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Solano Avenue During the COVID-19 Pandemic

It has been a difficult 12 months and we would like to take a moment to acknowledge all that has been lost in the last year. Some lost family members or friends; some lost jobs or businesses. Some people lost their home; some their sense of security. It's safe to say everybody has lost something.

We acknowledge and share these losses at the same time that we are hopeful for the future in 2021.

Welcome to Solano!

New business ventures!

5 (Tacos and Beer)	1175 Solano at Stannage
Bay Area Brain Spa	1615 Solano at Santa Fe
Berkeley Humane Society Thrift Shop	1120 Solano at Kains
Digital Roots Studio	1329 Solano at Pomona
Fazli's Rugs	1412 Solano at Santa Fe
Fillgood.co	1579 Solano at Tacoma
Gangchen Gifts	1595 Solano at Tacoma
Inter High	1109 Solano at Kains
Kiri Tara Spa	1488 Solano at Santa Fe
Korman & Ng Real Estate Services	898 The Alameda (at Solano)
Lizzy's & Mr. C's Cajun Café	902 Masonic at Solano
Mainichi	1647 Solano at Ventura
Picnic Rotisserie	862 San Pablo at Solano
Playground Kings, LLC	1639 Solano at Ventura
Solano Junction	1499 Solano at Curtis
Total Health Dental Care	1396 Solano at Carmel
Wendy's Gnome Shop	1637 Solano at Ventura
West Wind Karate & Kung Fu	1775 Solano at Modoc

Expansions / Relocations:

District Homes and Solano Eye Care

Under new ownership:

Rivoli and Snippetty Crickets

Annual meeting / mixer

Wednesday, March 31

(This will be a virtual event)

Online registration and renewal now available! Visit:

www.solanoavenue.org/join

Stay informed & share your updates! Visit our official website, **www.solanoavenue.org**. "Like" Solano Avenue Association and Stroll on Facebook, or subscribe to our e-newsletter by emailing **info@SolanoAvenue.org**

SAA Membership

As you know, the SAA has been active in supporting and promoting our business community (particularly during the pandemic), and we have great plans for the coming year. This is our annual membership renewal period and we are asking for your membership fees so we can continue our programs and support.

We want to encourage any businesses that are experiencing challenges during this time to call the SAA offices at 510-527-5358 if you would like to spread out payments or discuss your contribution. We do not want anyone to lose their membership because they have been affected by the pandemic.

If you have been more fortunate and your business has not been affected as much by the pandemic shutdowns, we hope you will consider the following:

1) Sponsoring the SAA "Sip and Savor" July 24th 2021 at a \$1000 (Platinum), \$500 or \$250 level

2) Making a donation – perhaps to make up for fees missed in 2020 or supporting future efforts such as our new "Get to Know Solano" program

We are anticipating reduced revenue this year (on top of extreme losses from 2020) so we are appealing to our members to help us continue to do what we do for the Avenue. **Join or renew online at solanoavenue.org/join.**



The Solano Avenue Association is dedicated to promoting and improving the Solano Avenue business district and to building community spirit and identity through events, marketing, and aesthetic enhancement.

2021 Headlines

SAA Activities

The Solano Avenue Association was affected by the pandemic the same as any other business – and more than many because so many of our activities (and our primary source of income) involve large in-person events. Without the ability to produce a Solano Avenue Stroll, offer the annual Arts & Wine festival, or even hold our happy hour mixers, we had to find other ways to support and promote Solano Avenue businesses.

We sent more than 50 unique communications to our list to help people keep up to date on the shifting rules regarding operations, the status of the pandemic in the Bay Area, Federal and local resources available to help businesses through the storm, and more. We held a virtual Annual Meeting where we heard from members and considered present and future consequences of the pandemic, including an increase in vacancies and problematic street behavior.

We managed to produce a COVID-safe Santa on Solano, with our Jolly Ol' Elf behind jolly ol' plexiglass. Santa's helper elves were all masked and kept a safe distance. Many thanks to Peggy Smith Agency – Allstate Insurance and Albany Subaru for making this event possible.

