



Councilmember Sophie Hahn
City of Berkeley, District 5

SUPPLEMENTAL AGENDA MATERIAL for Supplemental Packet 1

Meeting Date: April 26, 2022

Item Number: 30

Item Description: Co-Sponsorship and Budget Referral for the Solano Avenue Stroll

Submitted by: Councilmember Sophie Hahn

Renaming the item from “Co-Sponsorship and Budget Referral for the Solano Avenue Stroll” to “Co-Sponsorship and Budget ~~Referral~~ Allocation for the Solano Avenue Stroll,” to more accurately reflect the item recommendation and resolution.

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council
From: Councilmembers Sophie Hahn (Author) and Susan Wengraf (Co-Sponsor) and Kate Harrison (Co-Sponsor)
Subject: Co-Sponsorship and Budget Allocation for the Solano Avenue Stroll

RECOMMENDATION

1. Adopt a Resolution for the City of Berkeley to Co-Sponsor the Solano Avenue Association's 2022 and 2023 Solano Avenue Stroll events, currently scheduled for Sunday, September 11, 2022 and Sunday, September 10, 2023, taking place on Solano Avenue in both Berkeley and Albany; and
2. Resolve to provide in-kind City services previously provided at no cost to the Solano Stroll, including but not limited to police, fire, zero waste, and public works, at no cost to the September 2022 and 2023 Solano Stroll events, and allocate \$20,000 per year for FY 2023 and 2024 (\$40,000 total) for the Solano Avenue Stroll, to support the September 2022 and 2023 Stroll events.

CURRENT SITUATION AND ITS EFFECTS

This year the need for people to reconnect with their community in safe and celebratory ways is more important than ever. The Solano Avenue Stroll (the "Stroll" or the "Solano Stroll"), a multicultural outdoor event that draws visitors of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities from Berkeley and neighboring communities, provides the perfect opportunity, especially in light of the fact that some individuals continue to feel more comfortable in outdoor settings. It's been a long 2 years of hibernation and the community is hungry for this singular opportunity to stroll, dance, sing, learn, eat, shop, and enjoy the lively company of neighbors, friends, artists, musicians, shopkeepers, and the broader East Bay community.

The annual Solano Avenue Stroll is a public event which brings together the expression, enjoyment, and diversity of our communities in *an inclusive, no-barrier, family-friendly, outdoor celebration that is and always has been free* to the public. It is the largest street fair in the East Bay, drawing crowds of up to 250,000 people over the course of a single day, and spans two cities: Berkeley and Albany. The scale and importance of this free public celebration and event is unique in Berkeley and the region, and requires a singular level of support and partnership from both the cities of Berkeley and Albany.

The 2022 Stroll, the Association's 48th Annual event (the pandemic resulted in cancellation of the past two years' events), is scheduled to take place on Sunday, September 11 and, with the City of Berkeley's co-sponsorship and support, will once again span the entirety of Solano Avenue, both in Berkeley and Albany. The 2023 Stroll is currently scheduled to take place on

Sunday, September 10, 2023. These events are each expected to draw up to 250,000 participants, who can feel comfortable attending celebratory outdoor events after an extended period of social isolation.

Producing the Stroll is a uniquely complex and time-consuming undertaking. The Solano Avenue Association, with a board of 15 volunteers - who also own and run their own local businesses - works diligently to produce the Stroll on an exceptionally frugal "shoestring" budget.

In light of the extra importance of an event like the Stroll at this time, and increased costs over the years, the organizers look forward to continued partnership from the City of Berkeley through both in-kind donations of City services and an annual sponsorship amount of \$20,000, to support the North Berkeley Bart shuttle and other out-of-pocket expenses. They also look forward to working more closely than ever with the City of Berkeley, all Councilmembers, Visit Berkeley, and the Berkeley Chamber, among others, to ensure everyone in Berkeley knows *their Stroll is back, and they are cordially invited.*

To facilitate continuity of planning and support for this long-standing annual event, this item seeks to commit City sponsorship, free in-kind services, and a modest sponsorship donation for both the September 2022 and September 2023 events (which fall in FY 2023 and 2024).

