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Finding Funds: Granted, It's an Investment!

In a recent post to our email list-serve Steve Eastis, executive director of Main Street Upland Inc., posed a common query: *"Please let me know what grants are out there for helping with operations of downtown programs."*

Since most of the replies to this query were "please share what you find," a bit of print space devoted to this topic is appropriate.

Seek and, Perhaps, You Shall Find

Rachael Lavezzo-Snedecor, Executive Director, Livermore Downtown Inc., shared her experience in the search for grant funding as reprinted here:

"As far as grants that support the "program" those are very hard to come by if at all. Most grants are specific to a project that your downtown program is implementing or developing. For instance, PG&E grants are available to fund projects that you have that are helping with the economic health of your businesses such as training , but (these grants) can not be directed to support the administrative costs of your association.

Make sure you have a good buddy at your City offices who will forward grant announcements to you as they are usually sent to all city governments. Federal grants for transportation, going green grants, Preserve America grants, Certified Local Government (CA Office of Historic Preservation)

grants etc. are all worth taking a look at to see if you can find a way to leverage the requirements to fit within something that your association would like to have the funds for in your downtown."

Deanna Carvey, Executive Director, Old Town Salinas Association notes that

"If you are a 501 (c) (6) corporation, you will not fit into as many boxes as a 501 (c) (3). We have a foundation 501 (c) (3) as well, set up for educational purposes, and we are looking for grants to fund business education for our members."

In accord with these suggestions, Lani Lott, President, LL Consulting notes:

"I have worked with communities that have been able to leverage grants in the area of arts, cultural and entertainment: Primarily performing art venues, art related projects, art in public spaces, etc. Having a 501 (c) (3) is usually required so either establish that nonprofit status or partner with another organization.

Most grants...allow you to build in administrative "overhead" into the

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President's Message

Reflecting on the "R" Word

It's out there. I heard it again this morning. The **R** word: **RECESSION!** How do you respond to the merchants on Main Street that are struggling to pay their rent and stay in business?

Even for seasoned managers, there is that gut reflex to react by placing more ads or organizing extra promotions. However, if you have a solid work plan in place its better to focus on working your plan. Don't fall into the trap of diluting your resources, physical and financial. Instead, place your focus on the critical areas of your organization.

What is the mission of your organization? When was the last time you reviewed and updated it? Does your membership, board members and vendors know your mission?

What is the vision of your organization? Take the time to

think through where your organization is headed and what the future looks like. Without this sort of strategic reflection, you'll never attain a clear vision for success.

How effective are your management systems? Have you reviewed each one from the perspective of a board member or business owner?

Is your service beyond expectations? When was the last time you surveyed your membership to see what they need? When was the last time you surveyed or visited programs in adjacent communities? What do they do differently or better?

How effective is your communication? How do you keep board members, vendors, business owners and employees informed as to what is taking place in your organization? Are you using a method that is best for them or for you?

Do you devote ample resources to promotional efforts in order to achieve your vision? How do you measure the effectiveness of



marketing expenditures? Is there really a return on investment or are you doing the same things as always because of expectations?

What human resources do you need to achieve your goals? Is your current staff up to the task of achieving the mission?

What financial systems are in place to take you to the next level? Is it time to covert your Main Street Program to a business improvement district or you business improvement district to a property based improvement district?

Do you have a written plan in place that states the goals of your organization on a short, mid and long-term basis? What controls and measurements are in place to gauge your progress?

If you were able to confidently answer all the questions, then continue to move forward as the leader your organization deserves and stay the course. Work your plan. If not, devote some time and energy to getting those answers and developing programs to strengthen and grow your organization.

Good luck! And as always let CDA know how we can partner with you for success.

Roland Peterson

Mary Coburn

Legislative Update

California voters, who recently rejected Proposition 90 that would have made a significant number of changes to eminent domain law, will now face two more ballot measures that attempt to change eminent domain law in California. Both will be on the primary ballot on June 3. Propositions 98 and 99 have both qualified for the ballot, and Proposition 98 is the more restrictive of the two. Look for future correspondence from CDA as we will try to inform you in greater detail of the likely impacts if either one or both pass.

