

A quarterly newsletter providing information, ideas, and resources to help you thrive in Downtown Novato.

The Downtown

# LOW DOWN

WINTER 2014 / 2015



DOWNTOWN  
**NOVATO**  
BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

[www.downtownnovato.com](http://www.downtownnovato.com)

[dnba@novato.org](mailto:dnba@novato.org)



# YOUR TEAM

With a new Board in place, an Executive Director at the helm, and a physical office location, the energy and excitement at the DNBA is undeniable.

Adding to the workforce is our new Social Media & Communications Intern, Frances Telles. Beginning on January 19th for a period of approximately 17 weeks, Frances will help us develop a social media and communications plan, and assist in its implementation.

Frances is currently completing her final year of a Bachelor of Arts program at Sonoma State University with a major in Communications Studies and an Emphasis in Public Relations. We look forward to benefitting from Frances' time with us and hope she will learn a lot, too.

JOIN US IN WELCOMING  
OUR NEW INTERN,  
**FRANCES TELLES**



If you would like to play a bigger role, members are invited to consider joining the Board of Directors or a committee. Being on the board is an active way to have a hand in managing the association, its activities, and its finances. You have the power to make serious difference in Downtown Novato! Many people say that their work sitting on boards turns out to be among the most rewarding work they do in their lives.

## YOUR EXECUTIVE TEAM



### PRESIDENT

Andy Podshadley, Winemaker at Trek Winery:



### VICE-PRESIDENT

Anne Wade, Owner of Anne's Secret Hang-Ups



### TREASURER

Phillip Schlenker, CFO at Continental, Inc.



### SECRETARY

Chris Donohue, Owner of A Closet Affair

# MEMBER NEWS & INFO



We are thrilled to be issuing the first edition of the quarterly 'DOWNTOWN LOW DOWN' Newsletter. One of the DNBA's key goals for 2015 is to communicate better with you, our members. This newsletter is one of the many steps we are taking to ensure you are well aware of the exciting things your Downtown Association is working on.

We also hope that we can encourage you to become more involved. The most successful downtowns worldwide have an active membership in their downtown association. If we band together, we truly can improve Downtown Novato, making it a more economically sound, beautiful, safe, and vibrant place to be.

## FARMERS MARKET

Each Tuesday, beginning on May 5th, 2015 and ending on September 29th, the Downtown Novato Community Farmers Market will return! The operating hours will be 4 P.M. – 8 P.M. with the street shutting down at 3 P.M. and returning to normal at 9 P.M. Signs indicating that no parking is permitted will be posted 24 hours in advance. If you are interested in having a booth at the market, please contact Kelly from Agricultural Community Events Farmers Markets (the non-profit organizers of the event) at 415-999- 5635 or via email at [agriculturalcommunityevents@gmail.com](mailto:agriculturalcommunityevents@gmail.com). Special rates are offered to Downtown Novato businesses at \$25/day, plus a mandatory \$2 fee. Health permits are required for some food related businesses. Apply by March 1st to avoid a late application fee.

## MEMBER MIXER; JOIN US!

We hope you can join us on Tuesday, February, 24th @ 7P.M. at Trek Winery for a Member Mixer. There will be food, a no-host bar, and lots of great company! In addition to mixing and mingling, there will also be a breakout session with members from each industry vertical, i.e. restaurants, services, retailers, etc. and geographical area breaking into groups to discuss and brainstorm how the DNBA can better serve you. We hope that as many members as possible will join us in this exercise.

## IMPROVING COMMUNICATION

We are working hard to communicate better with you! We are asking all members to email us their correct contact information. Please take the time to send the following information to [dnba@novato.org](mailto:dnba@novato.org): Business Owner Name, Company Name, Company Address, Phone Number and (very important) Email Address. With your correct information we can include you in the new kiosk directories, profile you on our website, email you updates and keep you informed about meetings and mixers.

## HELP RAISE THE PROFILE OF OUR BUSINESSES

North Bay Biz is running its annual Best of North Bay Contest. This year let's make sure that Novato businesses rank among the winners! Visit [http://www.northbaybiz.com/Best\\_of\\_Form.php](http://www.northbaybiz.com/Best_of_Form.php) and vote for your favorite Novato businesses. The deadline is February 28th. Feel free to vote for your Downtown Novato Business Association for 'Best Non-Profit'!

## INTERN OPPORTUNITY

Have you thought about the possibility of working with an intern? The concept is a mutually beneficial one! Interns are given the space to practice their chosen craft by you, and you benefit from their efforts.

The Marin County Office of Education runs a program that you may be interested in learning about. Last month we met with Sita Aiello to find out more. The program is called the School to Career Partnership and is specifically for high school students. Sita encouraged our members to reach out to her if they are interested in participating.

To learn more, visit <http://www.marinschools.org/STC/Pages/default.aspx> or contact Sita Aiello at 707-364-9160 or [saiello@marinschools.org](mailto:saiello@marinschools.org).