BACKGROUND



The Solano Avenue Association was organized in 1974 and achieved nonprofit status in 1983. The Solano Avenue Stroll, the Association's signature annual event, draws approximately 250,000 people over the course of a free, outdoor, closed-street, family-friendly, smoke- and alcohol-free one-day event which spans 26 blocks and more than a full mile of Solano Avenue

in both Berkeley and Albany, from The Alameda to San Pablo Avenue. In 2000, the Solano Avenue Stroll became an official "[Local Legacy](#)," installed into the United States Library of Congress with the help of Congresswoman Barbara Lee, and was recognized as celebrating "America's rich diverse culture."

Now in its 48th year, the Solano Avenue Stroll has been sponsored with both services and funds by the Cities of Berkeley and Albany for longer than the Solano Avenue Association has records; meaning at least 20 years.

The Stroll draws both locals and visitors. In 2013, a zip code survey was taken from 453 event goers and recorded 139 different zip codes from across the Bay Area. On the east end, the Stroll is referred to as "Berkeley's Reunion," and on the west end much of Albany turns out. Both ends are united by the festive Parade that kicks-off the event, starting at the top of the street with dancers, bands, floats and youth and families from many schools and organizations.

The Solano Avenue Association works actively to minimize the environmental impact of the Stroll. In addition to regular AC Transit service, free event-day shuttles provide rides from 10AM to 7PM to and from the North Berkeley Bart Station and up and down the length of Marin Avenue, making stops at intersections with stop lights on Marin. Free valet bicycle parking is available at Wells Fargo bank (1800 Solano at Modoc) and a vacant lot (1254 Solano at Masonic). Recycling and composting are part of the zero waste ethos of the event.

This year, the Solano Avenue Association will be requiring all vendors to provide only compostable bags and foodware, unless items are not available due to supply chain challenges, or for health and safety reasons (to avoid spilling of hot liquids, for example). Recycling and composting bins have and will continue to be provided along the entire route of the event.

The Solano Stroll typically features over 500 vendors, including 50 entertainers representing a wide variety of cultures, food from 50 booths and local restaurants representing cuisines from all the continents, 150 government and non-profit agencies, 150 juried handcrafters, a 75-participant parade with local bands, performers, schools, and organizations, safe mechanical rides for children, and more.

The Stroll gives people from near and far a rare opportunity to see, experience and learn about everything our unique community has to offer. The event is family friendly and supported by diverse not for profit and government organizations. Approximately 75% of participating non-profits use Berkeley booth locations to broadcast their mission to the public. The event allows for meaningful outreach and direct contact with the populations that these vital community organizations serve, including low income clients who may have few other free and public opportunities to learn of available programs and services, and offers a unique opportunity to recruit volunteers and donors.

There is a "green zone" for environmental organizations, an area for health and wellness organizations, affordable housing and homeless services providers, libraries, police, fire and other city and county departments, schools, sports teams, transit providers, student and

neighborhood associations, faith institutions, and political parties and associations, among others. Many elected officials from the State, County, region and local cities and school districts also participate, to connect in person with the hundreds of thousands of constituents who attend the Stroll. All of these groups and individuals rely on the unique exposure the Solano Stroll provides and consider participation a key annual activity to connect with stakeholders and potential clients. Ninety-two percent of participating organizations and vendors return each year. After a two-year hiatus, the opportunities provided by the Stroll to connect with the public are particularly important.

A list of recent Stroll business, arts, and organizational participants is attached to hereto.

