

## Downtown Fun Fridays Morph into an October Extravaganza! -- 7/15/12 by Paula McConnell

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For the past several weeks a committee of volunteers has been meeting at a conference room in City Hall under the guidance of acting Planning Director, Michelle Hightower. The primary goal of this committee is to establish four historic downtown celebration evenings which were scheduled to begin on a Friday evening in July. But in view of the looming expenses necessary to put on these events, the task has proven to be a little too daunting.

Even with the blessings and insurance coverage from CCRC, and considerable help from Vallejo Main Street member Rick Montero, the concept of four Friday nights of downtown summer fun seems overwhelming. With the expense of paid security, electricity, musicians, outdoor lavatory rentals and other miscellaneous expenses, the event committee has decided to scrap the idea of four summer evening events initially set to begin July 13th. Instead they have turned their efforts to creating one huge extravaganza sometime in the month of October.

An October date would also align nicely with the lighting of some of the downtown trees. Fred Menard of Indian Alley Antiques has been hard at work selling cookbooks created with recipes donated by downtown merchants for this very cause. Menard has already secured enough money to light ten trees. According to Vallejo's acting Planning Director, Michelle Hightower, each tree will cost \$300 to light; there are sixty-eight trees downtown. "But lighting ten trees will be a good start," Hightower said. The tree lighting will also coincide with a trick or treat afternoon where children will be able to visit the downtown merchants for a candy give-away. In addition to several committee volunteers, Hightower has also worked hard to spearhead this upcoming "Extravaganza";

In conjunction with this event there will be an unveiling of some seventeen windows which will be creatively designed by local artists. Vallejo's "Coal Shed" artist Erin Bakke has worked tirelessly to find and contact approximately twelve owners of downtown buildings. Each owner has agreed to allow artists to create displays for their windows. The artists' work will remain in these seventeen downtown windows for one year. The artistic displays will be selected by a jury (yet to be determined) who will judge each submitted art project proposal. After careful consideration, the jury will then select the artists who will be assigned one window each in which to exhibit their creations. This will be a double win. It will serve in enhancing the overall look of the historic downtown, as well as giving great exposure to area artists.

To help fund this autumn event, the committee has proposed the selling of more cookbooks, and a possible summer fundraising event which will take place most probably at Dance Unlimited on Sonoma Blvd. Funds raised will be used for music, security, lighting, marketing and other needed elements which will serve to promote and encourage attendance for this upcoming October "Downtown Extravaganza";