As mentioned in a previous newsletter, CDA is still working on trying to get a bill into the legislature on alcohol sales in full-service restaurants in smaller population counties. In the last legislative session, Senator Cox passed a bill that allowed for an additional ten such permits in Mono County. Alternative models appear likely to be explored, such as sales across county lines, leases of alcohol permits, and perhaps more. If and when we can get to a bill to be introduced in the legislature that supports our efforts, we will let you know and ask for your letters of support to elected representatives.

Mark Your Calendars!

Downtown - Where Everything Comes Together

2008 Annual Conference October 1-3 in Santa Rosa!

Santa Rosa: a vibrant city overflowing with all you love about California. Wine country and farm country, redwood forests and rivers, lakes and ocean. And in the center, a charming, thriving downtown, lined with intriguing shops and restaurants that delight casual diners and epicureans alike. Famous chefs flock to Santa Rosa – not only for the vineyards, but for all the abundant local produce, dairy, meat, and seafood. The restaurant business is booming here, along with agriculture, high-tech, bio-medical, education, environmental, and, of course, tourism. Whether you're into safaris or spas, golf or gardens, Snoopy or Snoop Dogg – or all of the above – you can have it all in Santa Rosa.

At CDA's 2008 annual conference, we will feast on "California's Cornucopia" while we explore what it takes to "bring it together" in downtowns large and small across the state.



Call for Presentations

Help us bring it all together at our 2008 Annual Conference. We welcome proposals for premiere educational sessions that showcase strategies and innovative solutions to business district challenges and present effective methods for operating successful programs that energize a district or an organization. We also seek motivational sessions geared to stimulating creative thinking and to developing leaders who are skilled in bringing together the elements for business district success.

If you have a request for a session on a particular topic, or you wish to propose a session presented by you, a panel, or a dynamic speaker you have heard, you may download a proposal form from our website, or

email Laura Cole-Rowe at conference@californiadowntown.com. Our 2008 conference will be most successful if we have our members share their successes and suggestions.

Talking Trash: The Green Giant with a Big Belly

Out of sight. Out of mind. When it comes to trash, if you have reason to pause to think about trash collection while walking along a street, it is a good indication that there is room for improvement.

That is exactly what came to my mind last summer when I had the good fortune to spend several weeks in Boston, one of our country's most beautiful cities. On residential streets, the absence of alleyways has, no doubt, caused a tricky proposition for those tasked with managing the waste of today's urban dwellers. Twice a week, brownstone residents take their trash and place it on the sidewalk curb for pickup. These trash piles include not only "bagged" trash (loosely defined as contained in something "baggy") but also, anything else a household deems to be waste, such as ironing boards, old desks, sofas, clothing, along with separately bagged--again, loosely defined-- recyclables.

Like clockwork, the garbage collectors roar on through the neighborhoods, staking their claims to

Boston's highly prized curbs and chug-a-lug the bountiful waste. Unfortunately, after the garbage collectors sweep through, what remains on the sidewalk is everything that has fallen out of the bags, whether due to flimsy containers or late night scroungers. It is not a pretty sight.

The presence of trash on otherwise lovely streets had me stumped: How can it be that here, in the midst of dense intellectual matter (Harvard, Boston U, Northeastern and MIT minds roam these streets too) no one has figured out how to keep this city litter free?

The exception are the well-managed business districts, whose primeval *raison d'être* are keeping streets clean and safe.

Business districts obsess over trash collection (just peruse an annual report where the pounds of trash collected are proudly reported.) But even our keenest business district vultures can't always keep pace with waste production.



A common sight along lovely Boston Streets

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Member Profile

Stockton's Kathy Miller Brings Design Skills to Downtown

Like many in this field, Kathy Miller had never considered working for a downtown association. She was an interior designer for over fifteen years. When she and her husband moved to Stockton after seventeen years in Seattle, she wanted to connect with her new community and volunteered for Stockton's inaugural First Night New Year's Eve Celebration. She eventually became president of that organization and, as a result, worked closely with city staff. Although she had a busy interior design business, it didn't give her the people contact that her volunteer work did. About the time her youngest was heading to college, the executive director's position at the Downtown Stockton Alliance was open, and the city staff she had worked so closely with encouraged her to apply. She thought "Why not?" and threw her hat in the ring. March 1 marked her fourth anniversary in the job.



