

Albany Chamber of Commerce Funding Proposal 2010

April 2010

Introduction

It is an exciting time at the Chamber of Commerce. We have a very capable and experienced Executive Director, and have shifted our efforts to focus more directly on business-related programs and events. Our membership continues to grow even in this difficult economy, and we are optimistic about 2010 and beyond.

This proposal is for support from the City for specific programs that are designed to support and promote Albany businesses. Our goals are to retain and strengthen our businesses, and improve our business districts. We are gearing up to recruit new businesses when the economy improves, and to increase the connections between the commercial and residential portions of our community

2009 - 2010 Activities

The following list highlights 2009-10 Chamber activities. The Chamber continued to increase its visibility and effectiveness through the year. Perhaps the most significant change at the Chamber in this period was the welcoming aboard of a very experienced Executive Director, Winkie Campbell-Notar in April 2009.

- Launched the Find it in Albany/Welcome to Albany program, featuring a business map of Albany, packets of information for new residents and businesses, and a searchable web database of Albany businesses. We are partnering with the City and local realtors to reach new residents.
- Partnered with the City and the Solano Avenue Association on two well-received business seminars.
- Participated in the City's Economic Development Working Group.
- Worked with SAA on the increasingly successful Santa on Solano event. Attendance at the four Chamber of Commerce-hosted days were approximately 600 families.
- Through our weekly e-news we have expanded our communications to reach approximately 300 Chamber members, community and business leaders, and elected officials.

Summary of the 2010-11 Proposal

- **Business Workshops: \$1,950**
 - Staff time and resources: \$1,250
 - Promotion and direct support of events: \$700

- **Albany Info program: \$1,800**
 - Staff time for development of content: \$1,500
 - Advertising and Promotion: \$300

- **Lights on Solano program: \$1,000**
 - Replacement lights, timers, supplies: \$400
 - Staff time and resources: \$600

- **Holiday Season Activities & Promotions: \$1,500**
 - Staff time and resources: \$1,200
 - Energy-efficient decorative lighting: \$300

- ***Find it in Albany/Welcome to Albany Program: \$1,800***
 - Design, Printing and Supplies: \$300
 - Postage: \$100
 - Staff time and resources: \$1,400

- **Street Banner Program: \$1,600**
 - Staff time and resources: \$1,600

- **Mini Business Expos: \$2,150**
 - Staff time and resources: \$1,600
 - Advertising and Promotion: \$550

- **Facade Grant Program : See Separate Proposal**
 - Landscape & Lighting District Funds

- **Market Analysis and Consumer Survey: \$3,700.**
 - Staff time and resources: \$2,500
 - Materials & data costs: \$1,200.

Total 2010-2011 Proposal: \$15,500 (+)

Proposal Details

Business Workshops: \$1,950

These are workshops on topics to give Albany businesses tools to change and succeed in a shifting economy. Two successful workshops were held in 2009, and this will be expanded upon for 2010-2011. In previous conversations, we have suggested that the workshops:

- Be expanded to 4 or 6 hours
- Be held on a weekend day (presumably Saturday)
- Have a moderate cost (\$25 - \$50)

Speakers would be drawn primarily from Chamber Members, or others with relevant expertise who would be willing to speak to a group for free. We will also consider high-quality speakers who are not Chamber Members.

Budget basis: \$1,250 for staff time and resources; \$700 for promotion and advertising to increase attendance at events

Albany Info program \$1,800

The Albany Info program is designed to increase the visibility of the Chamber while providing a resource for Members and Albany residents, as well as providing promotional opportunities for Members. This aligns well with the existing “Find it in Albany” program. We will produce a series of documents that provide “everything you need to know...” about various activities.

One example is a document that contains information and instructions for anyone who wants to put on an event in Albany. This could include what sorts of permits might be required for the event, their cost and where to go to get them (and how long it should take), relevant limitations or opportunities in the City, suggested means of promoting the event, and the local/member businesses that provide relevant products or services.

Another example might present information about starting a new business in Albany, expanding on what is provided by the City by including not only the legal requirements and permits, but advice from real experience, and the local/member businesses that could help during the any step of this process.

We understand the City is undergoing a major update of its website. We will integrate our program with the new City information, and provide additional detail in our document packet.

Budget basis: \$1,500 for staff time and resources; \$300 for advertising and promotion

Lights on Solano program \$1,000

This program is for the installation and maintenance of the year-round strings of lights on Solano Avenue. With equal support from two member business sponsors and the City, last year we installed approximately 50 strings of high-efficiency, LED lights along with light-sensitive timers on each lamppost on lower Solano. This serves the purpose of making the street a more attractive place to stroll in the evening, while minimizing the impact on energy use and expense.