## PROMOTE YOUR EVENTS & BUSINESS

Are you offering a special, hosting an event, or running a promotion? If so, and you would like to generate some free publicity, send the details for potential posting to the 'Shop Local Novato' and the 'Visit Novato' sites, ideally along with a photo: <http://shoplocalnovato.com/contact-us/> and email [hello@visitnovato.com](mailto:hello@visitnovato.com). Special events or updates can also be sent to us at [dnba@novato.org](mailto:dnba@novato.org).

Ad space will be offered, beginning with our Spring 2015 Newsletter, for \$75. Please contact us if you are interested!

# EVENTS UPDATE

## EVALUATING PAST EVENTS AND ANTICIPATING UPCOMING ONES

### A LOOK BACK AT OUR HOT HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS 2014.

The holiday season was a busy time at the DNBA headquarters! With events such as the Annual Tree Lighting, Holiday Carriage Rides, Small Business Saturday, and the newest additional to our roster, Let it Snow, Novato, there wasn't a moment to spare. Here is a brief overview on the outcome of each event:

#### SMALL BUSINESS SATURDAY

Spearheaded by Carolyn Thompson of Bicycle Brustop and a member of the DNBA Marketing Committee, Small Business Saturday, is an annual event organized by American Express, which took place on Saturday, November 29th. A small number of merchants in the Downtown Novato Business Association came together to offer extra special savings which were a part of the Downtown Novato Shop Small Passport. Shoppers registered their American Express card with Amex at [www.shopsmall.com](http://www.shopsmall.com) and got up to three \$10 statement credits when they spent \$10 or more at registered merchants.

While an even bigger turnout was hoped for, based on the number of merchants that participated and the fact that it rained, most felt it was an exercise that was well worthwhile. We hope that next year more businesses will participate and help cross-promote the event. A big thank you to Carolyn for her effort to make this event happen.

#### ANNUAL TREE LIGHTING

This committee is a formidable group who, year after year, pulls off an amazing event with the precision of professional event planners. This year's 85th Annual Lighting was, as always, a heartwarming community event that brought out hundreds of Novato based families, kids and singles for an evening of festivities.

#### HOLIDAY CARRIAGE RIDES

Curly, the Belgian draft horse and his carriage provided FREE holiday carriage rides throughout Downtown Novato each Friday and Saturday from 5:30 P.M. - 8:30 P.M. between Nov. 28th and Dec. 20th, 2014. The service was a big hit with children and families.

A welcome change to the program was implemented this year; the loading zone for passengers alternated between the east and west side of our Downtown. A big thank you to Anne Wade from Anne's Secret Hang-ups for handling this event.



# ATE

## "VERY, VERY COOL"

"Thanks for putting on such a great Let it Snow, Novato event. It brought a lot of people downtown."

### THE LATEST ADDITION TO OUR ROSTER: LET IT SNOW, NOVATO!

We were thrilled to see so many residents and visitors at the DNBA's first 'Let it Snow, Novato' event. Approximately 7,000 people showed up at the event, which had an anticipated turnout of 2,000 - 3,000! Thank you to Mark Dawson for dreaming up, and advocating for, this unique event. Children, some who had never seen snow in their lives, played in the City Hall parking lot between 10am - 5pm on Saturday, December 13th.

Carolers sang, dancers performed, and hot chocolate flowed, while Santa and Mrs. Claus delivered a hearty dose of Christmas spirit to a long line of girls and boys.

While initial feedback from the general public and shop owners has been very positive, we are continuing to gather input from business owners and attendees on the event so we can determine whether it should become an annual event. Please drop a quick note to [dnba@novato.org](mailto:dnba@novato.org) with a few thoughts. We would specifically like to hear about any impact the event had on your business/sales.

Public relations was a big part of promoting our holiday events this year, along with a very minimal advertising spend. We are very encouraged to see that we can generate interest and attract visitors without using a lot of our hard earned dollars.

### 7,000 RESIDENTS & VISITORS!



**"THIS WAS THE MOST WELL ATTENDED EVENT WE HAVE EVER SEEN DOWNTOWN. WE COULDN'T KEEP UP!"**

"My family and I along with extended family LOVED the snow day! After, we had a late lunch at Grazies then did a little shopping at 5 Little Monkeys! I really hope it becomes an annual event! Love the community coming together! Thanks!"

A big thank you goes out to all our volunteers and sponsors: City of Novato, Old Town Sports, Peet's, Snipz, UrbanSitter, Blake's Auto Body, Novato Chamber of Commerce, Marin Independent Journal, Rock for Good, Pacific Sun, Pini Hardware, Big 4 Party, Novato Chevrolet, Bank of Marin, Continental Jewelers, Leonardi Auto, Love2Dance, Napa Auto Parts, Novato Smiles Dentistry, Randall Bros. Auto, Marin Real Estate, Novato Kitchens & Baths, Zenith Instant Printing, Denise Athas Real Estate, Roto-Rooter, Alders Financial Solutions, and Dr. Insomniacs.



## 2015 Events

# LOVE IS IN THE AIR



There are numerous exciting events and activities on the horizon for 2015 in Downtown Novato! First up on the calendar was Valentine's Day.