Today, Kathy sees the role of Downtown Manager as important. "We make valuable contributions to our communities, which is very rewarding personally," she says. She believes in education for those who choose this line of work, and is one of the first ever graduates of CSU San Bernardino's Certified Downtown Professional program, developed in partnership with CDA. She and at least two of her staff attend the annual CDA conferences and she says, "I wish I could take all our supervisors."

Stockton has seen significant growth in the past five years, with a current population of 325,000. The Downtown Alliance is a PBID has a budget of \$1.2 million. There are 27 to 30 full and part time people on staff, with an office staff of five, nine hospitality guides and thirteen maintenance technicians. "The Alliance is on the job 24/7," said Miller.

While every city faces the challenges of the current state economy, Stockton has several unique initiatives to assist in dealing with them. First, the Alliance will soon be overseeing most of the downtown maintenance, including sidewalks, plazas and streetscapes. Stockton is also developing an entertainment district, to be managed by the Alliance, and re-branding the community. Kathy and City of Stockton staff made their initial contacts with the Jim Peters of the Responsible Hospitality Institute and Roger Brooks of Destination Development, their eventual consultants for, respectively, the entertainment district and branding, at the 2006 CDA conference in Monterey. While Stockton has not traditionally been a tourist area, that's changing and the new district and marketing plan will aid that change.

Miller says a good executive director has to be able to multi-task, be good with people as well as numbers, and be creative. "It takes a blend of right and left brain thinking," she said laughing. "I love it."

Craig Smith
Executive Director, Downtown Napa

About Downtown Stockton Alliance

The Downtown Stockton Management District is a public/private partnership uniting almost 300 property owners and 1300 downtown businesses. After a series of public meetings with property owners and stakeholders, an election was held in the summer of 1997 and the Downtown Stockton Management District was formed with an initial five-year assessment period. The Downtown Stockton Alliance was incorporated in 1996 as a 501(c)(6) corporation for the purpose of managing the district, which began operations in January, 1998. In 2002, the District was renewed for a second five-year period with 82% approval by assessed property owners. In 2006, the Mission Statement of the Downtown Stockton Alliance was updated to reflect ongoing revitalization successes.

On July 10, 2007, the Stockton City Council approved the reestablishment of the Downtown Stockton Management District for a ten year period, after receiving 84.6% ballot support from downtown property owners. This marks the Downtown Property and Business Improvement District's (PBID) second renewal since its inception as California's second PBID, in 1997.

As defined in the Downtown Stockton District Management Plan, the five primary goals of the Management District are:

1. Develop and implement an aggressive outreach marketing program to attract new downtown investment and new businesses to the central city.
2. Promote existing events and create new events and programs which draw local residents and visitors to downtown Stockton from throughout Northern California.
3. Form public policy for downtown's revitalization and advance the interests and rights of downtown property owners and businesses, including enhanced incentives and expedited permitting.
4. Implement a broader sidewalk cleaning, graffiti and litter abatement and private property improvement program to enhance the overall appearance of downtown and promote a sense of safety and security.
5. Establish and grow an every-day Hospitality & Information Guide program to welcome visitors, employees, and residents to downtown Stockton.

Location: The District includes approximately 123 blocks in the downtown, central historic, core area and along both north and south shores of the Stockton Deepwater Channel, including Central Parking District surface lots on Fremont Street, the U.S. Post Office, the ACE Station, and additional parcels on the south shore. This is approximately 15 additional blocks.

Budget: Total property assessment Management District budget for 2008, is \$1,249,829. The total business assessment Management District budget for 2008 is \$28,500.

Maximum Assessment: Property assessments may be subject to changes, not to exceed four percent (4%) per year, subject to approval by the Board of Directors.

City Services: The City of Stockton continues the existing policy of maintaining existing levels of services within the district, per the first ten years of the district.

The Survey Says

Support for “Buy Local” Boosted Holiday Spending at Independent Stores

As major chains report weak holiday sales, a nationwide survey of 1,382 independent retailers has found that a desire to support locally owned businesses is emerging as a factor in people’s shopping choices.

