



2010 Annual Report *of the* **Sonoma Valley Economic Development Partnership**

The Economic Development Partnership is a collaboration of the **Sonoma Valley Chamber of Commerce**, the **City of Sonoma**, and the **Sonoma County Community Development Commission** to support the local economy.

Guided by a five-member Advisory Committee and supported by local redevelopment funds, the Partnership contracts with a part-time project manager to implement an economic development program and serve as a resource for the business community.

By working to achieve common goals, the Chamber, City, County, and other collaborating organizations have taken important steps to position Sonoma Valley for economic recovery and ongoing vitality. In 2010, the Partnership:

- * Expanded the downtown business wayfinding signage project.
- * Hosted the 4th annual “*Tops in Sonoma*” event, which recognizes the valley’s largest tax generators and employers, and reports the results of an annual survey on local business climate and retention issues. This year, a special recognition category was added to the event for outstanding commercial property improvements.
- * Extended the “*Picture Your Business in Sonoma*” campaign, with advertisements now running in North Bay Biz magazine, Sonoma Magazine, and the 2011 Sonoma Valley Visitors Guide.

**Thank You to the
 Economic Development
 Advisory Committee for
 2010:**

David Burt
Chamber Board of Directors

Linda Kelly
Sonoma City Manager

Al Lerma
*Sonoma County CDC
 Redevelopment Associate*

August Sebastiani
Sonoma City Council

Jennifer Yankovich
Chamber Executive Director

Staff:
 Laurie Decker
Economic Development Manager

In 2010,
 the Economic
 Development program
 provided one-on-one
 assistance to more than
 100 prospective, new, and
 existing businesses and
 commercial property
 owners.

- * Coordinated an effort to streamline the City’s sign ordinance and improve outreach to businesses.
- * Hosted a 3-day start-up workshop series (“*So You Want to Start a Business*”) presented by the Small Business Development Center, with 29 prospective business owners attending.
- * Held workshops on e-marketing in February and March, attended by more than 70 local businesses. Topics included “*Making Your Website Work for You*”, “*Social Media Marketing*”, and “*Best Practices in E-Mail Marketing*”.

* Expanded the Shop Sonoma campaign, led by the Chamber with support of the Index-Tribune and Sonoma Valley Visitors Bureau. New components include a landing page at ShopSonoma.biz, a Shop Sonoma fan page on Facebook, and new holiday banners around the Plaza.



* Supported sustainable business through development of a "Greening Your Sonoma Valley Wine Country Event" guide (which also includes a "shop local" focus) and a "Green Lodging Pledge" for B&B's and other small lodging properties.

* Initiated a project to add cross-street signage to traffic signal arms along the Valley's Highway 12 corridor, to support the visitor economy.

* Worked with the Chamber to identify important issues to the business community, through outreach that included surveys, a business & broadband working group, a meeting for Eighth Street corridor businesses, and the Latino Business Roundtable.

* Added new features to SonomaValley4Biz.com, including a video from the 2010 New Business Welcome, and an Educational Resource Guide with info on intern programs, professional development workshops, and certifications available to local businesses from colleges and universities in the region.

Turning the Corner....

In September 2010, we asked the Valley's largest businesses "How is your business doing compared to this time last year?" A total of **71% responded that they are doing "slightly" or "significantly" better.**

This is the same percentage that reported doing slightly or significantly worse when asked this question in September of 2009.

SonomaValley4Biz.com, the Partnership's website for business attraction, creation, and expansion, was visited about 12,000 times in 2010, by an average of 325 unique visitors each month.

* Continued to promote redevelopment loan programs and assist applicants through the process. Both the City and the Springs loan programs were actively used in 2010. The commercial rehab loan program in the Springs is continuing the revitalization process started by the Highway 12 improvements, also funded through redevelopment.



Hot Box Grill and 5th West Plaza were among those receiving assistance for property improvements from local redevelopment loan programs in 2010. (Photo credit: Robert Sanders & Co.)