoppers and residents throughout the year. These light strands are typically incandescent strands, which are cheaper, less energy efficient, and not very durable. LAVA has requested support from the City of Los Altos in their effort to upgrade the light strands on the trees to more efficient and durable LED lights. The cost of these lights exceeds their annual budget allocation for lights in Downtown. Silicon Valley Clean Energy, the Community Choice Aggregate for the City of Los Altos, has already pledged a grant to this same project.

### **Discussion/Analysis**

Financial assistance by the City of Los Altos will help continue to light up the Los Altos Downtown with even brighter and better light strands. The light strands in the trees Downtown have become a unique amenity that visitors have come to enjoy. The upgrade to LED lights will allow for the continued enjoyment by the community and visitors to the Downtown and saves resources in the long term.

### **Options**

- 1) Approve the \$9,000 expenditure request by LAVA to be used towards the purchase of LED light strands for the trees along Main Street, State Street, and the parking plazas in Downtown Los Altos

**Advantages:** Brighter lights that last significantly longer and cost less to operate over the life of the strand

**Disadvantages:** None

- 2) Reject the \$9,000 expenditure request to LAVA towards the purchase of LED light strands for the trees along Main Street, State Street, and the parking plazas in Downtown Los Altos

**Advantages:** Retained grant money

**Disadvantages:** Less energy-efficient, lower quality light strands that will cost more to operate over the long term



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**Recommendation**

The staff recommends Option 1.



Dear Anthony:

Often the vitality of a downtown district like Downtown Los Altos relies on the overall experience a visitor has, and not just on the breadth of fine retail and dining selections. Subtle touches, big and small leave a lasting impression – even if they are not specifically noticed. While our Downtown has unique pieces of art and lush landscaping that are a part of the overall identity, one area that has elicited the most response is the twinkle lights in the street trees. These lights along our streets and parking plazas not only provide an additional sparkle, they invite people to walk safely as they peruse our shops and restaurants.

For a number of years, the Los Altos Village Association (LAVA) has purchased and maintained the tree lighting while the City of Los Altos has provided the trees and power. Prior to my arrival at LAVA, these lights were installed just before each holiday season, and then cut down and discarded shortly after the season ended. Not only is this costly and wasteful, it deprives the Downtown of a portion of its identity for a majority of the year. LAVA made the decision to leave the lights in the trees year-round. However, the lights we have been using were not meant to be out in the elements for as long as we would like. Hence, the current – rather hodgepodge – look of the lights as they reach the end of their short lives.

Still desiring to keep the lights on all year long, LAVA investigated alternatives and found energy-efficient LED lighting specifically designed for outdoor use in a downtown setting would be the best way to go. However, even given the expected lifetime of these types of lights, they are more expensive, and the initial investment needed to upgrade all the lights was cost-prohibitive for our organization. Which brings me to the actual “ask” of this letter. Would the City of Los Altos be able to cover the additional costs of an upgrade to LED lighting?

Before you go there, I want to give a little background on what we have done regarding these lights. When LAVA originally discovered the high cost of upgrading the lighting we looked for sources of funding. Our budget already accounts for inexpensive light replacement each year. But this is barely a third of what is needed overall. Our board voted to reserve some money from our “rainy day” account, and that only got us a bit closer. We applied for a grant from Los Altos Community Foundation and received a portion of our request. Those funds were used to upgrade the lighting in Veterans Community Plaza to test the look of the lights and gauge public reaction. Both tests have been positive. Even so, LAVA’s available funds are not enough to cover the nearly \$30K estimate we received for purchasing the lights, let alone the additional cost of installation.

Which brings us back to the ask. If the City is able to cover the cost of purchasing the lights LAVA will cover the cost of installation. There are a number of opportunities here for us to partner with others to promote them and this project as a big deal for Los Altos residents and Downtown businesses. Nina

Nesmith at Los Altos Hardware worked directly with her vendor to provide a quote for the lights, allowing us to purchase locally. And since LED will save energy, Silicon Valley Clean Energy (SVCE) has also awarded a grant toward the project.

LAVA and our board of directors hopes you will entertain this request as a cost-effective way to add to the growing vibrancy of Downtown Los Altos.

Thank you for your assistance and consideration,

Scott

**Scott Hunter**  
*Executive Director*  
Los Altos Village Association

# Downtown Los Altos Tree Lighting

## Proposed Budget

### Labor and Supplies

Commercial-grade LED light strings	\$29,526
Installation labor	<u>\$9,000</u>
<b>Total COGs</b>	<b>\$38,526</b>

### Funding

LAVA Budget	\$12,026
LAVA Village Fund	\$15,000
SVCE Grant	\$2,500
City of Los Altos Grant	<u>\$9,000</u>
<b>Total Funding</b>	<b>\$38,526</b>