

Covina becomes latest city to promote 'shop local' campaign

By Amanda Baumfeld, Staff Writer
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COVINA - The city is joining others in the San Gabriel Valley in initiating a "shop local" program just in time for holiday spending.

The Shop Covina Program is designed to create awareness and promote the benefits of shopping in the city.

"It's a work in progress," said Community Development Director Robert Neuber. He said the next step is "creating more excitement here in town and showing the importance of shopping in the community."

The city is working to promote the program, which launched last month, through fliers, its Web site and coupons for shoppers.

It comes at a time when many cities are struggling financially and trying to do what they can to increase revenues.

Other cities that boast the benefits of shopping locally and have their own programs include Pasadena, Glendora and La Verne.

Pasadena is in its second year of promoting its "Grow Your Community, Shop Local" program.

"It's all about the importance and what it does for the local economy," said Economic Development Manager Eric Duyshart.

The city profits about \$35 million in sales tax revenue every year. It is unclear how much of that money is due to the shop local program, Duyshart said.

The Andersonville Study of Retail Economics shows for every \$100 in consumer spending at local independent businesses, \$73 stays in the local economy.

"The sales tax comes back," Neuber said. "If shopping locally it goes to the salaries of people working there and in turn goes to other things local. You are reinvesting back into the community."

Ira Kalb, professor of marketing for USC, says for cities to really be successful in their programs they need get better at promotion.

"I am very critical of how they (cities) market this," Kalb said. "Cities are not effective enough."

Kalb points out that cities need to be more direct in their programs' advantages, including saving money on gas, not traveling as far and giving people a reason to shop in town.

"There's always that issue why are people going to shop in Covina," Neuber asked. "In the city we've got great shops, unique shops that offer products that are not necessarily in the mall."

Whittier Mayor Bob Henderson is an advocate of shopping locally and would be happy to have a program in his city.

Before implementing one, he wants to ensure that stores such as Target and Kohl's in the Whittwood Town Center are featured in a program.

"Local sales tax becomes a very big deal to cities. It's the primary source of income," Henderson said. "Giving more choices to citizens so they do shop here and having more options is a top priority."

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