The survey, which included retailers in all 50 states and Washington, D.C., found that, even in a difficult economic climate, many independent retailers are holding their own and even seeing sales gains by emphasizing their local ownership and community roots.

The survey found that independent retailers in cities with active “Buy Local” campaigns reported much larger increases in holiday sales on average than those in cities without such campaigns. In the last few years, “Buy Local” campaigns have been launched by local business alliances in more than three dozen communities. Independent retailers in these cities reported an average gain in sales of about 2% over the 2006 holiday season, while those in cities without “Buy Local” campaigns saw an increase of less than 0.5%.

“People made a special effort to shop locally and were vocal about their support,” one retailer commented. Another reported: “Our customers are responding to hearing this message both locally and nationally.”

The survey was undertaken by the Independent Business Forum, a newly formed network of trade associations and other organizations that represent independent businesses. Participating organizations include the American Booksellers Association, the American Independent Business Alliance, the American Specialty Toy Retailers Association, the Coalition of Independent Music Stores, the Gift & Home Trade Association, the Independent Florist Association, the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, the National Bicycle Dealers Association, and the North American Retail Dealers Association.

“It’s heartening to see that so many consumers understand the important role independent retailers play in their communities—and that they are increasingly choosing to ‘shop local,’” said Oren Teicher, chief operating officer of the American Booksellers Association. “Study after study has made clear that locally owned businesses have a far greater

positive economic impact on their communities, contribute more to local charities, and are largely responsible for our towns and cities retaining their unique characteristics.”

“Independent retailers are especially susceptible to a sluggish economy, so it is gratifying to learn that consumers are conscious that where they shop matters a great deal to their community,” said Kathleen McHugh, executive director of the American Specialty Toy Retailing Association.

“We’re seeing the beginnings of a shift in people’s shopping choices, particularly in places where ‘buy local’ campaigns have brought this to the forefront of public consciousness,” said Stacy Mitchell, author of *Big-Box Swindle* and senior researcher for the Institute for Local Self-Reliance, which administered the survey.

The Independent Business Forum plans to repeat the survey next year. The group is also collaborating on initiatives to increase public awareness of the value of locally owned businesses and to address public policy issues that affect independent businesses.

“We continue to see the power independent businesses and communities gain through local Independent Business Alliances, so it makes sense for advocates of independent businesses to organize and build on that success nationally,” said Jennifer Rockne, executive director of the American Independent Business Alliance, which helped to convene the Independent Business Forum.

“We’re seeing the beginnings of a shift in people’s shopping choices, particularly in places where ‘buy local’ campaigns have brought this to the forefront of public consciousness”

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Funding - Continued from page 1

grant request, which can directly assist with salaries and operationa costs.”

Roger Harrington, President, Harrington Decorating Company, added that to his knowledge, “...No city has been able to garner more grant money than the City of Paramount! They spent more than \$200,000.00 on banners in a very short period of time. As this was a rather large expenditure for a city of this size, I inquired as to the source of all these funds. I was told that much of the funding was from grants.”

So the short answer is: Yes, there is grant money available for various business district improvement projects, however finding it and securing it may depend on whether you have the time and staff available to locate the funds that fit the proposed project.

Finding the Funders

Many BIDs have had the benefit of grants funded by state and city governments and redevelopment agencies. Matching grants for façade renovation, building renovation and streetscape improvements, public art projects are most common. What’s a BID to do if the traditional sources are not delivering? It’s time to be creative and broaden the search.

There are many resources available to assist your organization in developing finesse in identifying and securing grant opportunities. Listed below are a few that offer superior information and training opportunities:

The Foundation Center – (www.foundationcenter.org) is a treasure trove of resources and education, offering classroom and online training, plus FREE webinars on grant seeking basics, finding funders, fund-raising planning and more. It is also offers an extensive fee-based online subscription grant maker directory that may be worth exploring.

While many grant database services are costly propositions (this

Preserve America Grants

Preserve America grants are awarded to State Historic Preservation Officers and Preserve America Communities to support preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education and historic preservation planning.

