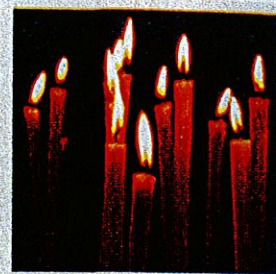


FOCUS

MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS

Keeping the faith

Tourism officials put emphasis on attracting large religious gatherings. **Page 12.**



A super selling point

Convention recruiters use Super Bowl to seal more deals

BY JENNETTE SMITH
CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

Think of Super Bowl XL as the ultimate résumé builder when it comes to attracting more events and leisure travelers to town.

That's the message from the **Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau** and others in the local hospitality business. They say the region's success in hosting the big game and supporting events proves it can host a wide range of visitors, and they plan to make the most of the positive buzz.

The bureau is working on a bid right now to host the **American Society of Association Executives'** conference in 2012 that could bring 7,500 association CEOs and executive directors to town plus open the door to other meetings. A pitch in Washington is planned this week as Detroit competes with St. Louis and Denver for the event.

On the sports side, the bureau's sports commission arm is going after the **National Collegiate Athletic Association** women's basketball Final Four for 2012-2015, a follow to Detroit's multiple NCAA events to be hosted through 2009 and 2010, including Final Four men's basketball and Frozen Four hockey.



Alexander

"Competition is very stiff for these groups," said Larry Alexander, president and CEO of the bureau. "Having the Super Bowl now as a true success story that we can point to is enormous."

"We underpromised and overdelivered. Now we've created a different perception. We can't let it slip back. Now the real work begins."

Direct spending from 2006 meetings and conventions is projected at more than \$153 million. Local tourism spending, which includes conventions, leisure and business travel, is around \$5 billion a year, accord-

ing to the bureau, which hopes to eventually increase that figure to \$8 billion a year.



Beachnau

Dave Beachnau, executive director of the **Detroit Metro Sports Commission**, said he's already received kudos from the NCAA and others about the region's Super Bowl success.

"Word gets around, and I think it certainly is a vehicle to bring more events to Detroit," he said.

There are practical new resources to tap as well. The volunteer database that was created to support the **Major League Baseball All-Star Game** and Super Bowl XL will not disappear with the Super Bowl Host Committee, but will be given to the bureau.

Alexander said many other convention bids are in the works, such as pitches to the **Veterans of Foreign Wars** for 2010 and 2011 conventions and **American Water Works Association**, an association focused on improving water quality, for 2016. Another upcoming sports pitch the commission is looking at is the **U.S. Figure Skating National Championships**, Beachnau said.

"I think we should just start bidding on everything that's out there," said Mike Dietz, president of **Dietz Trott Sports & Entertainment** in Bingham Farms. "The track record is in place with **Ryder Cup**, **All-Star Game** and now **Super Bowl**. Detroit's passed every test."

Plans to attract more leisure travelers to the area include a 30-second commercial that will start running in the spring in markets including Columbus, Ohio, and west Michigan. The bureau also plans to market specific tourism districts with 18-hour packages. Examples include Dearborn and the Woodward

GETTING THE MOST FROM SUPER BOWL XL

Actions being taken by the **Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau** to draw more conventions:

- Tap the volunteer database that was created to support the **Major League Baseball All-Star Game** and **Super Bowl** to use for future events.
- Bid on every convention and meeting that's out there.
- Emphasize the track record from the **Ryder Cup**, **All-Star Game** and **Super Bowl XL**.
- Build a Detroit as a destination and promote it to nearby residents
- Establish a shuttle system to help get tourists to destination spots.

See Future, Page 12



gressive National Baptist Convention and National Baptist Convention USA Inc. will be holding conventions in the city of Detroit in the next few years. The events are expected to bring thousands of visitors to the city and the region from all over the country.

The National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, which has a strong relationship with the religious community, is due in the city with its national convention next year. Nearly 8,800 are expected to attend the event and direct spending is estimated to reach more than \$16 million.

Larry Alexander, president of the bureau, said religious groups are a key market for the bureau. And Detroit is a top destination for these groups, since the city has more churches per square mile than any other city in the nation, he said.

The bureau's 2006 goals include booking 20,000 room nights for religious conventions, according to the group's 2005 annual report and

that was motivated by the Super Bowl. 77

Pastor E.L. Branch,
Third New Hope Baptist Church

2006 regional tourism economic impact strategy.

