



November 11, 2010

**SUBJECT:** Letter of Reference for Marco Li Mandri and New City America in Work Related to Tourism Improvement Districts (TIDs)

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

This letter is to acknowledge the work that Marco Li Mandri and his staff did in working with the Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau in the formation of the new Tourism Improvement Districts for our Destination Management Organization. The Anaheim/Orange County Visitor & Convention Bureau hired Marco in September 2008, after a competitive bidding process, to establish the two TIDs that would fund our Bureau's programs, staff and activities. We sought the TID to stabilize our funding, create an "Opportunity Fund" for new conventions, fund new marketing initiatives and cover staff and operational costs of our DMO. In the course of his work, Marco formed TIDs for Anaheim and Garden Grove, two adjacent cities, in order to ensure that benefitting hotels were contributing the appropriate amounts to fund our marketing programs and staff.

Our Tourism Improvement District investigation and formation effort took longer than any of us had originally anticipated. From the outset, our Board of Directors completely understood and supported the TID concept. That is, they agreed that levying an additional fee on the occupied visitor's room would give the Bureau a stable revenue source, as well as give us our independence from the political headwinds of our City Council.

My Board was also adamant that the public funds currently received by the Bureau would not go back into the City's General Fund for general services. We were insistent that if we gave up our annual allocation of public funds the same amount of funds would be earmarked to improve and expand our Anaheim Convention Center. Therefore the funds would be transferred from the programmatic needs of the Bureau to the expansion of the asset, needs which would benefit both our hotels and the City.

The time it took to establish these two TIDs was due to the "politics" that existed in our target cities. Marco and I clearly came to understand all of the dynamics at play in the political process and were able to forge a strategy that led to the desired result.

In the end, our Bureau funding went from approximately \$5.5 million per year to over \$8 million per year in stable revenue. Marco understood all aspects of the TID formation process including setting the TID rate, engaging stakeholder concerns, creating benefit zones, understanding the local legislation, understanding the political process and bringing our TID to a public hearing for adoption by the City Council.

I would highly recommend Marco and New City America for any TID effort that your Bureau or DMO considers over the next few years. Please feel free to call me should you have any questions regarding the professionalism, knowledge and "results orientation" that Marco has demonstrated in creating our two new TIDs.

Sincerely,



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President

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