Several California city’s benefited from Preserve America grants in 2007. They include:

- ◆ The City of Santa Monica, awarded \$100,000 to promote the historic and cultural value of the Santa Monica Pier through a yearlong celebration and marketing campaign, “100 Years in the Past, 100 Years in the Future,” with the goal of enriching the heritage tourism experience of visitors and provoking a deeper respect for the integral importance of the Santa Monica Pier.
- ◆ The City of Weaverville, awarded \$28,754 to promote local heritage festivals, advertise local museum exhibits, and develop and implement way-finding and identity-building elements specified in the Weaverville Revitalization Plan.
- ◆ The City of San Clemente was awarded a matching grant of \$30,000 to develop a “way-finding” program to direct visitors to city hall, the downtown, the Municipal Pier, and North Beach historical and cultural resources.

Preserve America is a White House initiative that encourages and supports community efforts to preserve and enjoy our cultural and natural heritage through ...strengthening regional identities and local pride, increasing local participation in preserving the country’s cultural and natural heritage assets, and supporting the economic vitality of the nation’s communities.

Cities, counties, towns, as well as eligible neighborhoods within cities with a population of 200,000 or more may apply to be recognized as “Preserve America communities.” Communities applying for designation must demonstrate use of historic assets for economic development and community revitalization. Designated communities may compete for Preserve America grants.

The following CDA Members are California Preserve America Communities Fresno, Monterey, Richmond, San Clemente, Santa Ana, Santa Barbara, Santa Monica and Santa Rosa.

Guidelines, applications, and other information is available online at preserveamerica.gov

is where your City partnership is valuable), there are some no cost resources. For example, Compass Point Non Profit Services (www.compasspoint.org) in San Francisco, offers an East Bay Funders Directory and a Silicon Valley Funders Directory, both of which are searchable databases of funders who are located or serve Northern California organizations.

Nozasearch.com, an online database that indexes charitable donation records from foundations, companies and individuals, has emerged as an innovative leader in free information sharing. Its database is available for a cursory search without a subscription. However, accessing detailed information remains fee-based.

In a January, 2008 article about NOZA in the Santa Barbara News Press, NOZA founder Craig Harris said, “Aside from the IRS, we have the largest source of searchable data for charitable organizations

on the planet.” As of December 2007, the database boasted more than 28 million donation records (this includes individual donors) and is adding them at the rate of nearly 250,000 per week. Most useful to nonprofits, these records can be searched by name, region, cause, donation amount, or any combination of those criteria.

In that same article, it was noted that in 2006, “close to \$300 billion was donated to nonprofit organizations in the United States. But to raise necessary operating funds, charities spent as much as \$100 billion, according to the higher estimates, in donor research, event hosting, and other fund-raising expenses.”

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Trash - Continued from page 3

So what is the solution? Fortunately, I am not the only one to ponder Boston's trash dilemmas, as one of the most interesting trash innovations to date--the BigBelly Solar Trash Compactor--is chomping on trash in the US and beyond and making a difference.

"The idea (for BigBelly) hit me probably about six years ago, when I was walking down a busy street in Boston," says MIT Alum Jim Poss, "and I noticed that all the garbage cans were overflowing with mounds of garbage. And it just hit me that there's a better way." In addition to the unsightly mess, Poss says he was also inspired by the diesel-devouring garbage trucks used to collect the trash: "They are the least efficient vehicles on the road...and they idle about 70 percent of the time."

With a background in electric cars, this self-described gadget-nerd put his brain power to work and created the first solar-powered trash compactor designed to take a big bite out of trash collection frequency. And it's working.

According to Big Belly Solar, in early 2006, Boston Mayor Thomas Menino decided to do a pilot program geared toward streamlining the collection process. He bought 50 BigBelly solar powered trash compactors.

During the next year, the city monitored the machines. It found that much fewer trash collections were needed where BigBelly was deployed. It also found a reduction in litter which made constituents very happy. Tim McCarthy, of Boston



The BigBelly compacts trash to contain five times that of a comparably sized unit.

Public Works, said about the pilot: "The results have been excellent. The public response has been nothing but positive, and we have realized the desired benefits for the city. We intend to move forward through the budget process toward a city-wide deployment starting this spring (2007)."