Due to the popularity and reputation of the Solano Avenue Stroll, both the cities of Berkeley and Albany, as well as the community at large, have benefitted from the exposure the event has garnered. Many local businesses and organizations have gained a loyal following by first participating as a vendor at the event, and some have found permanent store-front homes along Solano Avenue and now contribute to the local economy with community-oriented goods and services. The Stroll draws significant traffic to local restaurants, retail businesses, and arts and culture venues who participate in the event. Most recently, there are a number of businesses that have made Solano home during the pandemic, risking an investment in our local economy at a very challenging time, and the Stroll will provide a great opportunity for the community to discover and welcome them to the neighborhood.

Solano Avenue merchants, longstanding and newly arrived, benefit from the exposure to approximately 250,000 potential customers who see Solano's products and services. While not every business registers a boost in sales the day of the Stroll, positive economic activity generated by the event continues for months.¹

While there remains some uncertainty due to the pandemic, the Solano Avenue Association has consulted with organizations hosting similar outdoor events in the region and has learned that many are successfully planning and executing their events despite the challenges. Many past Stroll participants and supporters have been reaching out to the Association in hopes of attending or participating in the Solano Stroll this year, and going forward. Examples of outreach the Association has received, asking for the event to move forward, include the following:

"We are very much in support of the return of the Solano Stroll for 2022. As vendors we rely on these types of events for income and this show has always been a highlight on our calendar. It is vital, critical and essential that all cities give proper attention to these cultural events that make our geographic home a living breathing entity. Please bring it back. For Berkeley" – Jacob C.

¹ <https://www.solanoavenueassn.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/solanoavenuestrollhistory.pdf>

“Hello, We would LOVE to be able to have a booth at the Solano Stroll on Sunday September 11th! Hopefully it will happen! It was great fun and such a success. Thank you and please keep us updated!” – Kipp H. Berkeley

“We’ve been artists at the “Stroll” for 25 years (!) and we would LOVE to see it return in 2022! It’s always been one of our favorite events for many reasons; it’s very well-organized by the powers that be- and supported by the public fabulously! We’ve heard from SO many past customers and attendees that have missed it and also want it to return! Please allow it to return in September of 2022; don’t let it become a victim of covid!” – Kim & Mark P (After the Gold Rush)

“This is one of my best markets and a big boost to my economy. I see all my old friends and make new! LOVE IT!” – Diane A Multiple Threads

“The Solano Stroll is such a wonderful opportunity to see all of my Berkeley friends. I grew up in Berkeley and miss it. It is well organized and I thank you all who work so hard to make it happen.” – Nicki T. Los Gatos

“California Revels has participated with and supported for many years the Solano Stroll. It’s a highlight of our Fall and we believe our Solstice Ensemble singers provide one of the high points for passers by.”

The Stroll also raises revenues and enhances the City’s reputation locally and regionally, engendering significant goodwill. The event is well-known and beloved by the community and an opportunity for people beyond Berkeley and Albany to discover these communities, and has been a source of pride for both Berkeley and Albany for five decades.

It takes about 600 staff-hours to produce the Solano Stroll, plus thousands of additional volunteer hours, and the event is one of only four in the United States and Canada that operates in two municipalities simultaneously. The scale and complexity of the Solano Stroll is unique and requires coordination among municipalities and with the Solano Avenue Association to ensure security, zero waste, toilet facilities, parade staging, set-up and take-down of performance, commerce, and event spaces, electricity, barricades, and other services and elements. Despite the magnitude of the Stroll, Solano Avenue is virtually spotless and fully restored to normal operations within 24 hours of the close of the event.

This item asks the City of Berkeley to register its official sponsorship of the September 2022 and 2023 Stroll events (taking place in FY 2023 and 2024) with a resolution, a commitment to continue providing services traditionally offered to the Stroll at no cost, and a budget allocation of \$20,000 in sponsorship for each of the two years (for a total of \$40,000 from the FY 2023/2024 Budget). In sponsoring the Stroll in all these ways, Berkeley joins the City of Albany and local businesses including Albany Subaru, Mechanics Bank, Belmont Village, John Muir UCSF Health, Winkler Real Estate Group, and Safeway, and acknowledges the thousands of volunteer hours donated by the Solano Avenue Association Board of Directors and other volunteers.

