

## **Albany Chamber of Commerce Funding Proposal July 2008 - June 2009**

### **June 27, 2008**

We are delighted to report that the Albany Chamber of Commerce has had a successful year! Apart from the list of specific activities below, what we are most excited about is that the Chamber has been rejuvenated as an active, visible and valuable organization in the City of Albany. Our membership is up and we are planning even more and larger activities for 2008 – 2009. We are grateful for the budget support the City has shown us this past year (and in prior years), and are also very grateful for the participation of the Mayor, Council Members and City Staff in many of our activities and events. We believe that both of these types of support have been key to our success.

This funding proposal spells out the accomplishments of the Chamber for the past year and looks ahead to the coming year. In it we list the specific items that we believe it would be appropriate and beneficial for the City to support. There is a long history of City of Albany support for the Albany Chamber of Commerce (a 501(C) 6 non-profit organization). One of our goals in the coming year is to make sure that the City continues to see a real value in their investment in our organization.

### **2007-2008 Budget Year**

The following list highlights 2007-2008 Chamber accomplishments in two major categories. Apart from their benefits to Albany's business and general communities, these accomplishments have led to an increase in our membership and interest in Chamber programs.

#### **Information and networking services**

- Information to the public regarding City events, activities, policies, etc
- Organizer of business mixers most months; most recently at Albany Cabinets, Different Day Gallery, Albany Bowl, Six Degrees on Solano, Mechanics Bank, Albany Ford Subaru
- A channel for feedback on City proposals regarding local businesses
- Partnership with the City on "Recycle Your Rebate" program and selection of Economic Development consultant
- Provider of a wealth of information including an online directory of local businesses on our new web site. Plans are in place to continue expanding the website's features and content.
- Updated website with live information on Chamber Members as well as an initial version of a "Find it in Albany" tool that features a searchable database of all Albany Businesses.

## **Presenter of local Events and Activities**

- Lead on the City's Centennial Banner Program – managing, selling sponsorships, taking financial risk, coordinating with different groups, and mounting 52 banners (with 37 sets of new and improved brackets) on San Pablo Ave, Buchanan St, and Solano Ave
- Presenter of the 2008 Centennial Tour and Taste of Albany on June 1, 2008
- Centennial T-shirt, and Centennial wine glass production and sales
- Sponsor of the Albany Citizen (Jack Rosano) and Student (Jack Wallace) of the Year Awards, awards dinner on June 24, 2008 at Solano Grill and Bar
- Provider of December holiday programs to encourage shopping in Albany. Partnered with the Solano Avenue Association to present *Santa on Solano*.
- Collaborator with others to maximize benefits: Albany Historical Society, Albany Arts Committee, Solano Avenue Association, Albany Lions, Albany Rotary Club, UC Berkeley

At the start of the 2007 fiscal year, City Finance Staff performed a review of Chamber finances and records and reported no adverse findings. The review included recommendations that were implemented as suggested, or, in some cases, were implemented in a manner more appropriate to our organization, but with the same result.

## **2008-2009 Plans and Funding Request**

In order to continue to provide benefit to the City of Albany, from a location located conveniently for members on Solano Ave near San Pablo Ave, the Albany Chamber of Commerce requests funding for programs in the upcoming fiscal year. Funding is requested by activity in accordance with prior City Council guidance, and in recognition of the reality that membership dues and activity proceeds are needed to fund operating expenses such as office rent, utilities, supplies, and staff, which total about \$35,000 per year.

## **Request Summary**

- **Holiday Season Activities & Promotions: \$2,800**
  - Decorations and Events: \$2,000
  - Energy-efficient decorative lighting: \$800

- **Tour and Taste of Albany Event: \$6,000**
  - Equipment and Space Rental and Permits: \$2,000
  - Entertainment, Speakers: \$1,000
  - Early Outreach and Publicity: \$3,000
  
- **Welcome to Albany Program: \$3,700**
  - Design, Printing and Supplies: \$1,900
  - Postage: \$800
  - Additional Staff Hours: \$1,000

**Total 2008-2009 Request: \$12,500**

## **Request Details**

### **Holiday Season decorating and networking events, Oct-Dec 2008 \$2800**

In 2007 we continued our traditional activities including our Holiday Business Mixer, special holiday buses and the City celebration display at Key Route and Solano Avenue. Additionally, we worked with the Solano Avenue Association to expand the holiday lights on Solano (including energy-saving equipment installation) and launched the successful Santa on Solano event that brought several hundred people onto Solano during the prime Holiday shopping season. For 2008 we plan to expand these activities to include safer, even more environmentally friendly holiday lights, a larger and more extensively promoted Santa on Solano event, and a new promotion in October or November to get people to see what is here earlier in the Holiday season.

The request for energy efficient holiday lighting is to replace the standard incandescent interior lights and timers installed last year with outdoor-grade LED lighting that will save still more energy be safer, and will last for many years.

***Budget basis: \$2000 for decorations and activities that reflect the varying seasonal celebrations in October/November/December; \$800 for energy-efficient decorative lighting***

### **Tour and Taste of Albany June 7, 2009 \$6000**

In the wake of a successful Taste of Albany on June 1, 2008, the Albany Chamber of Commerce is reassessing how to provide a similar festival in 2009. One option under consideration is to coordinate it with the “Greening Albany” event and make green businesses part of the “Tour.”

