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## Banner Days Continue in Lafayette

Cathy Dausman



These banners will remain up through the Fourth of July. Photo C. Dausman

Lafayette more of a "hometown feel" and "encouraged people to shop locally."

Banners cost \$5,000 to design and \$5,000 to produce, and an additional \$35 in city time and labor to hang each double-sided set.

Banners typically last five or six years (hanging one month per year) before fading and tearing; then they're destroyed. Lafayette and the Chamber of Commerce share in the cost of the program, with the Chamber contributing roughly twenty five per cent. The city's share runs \$25,000 annually.

San Francisco graphic artist Jennifer Morla has designed Lafayette's silkscreen-on-canvas banners since 2002. "Design time takes about two to three weeks," says Morla by e-mail. "Our ideas are generated by the nature of the title and how that title relates to the town of Lafayette. We often reference the town's landscape, civic structures or retail/restaurant community when developing the illustrations." Limiting designs to two ink colors (to manage cost) "is the most difficult aspect of the design process," but Morla says what's most important to her is that the posters "have a sense of whimsy and verve that mirrors Lafayette's wonderful, sunny attitude."

They call to you wordlessly along Mt. Diablo Boulevard, urging you to visit the reservoir, support the arts, or touting our great schools. They may or may not be star-spangled, but the banners do proudly wave in downtown Lafayette, as they've been waiving since 1999. And will continue to wave, at least in the near future, despite the recent threat of budget cuts.

Lafayette City Council members voted 3 to 1 on May 23 to continue funding the program that City Manager Steven Falk calls, "a rotating public art program."

When a downtown beautification project in the mid 1990's moved Mt. Diablo Boulevard utility lines underground, the city brought in Battery Park- style streetlights with banner poles. When the poles were in place, the banners quickly followed.

While mass-produced, generic banners are readily available, Falk says Lafayette wanted its banners to be "custom-designed and unique." The banners, all twenty or thirty sets, are usually changed out monthly but the current design, "Land of the Free," aptly stays up through the Fourth of July.

Former Lafayette mayor and City Council member Anne Grodin was an early advocate for the banners. Also active in the city's Chamber of Commerce, Grodin saw banners used in other towns and felt this was a great project to bring to Lafayette. She felt the banners gave

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