In California, Big Belly is expanding its consumption across the state. According to Ernest Moniz, the West Coast Sales Representative, there are now 100 Big Belly's installed in cities ranging from Downtown Los Angeles, Santa Monica, Anaheim, Covina, Encinitas, Sacramento, Santa Cruz, Ventura as well as The San Diego Zoo, and private companies Cisco and Google. Says Moniz "Last year there were only four in California. They have been well received and everyone seems happy with them." The company expects an additional Big Belly growth spurt when its new recycle bins hit the market later this year.

Currently, the Big Belly, at approximately \$4,000 per unit, is a big investment, but it is one that is paying off in reduced trash collection frequency. The city of Pasadena installed four units in a pilot program funded by private donations, which attests to the appeal of this innovation as a benefit to the community.

For more information, visit the Big Belly Solar website at www.bigbellsolar.com or call Ernest Moniz at 866-824-8865. He can refer you to existing customers and distributors in California.

Carol Thompson

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This is no small point. In Lani Lott's reply to the list-serve query, she cautions, "...like anything, researching, writing, applying and managing the bloody thing can make a grant not as productive or cost effective as it sounds."

Still, if grants remain an appealing adjunct to the assessment fees that keep your organization running, then skillfully applying for them is critical to maximizing the cost-benefit ratio. Fortunately, there are many free resources available to support this effort.

www.grantproposal.com is a site devoted to providing free resources for both advanced grant writing consultants and inexperienced nonprofit staff. The site offers concise and easy to follow guides to grant writing, while also addressing how a small organization may cost effectively utilize a professional grantwriter's expertise. In their "Getting Started" section, they offer this encouraging advice for novice grant seekers:

Small nonprofit organizations without the discretionary funds to hire a grantwriting specialist must decide whether to educate existing staff in proposal preparation, recruit a local volunteer with solid writing skills, or hire a fund-raising consultant. Fortunately, free web resources can help beginners learn the basics of grantwriting. Of course, be realistic — the designated staff person should already know the fundamentals of clear writing, have an analytical mind, and love detail like a bureaucrat.

Although beginners might lack the strategic sophistication of a professional grantwriter, funders are

more concerned with the quality of the organization than grammatical perfection. (Nonetheless, proofread carefully and use spell check.) In fact, the Hewlett Foundation's guidelines state: "While the Foundation respects the aid that grant writers provide, it has been our experience that proposals are less persuasive and thus less competitive when they lack the voice and do not directly reflect the thinking of those involved in the conception and responsible for the execution of the proposed project."

Grantproposal.com offers a link to The Downing Foundation Guide for Grantseekers (www.jcdowning.org/resources/generaguide.htm) noting it offers a streamlined explanation of grantwriting's basic principles, from establishing objectives to documenting your case.

In California, there are a number of nonprofit resource centers that offer good training, such as the Non Profit Resource Center in Sacramento (www.nonprofitresourcectr.org), Compass Point Non Profit Services (www.compasspoint.org) Long Beach Non Profit Partnership (www.lbnp.org) for example.

Seeking grant money to boost your organization's programs is feasible, however finding a good fit will take a bit of time and effort—an investment itself. If you are successful in securing a grant from an obscure source, please email your success story to us. Inquiring minds want to know!



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Thank You Renewing Members

Benicia Main Street
Brea Downtown Owners Association
Carlsbad Chamber of Commerce
City of Blythe
City of Brea
City of Brentwood
City of Carlsbad
City of Concord
City of Corona Redevelopment Agency
City of Clovis
City of Gilroy
City of Hesperia
City of Lincoln
City of Oceanside
City of Palm Springs
City of San Diego
City of Santa Barbara
City of Seaside
City of Sonoma
College Area Business District
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Downtown Berkeley Association
Downtown Long Beach Associates
Downtown Pomona Owners Association

Downtown Resources
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Gilroy EDC
Gridley BID
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L.L.Consulting
McGill Martin Self, Inc.
Morgan Hill Downtown Association
North Tahoe Business Association
Old Monterey Business Association
Old Town Salinas Association
Pacific Municipal Consultants
Playhouse District Association
San Fernando Downtown Association
Santa Rosa Main Street
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Town of Windsor
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Urban Transformation
Vista Village Business Association
Whittier Uptown Association
City of Willits

Welcome New Members

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