



CITY OF ALBANY CITY COUNCIL AGENDA STAFF REPORT

Agenda Date: September 18, 2023
Reviewed by: NA

SUBJECT: Economic Development Program Update

REPORT BY: Brennen Brown, Assistant to the City Manager / Public Information Officer

SUMMARY

This staff report provides an overview of the City's Economic Development Programs.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

That the Council receive a presentation on efforts to foster economic development and support our local businesses.

BACKGROUND

In the last few years, an increased focus on furthering economic development and business support programs within the City has been a high priority. During the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic several programs were developed to support Albany's businesses, in particular Albany's small businesses. The City has worked to engage with business owners as well as local and regional business organizations to build out a program that offers assistance to current businesses, as well as attract new businesses, and encourage support for Albany's commercial areas.

DISCUSSION

The City's Economic Development programs include the primary goals of business retention, promotion, and recruitment. The projects and programs developed through the City have aimed to encourage economic development in Albany's commercial areas. This includes extensive communication approaches with Albany businesses to both better understand what businesses need and to provide information and resources. Support has also been provided by way of grants to businesses as well as promotional campaigns.

Grant Programs

The City has administered four grant programs to help address specific needs identified within our business community. The grant programs include:

- COVID Small Business Assistance Grant
- Window and Door Repair Grant
- Parklet Grant
- Business Attraction and Improvement Grant

The grant programs have been well received, with a total of \$1,022,190.00 approved to be awarded to local businesses, equating to a total of 86 grant awards to date. Staff continues to promote grant opportunities through direct outreach to our business community.

Business Retention & Promotion

The City established an eGift card program to encourage further support for our local business community. The eGift Card program was introduced in 2022 during Albany Local Week to encourage community members to shop in Albany. During the onset of this program, a special feature was included wherein those purchasing a gift card would receive a matching gift card amount, also called a BOGO (Buy One Get One) offer. The program was incredibly popular, resulting in the matching offer selling out within the first 24 hours. A second matching offer was introduced leading up to the holiday season that sold out within 2 weeks. As of today, over \$110,000 have been redeemed and went to Albany businesses.

Albany Local Week is another way that the City works to promote our local business community. During Albany Local Week, the City promotes events and pop-ups occurring within Albany, many hosted by the businesses. In addition, the Chamber of Commerce hosts their Best of Albany Awards Gala to recognize Albany businesses. This year, the City is providing businesses with complementary “Albany Local Business” window clings to promote Albany’s commercial areas and encourage customers to continue shopping locally in Albany.

The City has also engaged in advertising efforts to promote Albany’s commercial areas with news stories and sponsored advertising, social media advertising, window clings, and street banners. The chart in Attachment 1 shows the components of Albany’s Economic Development projects and programs that have occurred between 2022 and 2023, as well as the associated programmatic goals.

Business Recruitment

To provide further outreach and information the City introduced www.choosealbany.org. This website provides business-related information and demographic data useful to prospective businesses with regard to the unique market opportunities within the City. The site is intended to house information for current businesses as well as potential businesses.

A “welcome packet” is provided as a way to help provide information to our newer businesses regarding available resources within the City. In addition, a business attraction packet has also been developed for businesses looking to start, expand, or relocate in Albany.

Attachment:

1. Chart of Economic Development Projects and Programs – 2022-2023

Economic Development Projects and Programs – 2022-2023

Project/Program	Components	Function/Goal
Communication with current and prospective businesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to City Departments and outside organizations • Meetings with business owners • Surveys • Assisting businesses with community events • Business eNews to share resources and information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gain a better understanding of what businesses need. These needs may be specific to one business or something that applies to many • Use information to craft programing that helps Albany’s unique commercial areas • Be proactive in providing information and resources to the business community
Grant Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID Small Business Assistance Grant (2022) • Window and Door Repair Grant (2022-23) • Parklet Grant (Current) • Business Attraction and Improvement Grant (Current and Upcoming) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support businesses impacted by the pandemic • Support businesses and nonprofits that sustained window and door damage due to vandalism or break-ins • Assist in bringing commercial dining parklets up to City standards both in design and safety • Attract new, relocating, or expanding brick-and-mortar businesses to Albany by assisting with startup and facility upgrade costs • Assist current businesses looking to make façade and interior

		improvements to their existing space
eGift Card Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 Albany business enrolled to accept eGift Cards. • eGift Card Buy One Get One (BOGO) offer during Albany Local Week (2022) and leading up to the November and December holidays (2022) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage community members both in Albany and outside of Albany to support Albany businesses, especially during the months when the most shopping is done • Offer a program free for businesses to participate in that supports shopping local
Economic Development Website: www.choosealbany.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and resources for businesses moving to or operating in Albany • List of available commercial properties in Albany • Information about Albany's commercial districts and strategic advantages • Albany demographics and consumer information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as an information hub for businesses • Provide consumer data about Albany area • Advertise Albany as a great choice for businesses to open in, relocate to, or expand to • Connect businesses to Economic Development staff
Business Attraction Packet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on Albany's key advantages for businesses • Information on Albany's available storefronts • Information on Albany's commercial areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract new businesses to Albany • Provide prospective businesses with information about Albany's commercial areas
Business Welcome Packet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information on keys to success 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide information and resources about the area so that new businesses

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demographic and consumer information • Features of Albany’s commercial areas • Contact information to local business organizations and services 	<p>feel welcome and informed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect new businesses to the City’s Economic Development Division, so they know us as a resource
Participation in Economic Development Organizations regionally, statewide, and nationally.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • East Bay Economic Development Alliance (East Bay EDA) • California Association for Local Economic Development (CALED) • Innovating Commerce Serving Communities (ICSC) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect with the economic development offices of other local jurisdictions • Learn about innovative economic development strategies and programs
Promotions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Street banners in Albany commercial areas • News articles and advertising • Social media advertising 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advertise Albany’s commercial areas to attract new customers to Albany’s local businesses • Advertise Albany as a place to start a business • Enhance Albany’s commercial areas visually