

2020 Lake Merritt - Oakland Vending Pilot Recap

Presented by: A2Z Media Group
A Full-Service Advertising and Brand Experience Agency



Weekends 1 - 4

CONTEXT: For years, Black and Brown Oakland natives have been creating, inspiring, and selling self-made products along Lake Merritt.

- Similar to the Grand Lake Farmer's Market (taking place every Saturday just a few blocks away), the vending pilot program was developed as an excellent opportunity for local residents to unite in a COVID-safe, city-sanctioned space to sell + market their products, and earn revenue to support themselves and loved ones.
- Vendors were able to sell clothing, make-up, jewelry, candles, sage, skincare lotions, books, paintings, plants and much more!

INITIAL TRANSITION: Typically with change there can be skepticism or resistance. This pilot was excluded from neither.

- During early stages, the first weekend specifically, some vendors complained of feeling “policed” or “unheard” or “bamboozled”, given considerable changes from the Lakeshore Ave environment.
- Complaints pertained to unhappiness with booth location, booth neighbors, or other vendors selling similar products.
- Only 10% of the vendors had valid permits required to participate.
- Of note, during this early stage, booths were set up along Embarcadero St. as well as the Lakeview Library parking lot, with the library itself acting as an unintentional divider. This caused sporadic foot traffic early on, especially on the library side, with pedestrians having difficulty seeing continuity between sides. All things said, can progress truly exist without such adversity?



Weekends 5 - 8

FINDING STRIDE & SYNERGY: As weekends continued to pass, each more operationally seamless than the prior, vendors began feeling more comfortable with each other and the A2Z team.

- A2Z team members prioritized learning vendors' names, their business affiliations, and even booth preferences as PPE was passed out every morning (face masks, waters, hand sanitizer).
- Pivotal changes were: booths being relocated from the library parking lot to Lakeshore Ave, live music from local DJ's, and the implementation of food trucks into the library parking lot (possibly the most critical).
- Vendors applied for and acquired the necessary permits/licenses to participate. On weekend 5, roughly 70% of the vendors had their permits, progressing to 91% by weekend 6 and achieving over 97% by weekend 7.
- Compliance of non-permitted items such as alcohol, cannabis, and food (excluding food trucks) was met.
- What started out as just a pilot program had soon blossomed into a community of creatives young and old alike, co-existing and thriving with the most lucrative two weekends being Halloween weekend and the weekend of Americas 46th President elect.
- Vendors became ecstatic to arrive early and sullen to close shop at days end. Unity between black-owned businesses was on full display as black and non-black members of the community had a new watering hole where they could shop, eat, barter, enjoy music and learn a little culture.

NEXT STEPS: Many vendors have corresponded with A2Z members regarding the next installment of the program and who could blame them? In unprecedented times like these, we tend to naturally gravitate towards *some* normality of life, pre-COVID.



Recommendations

- Create *visual aid* to help vendors see and understand the process of how their booth location is determined on a weekly basis to promote buy-in and cooperation
- Create *available and designated parking* for vendors only
- Create *specific guidelines* pertaining to *amplified noise / music*; volume, frequency, censorship
- Create *public health incentive*, encouraging vendors to wear masks, use hand sanitizer and obey all other guidelines set forth
- Create a *heavier social media presence* to not only promote the program but promote different individual vendors throughout the week
- *Promote* the program on-site to drive more consumers to the vending area
- Implementing an official *vendor feedback system* throughout the entire program to better support them and their community



Vendor Survey Results

- *Overall, vendors are happy with the program (Avg. rating 9 out of 10).*
- *They'd like to see it continue through end of year (94%) AND throughout next year (100%).*
- *More than half (59%) of the vendors said they would pay a small fee to participate in the program. \$10 was the suggested price.*
- *Vendors felt that they had a voice in sharing their opinions (57%) and found A2Z staff to be very helpful (77%).*

Meet the Vendors



THANK YOU!

The City of Oakland, the Oakland Black Vendors Association, and its representatives agree not to disclose Consultant's (A2Z Media Group) Strategy analysis, reviews, recommendations and methodology, and fee arrangements to persons outside of its organization without express authority from said Consultant.