

January 26, 2009

Mr. P. Lamont Ewell
City Manager
City of Santa Monica
1685 Main Street
Santa Monica, CA 90401

Dear Lamont:

Your annual letter requesting input from our board of directors on priorities for the City budget for fiscal year 2009-2010 is again most appreciated. Your approach to the city budgeting process continues to be refreshing and helps to keep us focused on both our immediate and long-term priorities for the community. We are aware that this is a most unprecedented time for our local and global economy that much affects city revenue and its budget.

We once more urge you to maintain the homeless coalition to continue moving forward with a regional solution to this unfortunate plight.

Congratulations on the recently awarded American Planning Associations Great Places in America for Santa Monica Beach! Our beachfront location continues to provide us opportunity to be "Best at Beach" by setting standards of service and practices that residents and visitors alike enjoy and benefit from. We acknowledge there is still work to be done. Some suggestions from past community-based beach summits include:

- Public safety phones for emergency use in visible areas where there is no staff (i.e. evening hours on the beach path)
- Creative beachfront transport to encourage visitors to park in the south beach lots, visit our new Beach House and partake in the celebration on the Centennial of our beloved Santa Monica Pier.
- Sustain transportation and visitor services that keep our competitive edge during these difficult times.
- Improved path finder signage to and around the beach areas

We also believe certain goals are being met and are proud of our collaboration with your staff. These include.

- Spontaneous events on the beach
- Historic marker signage highlighting our beach areas
- Measure V passing

Our education committee comprised of City, Chamber, College and CVB leadership has delivered training and job enhancement opportunities to those currently employed in the tourism industry, as well as those seeking tourism jobs. Now one year running, the I AM Santa Monica Program has helped us deliver our brand and allowed us to sustain our youth in the local community. We now have over 1,000 certified Santa Monica Ambassadors who have completed this program and over 150 participating businesses. All of these programs require a continued reinvestment in tourism to assure they are maintained and expand their return on investment.

With the recent decline in TOT and revenue, it remains our goal to continue to provide a dependable revenue stream to the city. However, it is imperative that we remain diverse and strategic in our approach. The Santa Monica destination-branding program is now ready for it's first tier debut-*outside* of Santa Monica. While we strive to increase top of mind awareness of Santa Monica and ensure our city is always portrayed in a positive light around the world, we now require direct advertising supported by consistent media coverage with increased, in person sales visits and missions to simply sustain our revenue. The competition for visitor dollars is fierce. This may now require one time funding and collaboration with the business improvement districts on a regional approach as was done following 9/11 quite successfully.

As we have said before, building and communicating a strong brand is critical to a successful tourism program. It can and will continue to contribute to the city's overall economic health. Lamont, your continued support and involvement in these programs ensures their success as they enhance the lifestyle that our residents and visitors have come to expect from Santa Monica.

I look forward to continuing to working together on the vital initiatives that support tourism and building an even better quality of life for all who live or visit our beautiful city.

Sincerely,

Mary Ann Powell, Chair of the Board
Santa Monica Convention and Visitors Bureau