FISCAL IMPACTS OF RECOMMENDATION

As noted above, the Solano Avenue Stroll provides day-of and residual income to local businesses, and generates significant regional exposure and goodwill, contributing to the local tax base and economy. The item requests \$40,000 in sponsorships over two years (\$20,000 per year) and donation of in-kind services associated with the Solano Stroll event.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The Stroll minimizes climate impacts by operating on a street easily accessed by numerous AC Transit bus routes, and offering a popular no-cost shuttle to and from the Berkeley Bart Station, plus free valet bike parking at both ends of Solano Avenue. Ample additional bike parking is available throughout the area of the Stroll, and many participants simply walk from home to participate. In addition, the Solano Stroll provides compost and recycling facilities throughout the event, and will prohibit the use of non-compostable bags and throw-away foodware items by all vendors, except where necessary for health and safety or due to supply chain constraints.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Sophie Hahn, (510) 981-7150

Attachments

1. Resolution
2. Recent Booth and Parade Participants List

RESOLUTION NO. – N.S.
CITY OF BERKELEY CO-SPONSORSHIP AND SUPPORT
FOR THE 2022 AND 2023 SOLANO AVENUE STROLL EVENTS

WHEREAS, The annual Solano Avenue Stroll is a public event which brings together the expression, enjoyment, and diversity of our community in an inclusive, no-barrier, family-friendly, outdoor celebration that is and always has been free to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Solano Avenue Stroll is the largest street fair in the East Bay, drawing crowds of up to 250,000 people over the course of a single day, spanning two cities: Berkeley and Albany; and

WHEREAS, The scale and importance of this free public celebration is unique in Berkeley and the region, and requires a singular level of support and partnership from both the cities of Berkeley and Albany; and

WHEREAS, The Solano Avenue Stroll, now in its 48th year, has been sponsored with both in-kind services and funds by the cities of Berkeley and Albany for longer than the Solano Avenue Association has records; at least 20 years; and

WHEREAS, The Solano Stroll typically features over 500 vendors, including 50 entertainers representing a wide variety of cultures, food from 50 booths and local restaurants representing cuisines from all the continents, 150 government and non-profit agencies, 150 juried handcrafters, a 75-participant parade with local bands, performers, schools, and organizations, safe mechanical rides for children, and more; and

WHEREAS, The Solano Stroll is well-known and beloved by the community and has been a source of pride for both Berkeley and Albany for almost five decades; and

WHEREAS, The Solano Stroll raises revenues and enhances the City's reputation locally and regionally, engendering significant goodwill; and

WHEREAS, The Solano Avenue Association, producer of the Stroll event, works actively to minimize the environmental impact of the Stroll, providing a free Shuttle to and from North Berkeley Bart station, free valet bike parking at both ends of the Avenue, and will require vendors to offer only compostable bags and foodware; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of the diversity and reach of the event, the Solano Avenue Stroll has had the honor of being selected by Congresswoman Barbara Lee for inclusion at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. as a "National Local Legacy"; and

WHEREAS, the City of Berkeley has a longstanding practice of providing annual support for the Solano Avenue Stroll through cash grants and the provision of in-kind services at no cost to the Solano Avenue Association; and

WHEREAS, This and next year's Solano Avenue Strolls are especially important to connect our community after two years of COVID-related isolation;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Berkeley that the City of Berkeley shall be an official Co-Sponsor of the Solano Avenue Association's 2022 and 2023 Solano Avenue Stroll events, currently scheduled for Sunday, September 11, 2022 and Sunday, September 10, 2023, taking place on Solano Avenue in both Berkeley and Albany; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT the City of Berkeley shall provide in-kind City services to the Solano Stroll, including but not limited to police, fire, zero waste, and public works services, at no cost to the September 2022 and 2023 Solano Avenue Stroll events, and shall further support the 2022 and 2023 Stroll events with grants of \$20,000 for each event, for a total of \$40,000 over Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024.