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# More Sparkle in Downtown Lafayette

By Cathy Tyson



Photo Andy Scheck

“Twinkle, twinkle little civic median” doesn’t have quite the same ring to it as “little stars,” but Lafayette’s main drag is even more awash in festive white lights this year than last, with thousands of holiday lights bringing a magical ambiance from Dolores Drive to Brown Avenue and beyond.

It takes a village to bring this much sparkle to town. Credit the Chamber of Commerce with generous support from two members for paying for set up and take down, the Public Works team, contractor Ben Jorgenson for the installation, and the City of Lafayette to pay for the electricity.

Blocks of festive twinkle lights along Mt. Diablo Boulevard were installed and ready for a flip of several switches the weekend before Thanksgiving. New this year was an expansion all the way down to Brown Avenue which “has definitely helped to meld the east end of Mt. Diablo Boulevard with downtown,” said Public Works Director Mike Moran. He adds that recently planted baby trees require more care and less

weight from lights. “Since the median trees on the east end are younger and smaller than most of the trees to the west, they will use less strands of lights per tree,” he said. In addition to Mt. Diablo Boulevard, for the first time ever the islands on Pleasant Hill Road will also be lit at night.

All of the many strands are composed of energy-efficient LED, or light emitting diode fixtures, that use much less energy than old-school incandescent bulbs, specifically about one-fourth the electricity and boast a longer lifespan.

The annual tradition has, in years past, struggled to find funding to literally “keep the lights on.” The city used to be responsible for the entire project, but amid budget cutbacks a few years ago most of that responsibility shifted to the Chamber of Commerce. As recently as 2011, Chamber of Commerce executive director, Jay Lifson, was asking for donations to keep the twinkle lights twinkling. This year is brighter than ever, with thousands of lights that will remain up through New Year’s.

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