While we work to build the love for our Downtown, we also spread a bit of love and encouraged people to come Downtown to purchase Valentine's Day gifts and to book restaurant reservations. Our first ever, 'Novato's Most Romantic Couple' Contest and the annual Sweetheart Stroll were both big hits (see sidebar for all the details).

Upcoming events include a St. Paddy's Day Scavenger Hunt and an Easter Egg Hunt. Details on these events will be posted on our website and Facebook page as they become available.

### Novato's Most Romantic Couple Contest

For this contest we called on all lovebirds in a search for Novato's most romantic couple. We asked residents to share their love story for a chance to win a dreamy date for two in Novato's quaint Downtown.

The contest was run online, with no ad buy, to a resounding response! Over 2,000 views on our Facebook page were recorded and the engagement was higher than 95% of all other posts. The Novato Advance agreed to run the story, along with two follow-up features. One was a front page, top of the fold feature!

Our winning couple received \$100 towards dinner for two at any Downtown restaurant, a bouquet of flowers, gourmet chocolates, \$100 to spend at any Downtown salon, \$200 to spend at any shop or service provider in Downtown Novato, a horse drawn carriage ride on Valentine's Day, and a special feature in the Novato Advance. Visit our Facebook page to see who won!



Free Horse-Drawn Carriage Rides!

### The Annual Sweetheart Stroll

In addition to the contest, the DNBA hosted The Annual Sweetheart Stroll.

Two horse-drawn carriages meandered up and down Grant Avenue on Saturday, February 14th, 2015 between the hours of 6:30 P.M. – 9:30 P.M. This year there were two pick up and drop off locations to ensure both sides of Grant were on display; one at 2nd & Grant and the other at Sherman & Grant. The rides were extremely well attended with lines of approximately 20 people at various points throughout the night. Visitors came from as far as San Francisco for the event.

# LET'S DIALOGUE.

With the goal of starting interesting conversations that will lead to change and improvement in our Downtown, this section will introduce a new topic each quarter. We hope to hear from you with thoughts and questions!

## IS IT TIME TO RECONSIDER OUR HOURS?



It is a proven fact that 70% of all bricks-and-mortar spending now takes place after 6:00 P.M. The “Downtown Reporter”, National Retail Federation, independent retail chains, mall developers, BusinessWeek, Wall Street Journal and many more, have all confirmed this statistic. After all, it makes sense, doesn't it?

Back in the 70s when people worked shorter hours and families ate dinner together at home each night, it was logical for stores to close at 6:00 P.M. Today, during the day, most people are at WORK or at SCHOOL. When they are off work or out of school, our downtown is closed for business...so where do they head when they need to shop? Large shopping plazas and malls that are open. Every successful retail mall and center in America is open until at least 9:00 P.M., and as such, they are quickly replacing many downtowns throughout the U.S.

As for tourists, during the day they are hiking, biking, wine tasting, playing golf, and swimming in the pool. Like residents, they spend their money on consumer goods at the end of the day. A time of day when our downtown is closed.

In order to save themselves, downtowns are having to reinvent themselves, develop new identities, and offer a different value proposition. Dining, cultural arts, entertainment and special events are quickly becoming the lifeblood of the downtown cores across America.

As we strive to make Downtown Novato a more economically sound place to do business, our operating hours is something we should reconsider. For retailers, there are certainly growing pains associated with implementing such a change. Staffing costs will rise before residents and visitors catch on.

A good initial step would be to *collectively* decide to stay open until 7:00 P.M. This slight shift would kick-start a change in perception among residents about our downtown. It would tell them that we are evolving and becoming a more dynamic and accessible place to be.

What do you think? Please feel free to send thoughts and feedback on this topic to [dnba@novato.org](mailto:dnba@novato.org).

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## CITY CORNER

Updates from the City of Novato on topics that impact our Downtown.

**Tree Trimming** - The City's maintenance staff has been busy trimming the street trees along Grant Street to ensure their long-term health and to raise the canopy to enhance views of businesses. Thanks for everyone's patience; the end result will be worth it!

**Downtown Parking Study** - The City of Novato retained Walker Parking Consultants to prepare a parking study and strategy plan for its downtown parking system to provide decision-making information. Most recently, a downtown business owner survey was conducted. The report is anticipated to be completed in late March or early April 2015. City staff and Walker Parking are planning to meet with the DNBA and downtown merchants to receive feedback. More information will be available as we move forward.

**Keeping Novato Safe: Crime Stats & Tips** - Our City continually reports declining crime rates year after year and 2014 was no exception. According to end-of-year crime stats from our Novato Police Department overall crime was down nearly 5%. Novato continues to experience historically-low crime rates--with more than a 45% drop in total crimes over a 20-year period.

**Spring Concert Series Underway**- Join the City of Novato Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department for a fun, festive, and FREE community concert series beginning on Friday, March 13th from 6-8pm at Novato City Hall! Be sure to don your green apparel in honor of St. Patrick's Day and enjoy live traditional Irish music performed by the very talented McNulty Trio! Food and beverages will be available for purchase on-site from Finnegan's Restaurant! This is the first of three concerts that will be happening this Spring at Novato City Hall. Please stay tuned for more information or visit [www.novato.org](http://www.novato.org).

