

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: November 7, 2005

Prepared on: October 31, 2005

Reviewed by _____

SUBJECT: Update on Chamber of Commerce “Green Albany” Project

FROM: Judy Lieberman, Assistant City Administrator
Nicole Narver, Environmental Resources Associate

RECOMMENDATION

Information only.

BACKGROUND

James Carter, out-going Executive Director of the Albany Chamber of Commerce, will be making a presentation on this issue.

In July 2005 the Albany Chamber of Commerce was awarded a grant by the Alameda County Waste Management Authority and Recycling Board (Stopwaste.org) to implement the “Green Albany” project. This project involves conducting outreach to Albany’s businesses and assisting them to participate in recycling and food scrap composting programs that are offered by Waste Management of Alameda County (WMAC) under the City’s franchise. The “Green Albany Project” is a cooperative partnership between the Chamber, the City of Albany and Waste Management.

The City of Albany has been an active partner with the Chamber on this project. City staff provided assistance in preparing the initial grant application and continues to provide assistance to the project on an ongoing basis. The City provides tonnage information to measure effectiveness, information for grant reporting, and also works with WMAC when service issues arise for the commercial customers. In addition, the City supplies compostable bags and internal recycling containers for the Chamber to provide to participating businesses.

This project assists the City in further increasing the total amount of material diverted from the landfill, and encourages a sustainable commercial sector. It is also financially beneficial to Albany businesses, since commercial compost collection costs 50% less than the rate of garbage service, and recycling is provided to commercial customers at no additional charge. This allows businesses to reduce their garbage rates by increasing recycling and reducing garbage collection.

ANALYSIS

In the beginning months of the project, a variety of start-up problems occurred regarding Waste Management's difficulties in collecting the food waste bins in a timely manner. These problems related to issues such as the weight of the bins, location of bins, time of morning collection at restaurants with morning business, the lack of a dedicated route for Albany food waste, and the use of a one-person truck. Not all business experienced problems with the program, but several businesses threatened to drop their food waste recycling and this raised concerns about the viability of the project. On September 15, 2005 the Albany Chamber called a meeting with WMAC to attempt to address these serious concerns.

As a result of this meeting and a follow-up meeting the next week, WMAC made several changes to their operations, and also has committed to providing a two-person truck that would be regularly collecting from an Albany route. The two-person commercial compost collection truck is scheduled to begin November 14, 2005. City staff also requested that WMAC provide compensation, in the form of credits for garbage service, to those businesses experiencing significant collection problems. In addition, at the request of WMAC, the City approved a conditional 6 a.m. start time for the food waste collection program (only) in areas that are in the commercial district, but within 200' of a residence. Normal commercial collection begins at 5 a.m., while normal residential collection begins at 7 a.m. This time change will allow WMAC to collect from restaurants on Solano without interfering with breakfast services. The Albany Chamber of Commerce agreed to provide public outreach to any affected neighborhoods.

To date the Chamber has recruited 18 local businesses, including 15 restaurants, one produce store and one athletic facility, to the "Green Albany" project. As this project continues to recruit more and more businesses and a full Albany route is put into place, the initial difficulties experienced by the program should be resolved.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

None.