We continue to work with both cities and organizations on programs and policies to try to represent the interests of all our businesses while keeping people safe. We partnered with the Albany Chamber of Commerce to create a new, pandemic-safe event, the Solano Avenue "Cars and Coffee" meet-up. This event brings nearly 200 cars and more than 200 car enthusiasts to Solano Avenue each 4th Sunday of the month, with a couple of breaks for holidays and shutdowns.

We continued and expanded our partnership with the Solano Avenue Business Improvement District Advisory Board. We are excited and thankful to have this wonderful partnership bringing even more support to the Berkeley businesses on Solano, which of course, helps to support Solano Avenue as a whole.

Before the pandemic, we held our annual Lunar New Year celebration – a big "Thank You" to Landmark Theatre's Albany Twin for hosting, Golden Lion Martial Arts, and Ah-Lan Dance (EC) among others for their annual contributions to this free community program.

In addition, we continued:

- Running our Solano Avenue gift card program that continues to bring thousands of dollars of business to the Avenue each year. In 2020 we experienced record high "general public" sales from people wanting to support the district in a contactless fashion.
- Maintaining an active social media presence that helps keep Solano front-of-mind for local residents.
- Holding two mixers in 2020 before the Pandemic. We are looking forward to restarting that program with the Albany Chamber as soon as it's safe.

The SAA Program for 2021

The Director and Board of the SAA have been working hard to create programs that will genuinely benefit the Avenue while being safe for everyone. These programs include: Solano Cars and Coffee every 4th Sunday of the month from 8-10am; plans to hold a Summer art and wine walk on Saturday July 24th (we are looking for sponsors); and work-in-progress to develop a public art program including selfie-friendly murals to provide some

contactless entertainment. We also continue to work on a new marketing campaign to draw more attention to our merchants and their businesses.

We are committed to holding a Solano Avenue Stroll this year (!) even if that means going "back to the future." Stay tuned. We will release details soon.

Do you have any suggestions / thoughts / promotions you would like us to consider? Don't be shy!

Google Group for Solano Avenue Businesses ONLY

The SAA is developing a Google Group with Solano Avenue Businesses to be used to communicate with you directly, in an uncensored, immediate manner. This will be used as a fluid messaging tool that Solano Avenue Businesses can utilize to communicate with each other directly. This platform should be used for priority, non-promotional communications between business owners and managers: solano-avenue@googlegroups.com

The Blue Glove Crew

The Blue Glove Crew has continued its volunteer clean-up of Solano Avenue and San Pablo Avenue from McDonald's to El Cerrito Plaza through all the madness! Since 2008 they have been hand-cleaning our commercial district. facebook.com/BlueGloveCrew

Something you should be aware of on San Pablo Avenue

The City of Albany is developing a "specific plan" for San Pablo Avenue that will create a set of guidelines and requirements that will streamline development (primarily of housing) on San Pablo Avenue. This effort will likely involve changes to parking, height, density, and commercial mix requirements.

As the key corridor through Albany, not to mention the primary gateway to Solano Avenue, this is important for members of the association. On the one hand, increased housing density would mean an increase in local customers for our businesses, while on the other hand, reduced parking requirements could lead to impacts to parking on Solano and nearby side streets (especially in the blocks near San Pablo).

You may view and provide feedback on this plan on its dedicated website: sanpablospecificplan.org

2021 calendar of events

Annual Meeting / mixer	March 31
Sip and Savor	Late July
Solano Avenue Stroll	Early September
Halloween on Solano	October 31
Santa on Solano	First 3 weekends of December
Lunar New Year Celebration	February 6, 2022

Partnerships

City of Albany Economic Development Committee
City of Berkeley business district network
Diverse Housing Working Group
YMCA - Albany

The SAA is an important voice advocating for the businesses in Berkeley and Albany. If you know of something the cities should be addressing, please let us know.