

**CITY OF ALBANY
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
STAFF REPORT**

Agenda Date: 12/01/2008

Reviewed by: JRL

SUBJECT: Support for Albany Business District during Holiday Season

REPORT BY: Judy Lieberman, Assistant City Administrator

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Consider allocation of Council discretionary funds to support Albany Businesses during the upcoming Holiday season.

BACKGROUND

The holiday season is often a “make or break” time period for small businesses. As economic times worsen, it is worth considering any opportunities the City may have to support local businesses over the holiday season by promoting our local business district. Opportunities include support for the “Solano Nights Holiday Stroll,” (see attached description); and for related publicity and marketing, holiday decorations, etc., that may increase the attractiveness of Solano or San Pablo Avenue as a place for people to shop, dine, use personal services (hair, nails, spa, etc.) and gather to enjoy the holiday season. It should be noted that Solano Avenue was recently featured in the December issue of Sunset Magazine. (Attachment included)

DISCUSSION

City staff, the Solano Avenue Association, and the Albany Chamber have been working together with the city’s economic development consultants to prepare and implement a strategic plan for the upcoming year. However, staff is also working to immediately implement any programs that can be of assistance to local businesses. So far, these efforts have been well received and much appreciated. The potential to assist, even in a small way, at this difficult time, could be very useful to the long-term health of our business community. Potential specific suggestions from the SAA and the Albany Chamber are as follows:

- Purchase and install lights and decorations at the intersection of San Pablo and Solano Avenues. This would benefit both commercial streets, serving as a gateway to the Albany business district. Ideally, this would include Solar Powered LED holiday lights on light posts and/or trees for a block on either side of that intersection (depending on costs.) This is an item that would be valuable in future years as well.

- Provide small reimbursement grants (say \$100) to individual businesses for decorating their storefronts for the holidays. This is more direct aid to businesses, but directed in a way that makes Albany a more appealing place for holiday shopping. Some issues of accounting would need to be resolved.
- Produce a TV and/or radio ad for holiday shopping in Albany, although it might be too late to pull together what is needed to get this done in time for the holidays.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT

Encouraging people to shop locally supports our local community and can decrease car transportation to other shopping districts.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Allocation of up to \$5000 from the Council discretionary fund to support the Solano/San Pablo Business district.

Attachments

1. Solano Nights – Holiday Stroll
2. Sunset Magazine feature on Solano Avenue