One aspect we are planning to carry over from this year’s event is the historical Tour of Albany. We plan to work with the Albany Historical Society to identify locations of historic interest to include on a self-guided tour. We believe this is a great way to display

Albany's unique character to people from outside our borders, while building a stronger sense of community for Albany residents.

This event is largely sponsor funded. The funding being requested from the City is for two purposes. One is to help us offer discounts (usually 100% discounts) to non-profit and community organizations who wish to participate in the event. Participants at this year's event included the Albany Veterans, the Albany Lions Club, and the Albany Historical Society. The other purpose is to expand publicity and begin sponsor outreach earlier..

***Budget basis: \$2000 for space and equipment rentals and permits, \$1000 for entertainment, speakers, and \$3000 for outreach and publicity***

### **Welcome to Albany Program**

**Starting Sept. 2008**

**\$3700**

We are planning a program to collect material promoting Albany Businesses so we can greet new businesses and residents in the City with a "Welcome to Albany" packet. We plan to have three different packets, one for residents, one for businesses, and a special one for residents in University Village. The contents of the packet would be solicited from interested member businesses (coupons, premium offers, branded merchandise), and would also include information on accessing City services, and a local map highlighting features appealing to new residents. The expenses for the program include program-branded bags, mailing envelopes, postage, design, printing, and staff hours. We want to catch people who move here from other Cities in the area and get them to recognize what is available right in town before they develop habits that take them to Berkeley or El Cerrito for their needs. We are targeting our first roll out of this program soon after the September move-in at University Village. Our plan is to integrate this program with an ongoing "Shop Local" program launched this Spring as the "Recycle your Rebate" promotion (undertaken with the City, the Solano Avenue Association, and Mechanics Bank).

***Budget basis: \$900 for branded bags and mailing envelopes, \$800 for postage, \$1000 for development and printing of Albany Map, "Welcome to Albany" information sheet and other materials, \$1,000 for additional staff hours.***

### **About the Chamber of Commerce Organization**

The Board of the Chamber of Commerce is made up of local business people and residents with many decades of combined experience in business and non-profit activities. We continue to expand the Board to build a wider base of expertise. As an organization, we are considering activities and changes that would make us even stronger and more effective, including hiring a part-time Executive Director. We are not listing specific budget items for these programs, but it should be understood that without City

support for the programs listed above, our budget resources will be exhausted fulfilling those plans rather than on the following programs.

### **Albany Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Opportunity**

The Albany Chamber of Commerce has an opportunity to hire a part-time Executive Director. Current staffing reflects the minimum-wage funding the Chamber can provide now for staff. While a position at the Executive Director level would cost more, it would also increase the capabilities of the Chamber to execute professional operations; increase the potential for mutually advantageous coordination with other organizations, and potentially increase membership and membership services.

We would like to take advantage of this opportunity to continue to provide needed services and expand some services. Another reason to take this opportunity is because the workload on the current Board of Directors, without an Executive Director, is sufficiently onerous as to discourage board membership, exacerbating the situation. The opportunity for an Executive Director will exist, however, only if the Chamber is able to obtain some City funding for activities in the upcoming fiscal year.

### **Expanded Street Banner Program**

Our participation in the City's Centennial Banner program has always been with the goal to make Albany a more attractive and identifiable place for people to visit and do business. The 52 historical banners on San Pablo Avenue, Solano Avenue, and Buchanan Street are a dramatic and welcome beautification project that has led to repeated requests for more and larger banners.

Our plan for 2008-2009 is to work with the City's Arts Committee to create and mount banners to replace the Centennial Banners that are scheduled to be taken down in May 2009. If sponsor names on the banners continue to be an option, the program can be self-funded. If sponsor names are not allowed on the banners, it is likely that the program could not continue without significant City funding (on the order of \$10,000 for banners and mounting expenses).

Additionally, if more banner mounting locations are desired, there would be a need for purchasing additional mounting brackets. These, like the existing brackets on Solano Avenue, San Pablo Avenue and Buchanan Avenue, would appropriately be purchased with City funding and remain City property.

Since the existing banner program is a City program, and there are innumerable variables in any estimate of the expense of an expanded program in 2008-2009, we have not included a specific request for this program here, but look forward to working with City Staff and other organizations to bring a separate proposal to the City.

## **Green Products Center**

As Albany regulates more products, the Chamber has explored becoming an information source for local businesses on where to obtain environmentally-sensitive products. This information would be available on our website, as well as on a flier that could be distributed to appropriate businesses.

## **Membership Drive**

It is encouraging to note that the membership of the Chamber of Commerce has grown nearly 30% in the last year. It is especially encouraging because we have made no specific plea for new members. In 2008 – 2009 we hope to launch a membership drive that will bring our membership past the 300 mark. Current membership is just over 200.

## **Volunteer Pool**

The Board and supporters of the Chamber have put in exhaustive hours making our activities this past year a success. In order to be successful with future activities we are beginning to solicit our members to put their name in a volunteer pool. This would serve as a resource to help us plan, prepare and run the events and program we are planning.

## **Expanded Website**

We introduced our new Website in Spring 2008, and plan to continue expanding it in the coming year. Plans include an expanded event calendar, a more comprehensive “Find it in Albany” search feature for locating products and services in the City, and expanded Member Tools that allow member businesses to post descriptions of their products and services, carry on conversations, and more.

## **Conclusion**

We are excited at the progress we have made in the past year and are looking forward to an even more successful and exciting 2008-2009. We appreciate the City’s support and look forward to continue this long and fruitful relationship.

Sincerely,

Tod Abbott, President  
Albany Chamber of Commerce