"It's always been a major market for us because this region can provide support for and attendance to their shows when they come to town," Alexander said. The economic impact for the region is significant when you add up the dollars spent on transportation, hotel accommodations, restaurants and trade-show exhibits, he said.

Pastor E.L. Branch of the Third New Hope Baptist Church in Detroit lobbied for the city to be the site of the National Baptist Convention's annual event. His efforts were so

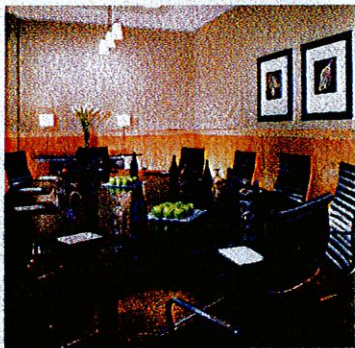
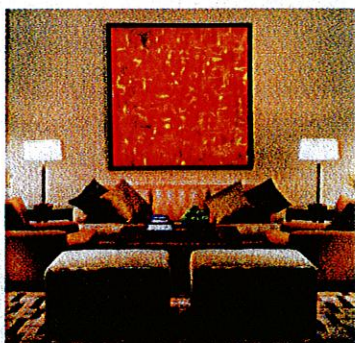
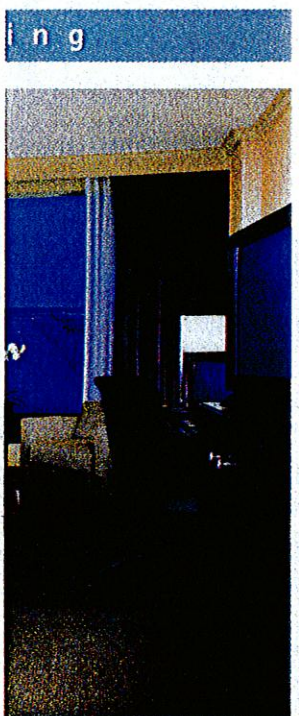
just so excited with the electricity that was generated by the Super Bowl. Seeing all those activities infused me with hope and excitement for 2009."

The conventions are expected to bring about 50,000 registrants each and a total of about \$50 million in direct spending to the region, Alexander said.

Meanwhile, the Progressive National Baptist Convention, which was in Detroit in 2005, is returning to the area in 2010. Last summer's event brought in nearly 12,000 attendees and direct visitor spending reached about \$7.4 million, according to the bureau.

Communities beyond the city of Detroit also benefit from the events, as many attendees find hotels in the suburbs and even in Windsor, either to be near family members and friends or to experience another country across the river, Branch said.

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Future: Keep going

■ From Page 11

Avenue corridor.

"Look at Walt Disney World and Epcot, the Magic Kingdom and Animal Kingdom," Alexander said. "It's about having these individual tourism districts."

The bureau primarily is seeking prospective tourists who live within a three- to five-hour drive.



Stinebaugh

an eventual expansion of Cobo Center will help bring more meetings and conventions to Detroit.

The Super Bowl and related events made the first quarter the best in the four-year history of the hotel by revenue generated, Stinebaugh said.

"We were thrilled with the results, the revenue generated, the sense of pride instilled in our associates," he said.

Stinebaugh said he hopes the Super Bowl momentum can be continued at his hotel. For example, the Westin has a lead for a communications industry meeting gained from

one of the NFL corporate sponsors who stayed at the hotel.

Super Bowl XL Host Committee Chairman Roger Penske said last week at the Crain's Newsmaker luncheon that the region's potential for greater success attracting out-of-town visitors is emerging.

"I think we need to build a destination," he said.

Better public transportation options are part of that picture, long-term, Alexander said.

"We don't have an easy way to get people from the airport to downtown Detroit to Somerset (Collection) to the Hyatt Regency in Dearborn," he said.

Shuttle buses serve their purpose as a stop-gap measure, but Alexander said there's no doubt the lack of a comprehensive system is a major obstacle.

Dietz said he'd like to see more park-and-ride shuttles available that head directly to downtown entertainment destinations, such as the temporary shuttles set up for Super Bowl XL that were overwhelmed with demand.

"What if you could always get on at The Detroit Zoo or Fairlane (Town Center)?" he said. "People make the party."

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