

# Orlando to launch program aimed at boosting spending

BY BILL ORBEN

It may not be worth \$787 billion, but the city of Orlando will debut its own program next month intended to stimulate the economy.

Although geared mostly to encourage consumers to buy their goods and services from locally owned firms, the city's new Buy Local Orlando program is also intended to encourage consumers to spend by offering them special deals.

"It is just as much about sustaining business as it is to get consumers comfortable about spending money," said Brooke Bonnett, deputy director of the city's economic development department.

The program is patterned after similar programs in other cities, such as the Austin Business Alliance in Austin, Texas. Civic Economics, an Austin-based consulting firm, in a December 2002 study found that for every \$100 spent at a locally owned business, \$45 goes back into the community. However, that impact is only \$13 if that same \$100 is spent at a chain store, the study found.

The Austin group has also convinced local government to conduct an economic impact analysis before offering

economic incentives to a chain store to locate in the area, said Steve Bercu, president of the Austin group and co-owner of Bookpeople, an independent book retailer.



**Bercu**

Unlike the city of Orlando's program, the Austin program was launched by business operators and has no direct government involvement.

Buy Local Orlando is a partnership between Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer's office and the Disney

Entrepreneur Center.

For \$49 next month and \$99 after May 1, business operators participating in the program gain access to programs at the Disney Entrepreneur Center, networking events and marketing materials. The enrollment fee would keep businesses in the program through September 2010. After that, businesses would have to pay another \$99 fee to stay in the program.

The city wants to have a minimum of 500 businesses initially enroll in the program.

Program details will be available at [www.BuyLocalOrlando.net](http://www.BuyLocalOrlando.net). The city is hosting a program event May 1 at the Disney Entrepreneur Center.



**Bonnett**