This turned out to be a much more labor-intensive program than anticipated when it was discovered that close to 15% of the purchased light strings and timers were defective! Even after

testing every string individually, there were several strings that failed after just a few days and required replacement. We currently have a schedule in place where the lights are maintained three times a year, plus at the holiday season when additional lights are added.

As a note of clarification, this is the year-round light program. The special holiday light program is a joint project between the Chamber and the Solano Avenue Association, and is a separate project in the Chamber's plan.

The expenses for the program include purchase of replacement lights and timers, as well as staff time and infrastructure for managing the program and storing the lights and supplies.

Budget basis: \$400 for lights, timers and mounting supplies; \$600 for staff time and resources to support the program

Holiday Season decorating and networking events, Oct-Dec 2010 \$1,500

In 2009 we continued our traditional activities including our Holiday Business Mixer and the celebration display at Key Route and Solano Avenue. Additionally, we worked with the Solano Avenue Association to expand the successful Santa on Solano event that brought many hundreds of people onto Solano during the prime Holiday shopping season. For 2010 we plan to expand these activities to include expanded, more environmentally friendly holiday lights, and a larger and more extensively promoted Santa on Solano event.

Budget basis: \$1200 for staff time and resources supporting the seasonal celebrations in October/November/December; \$300 for energy-efficient decorative lighting

Find it in Albany program \$1,800

This continues the current Find it in Albany program, and includes the FindItInAlbany.com website along with the Find it in Albany map and resource packets. The resource packets are delivered to new residents and businesses, and include the FiiA map, as well as brochures, coupons, etc. from member businesses.

This program was begun in 2009 and has proven very popular. While we were challenged to sell the needed ads to create the Find it in Albany maps last year, we anticipate the job will be easier this second year because we have examples of actual maps and packets that we can show potential sponsors. In addition to distributing the packets ourselves, we've partnered with the City's Community Engagement Specialist, neighborhood block captains, local realtors and University Village to deliver the packets to new residents.

We try to avoid mailing the maps as much as possible. This helps us keep costs down, but at the same time, we believe a packet that is hand-delivered by a neighbor is more likely to be opened and used.

This is a labor-intensive program, and also includes printing and some mailing costs. The city's generous support of this program in 2009 paid primarily for the staff time required to implement the program. Sponsor payments covered the printing costs, envelopes, and mailing expenses.

Budget basis: \$1,400 for staff time and resources; \$300 for design, printing and supply expenses; \$100 for moderate postage expenses

Street Banner Program: \$1,600

The Street Banner Program will install two sets of banners a year with a Spring/Summer design and a Fall/Winter design. Banners will be paid for by soliciting sponsorships from Albany businesses. We are working with the Solano Avenue Association and the Arts Committee on the design, and are waiting for branding direction from the City.

Under the Chamber's program, sponsorships are able to pay for the cost of the banners themselves, and the installation costs, however, this is a large program and uses a great deal of staff time and Chamber resources.

The City purchased additional banner brackets in 2009 with money that had been set aside for decorating the streets in 2008. This allows us to add approximately 20 more poles to the program on San Pablo and Buchanan Avenues.

Budget basis: \$1,600 for staff time and resources to support this program.

Mini Business Expos \$2,150

Mini-business expos will allow businesses that do not have the resources or facilities to host a mixer to participate in a group to showcase their business sector and individual firms. The Chamber will promote 2-3 mini-expos per year in various fields, e.g., health care, automotive, green resources, personal care, etc. This provides an opportunity for these businesses to gain exposure and meet new potential clients, and it could also serve to draw people who don't normally attend mixers. The costs of the shared venue would be shared by the participating businesses, and they would be responsible for their own exhibits, as well.

Expenses for these events include staff time and resources, and additional promotion expenses.

Budget basis: \$1,600 for staff time and resources to support this program, \$550 for advertising and promotion

Market Analysis & Consumer Survey \$3,700

The Economic Development Working Group has identified the need for a market analysis and consumer survey to produce business retention and attraction materials. The Chamber will build on the Working Group's process over the last year and the 2009 Mayer Associates report. The Chamber will work with the City and Solano Avenue Association to provide resources to put together a consumer survey.

The market analysis will consist of:

- Nielson Claritas data to identify the market catchment area and key demographics.
- Analysis of the data and the Mayer Associates report.
- Identification of leakage, potential business sectors.
- Draft of analysis and ongoing discussions with ED Working Group.
- Production of materials and analytical data for business retention and recruitment.

***Budget Basis: Staff time and resources to analyze data, reports and draft materials: \$2,500.
Nielson Claritas data costs - \$700. Production of business retention/attraction materials
(printing, slides, cd's): \$500. – Total: \$3,700.***