



ANNUAL REPORT

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 - CONVENTION CENTER

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Atlantic City
convention & visitors authority TM



There's no doubt that 2008 can be summed up in two words: "exciting" and "challenging" for Atlantic City.

It was exciting because of all the new developments that opened during the year, increasing our room inventory and providing additional activities and attractions for our visitors. It was challenging because of the many changes on the competitive horizon and evolving with an economy that made it more important than ever to form alliances and promote the city's non-gaming attractions.

Billions of dollars of investment in the city came to fruition in 2008. Approximately 3,000 new hotel rooms opened, giving the city the critical mass of hotel rooms needed to catch the attention of conventions and meetings that didn't previously consider Atlantic City. The additional rooms also put us on the radar for transportation providers looking to expand service and routes. That's exciting. It energized the community as a whole, and created lots of buzz in the media.

The economic climate that affected the convention industry nationally also challenged us locally, although the impact was significantly less than in other areas of the country. Atlantic City's popularity as a convention city, coupled with its strategic location that benefits the regional meetings market, bodes well for future bookings.

Our environmental efforts at the Convention Center led to an invitation to be a founding member of the prestigious Convene Green Alliance. Efforts included an exemplary recycling program, energy reduction efforts such as installation of giant fans in the soaring atrium lobby, and installation of the country's largest single-roof solar array, which put Atlantic City on the green meetings map. It also created excitement, both publicly and in the media.

On an internal level, the ACCVA's separation from the New Jersey Sports and Exposition Authority gave us more flexibility in charting our course for marketing the city to visitors and the convention industry. That was exciting, too.

We were challenged by the business media and investment community, which dwelled only on Atlantic City's negative gaming results. We were challenged by exorbitant gas prices, coupled with media reports that made the traveling public think twice about taking a vacation, but we were encouraged by the media that urged "staycations" and getaways to nearby destinations.

In all, 2008 set us up for a gaming, travel and economic landscape that will continue to change, and reminded us to be flexible to respond to those changes.

With new projects such as the Revel casino resort on the horizon, positive response to our Atlantic City Restaurant Week plans and a local business community that's eager and open to new ideas, from where I sit 2009 looks like a busy year with lots more excitement and challenges ahead.

Sincerely,



2008 ACCVA Annual Report Awards and Recognitions

2008 was another rewarding year for Atlantic City and the ACCVA. Here are some of the awards and recognitions we received:

Atlantic City

- The Atlantic City Boardwalk was listed as one of the “10 Best Boardwalks” by the Fine Living television network.
- Hotel & Resort Insider placed Atlantic City at the top of their list of “Top 5 Gambling Destinations Beyond Las Vegas.”
- Sherman’s Travel included Atlantic City in an international list of the “Top 10 Gambling Getaways.”

Boardwalk Hall

- *Billboard* magazine named Boardwalk Hall the top-grossing mid-sized arena in North America.*
- *Venues Today* magazine ranked Boardwalk Hall as the top-grossing mid-sized arena in the world for 2008.*

**These two publications use different time periods and criteria to determine the rankings.*

Convention Development

- The ACCVA was invited and accepted as a founding member of the prestigious Convene Green Alliance, a convention industry association, based on the environmentally friendly practices at the Atlantic City Convention Center.
- *Meetings and Conventions* magazine awarded the ACCVA’s Convention Development department the Gold Service Award.
- *Successful Meetings* magazine awarded the ACCVA with a Pinnacle Award.
- *Meeting News* magazine recognized the Atlantic City Convention Center with the 2008 Planner’s Choice Award.

Marketing Department

- The ACCVA became the first destination marketing organization in New Jersey to receive Destination Marketing Accreditation from the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI).

- The ACCVA's promotional video, "Always Turned On," received a Silver Ava Award, the competition's highest award, from the Association of Marketing and Communications Professionals.
- The ACCVA's promotional video, "Always Turned On," was recognized in the 29th Annual Telly Awards with a Silver Telly Award.
- The ACCVA's newly designed Web site won a MarCom Gold Award in the International MarCom Creative Awards competition, presented by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals.

Media Relations

- The ACCVA received a MarCom Platinum Award for its Interactive Press Kit in the International MarCom Creative Awards competition, presented by the Association of Marketing and Communication Professionals.
- The ACCVA's Interactive Press Kit won a Silver Jasper Award in the category of Media Relations: Media Kit, awarded by the Jersey Shore Public Relations and Advertising Association (JSPRAA).
- The ACCVA's Interactive Press Kit won a Gold Jasper Award in the Excellence in Writing category, awarded by the Jersey Shore Public Relations and Advertising Association (JSPRAA).

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Tourism Marketing

Early in 2008, the ACCVA presented to Marketing Partners and the community results of a new Visitor Profile Study, which showed that visitors had positive experiences, would recommend Atlantic City to friends, enjoyed the ease of getting to Atlantic City and parking, and came for more than gaming. The study validated Atlantic City's recent emphasis on development of non-gaming attractions and the associated branding and marketing efforts to draw attention to those attractions.

In keeping with the mandate to market Atlantic City as a well-rounded resort destination to potential visitors, the ACCVA continued to seek new opportunities to promote the city to key audiences throughout 2008.

While Atlantic City's motorcoach market had been diminishing in the recent past, economic realities once again made motorcoach tours a viable and desirable business segment. The ACCVA and several of our Marketing Partners hosted the Pennsylvania Bus Association's Annual Meeting in June, for its first-ever meeting in Atlantic City. Tour operators, tour planners, destinations, bus companies and industry suppliers had an opportunity to explore Atlantic City's newest developments and attractions. As a result, several local businesses have booked motorcoach trips to their venues.

Interest from international markets, particularly Canada and the United Kingdom, was strong in 2008. The ACCVA Tourism Department and the Philadelphia Convention and Visitors Bureau teamed up to bring ten international tour operators, a media representative and a delegate from British Airways, which provided the airfare, for a trip that included two days in Philadelphia followed by two days in Atlantic City. None had been to Atlantic City previously, and all were impressed. Four of the operators have since requested hotel information to put packages together.

With gas prices soaring during the peak summer season, The ACCVA turned their expertise toward encouraging drive-in traffic by spearheading a "Gas and Go" promotion in various regional drive-in markets.

Additional key activities included:

- The ACCVA and 16 Marketing Partners hosted a booth and a breakfast during the American Bus Association's annual conference in Virginia Beach, VA.
- Staff attended 17 group travel shows, one film-related trade show and two international tour operator trade shows.
- The ACCVA hosted five familiarization (FAM) tours and five group site inspections.
- The ACCVA hosted five international site inspections.
- Staff attended 10 AAA travel trade shows.

Two additional market segments are also addressed throughout the year by the Tourism Marketing department: film marketing, which can bring substantial economic impact when

motion pictures use Atlantic City as a location site; and sports marketing, which can attract sports events that utilize large numbers of room nights.

Film Marketing

- The Film office hosted 27 projects in 2008.
- The ACCVA film office played a large support role in the inaugural Downbeach Film Festival, which was well attended and received a high level of community support.

Sports Marketing

- The ACCVA and Boardwalk Hall hosted the Atlantic 10 Men's Basketball Championship, and played a role in getting a commitment for the tournament to be held in Atlantic City through 2012.

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Convention Development/Convention Services

While the economic realities of 2008 had a severe impact on some convention destinations, the Atlantic City Convention Center fared slightly better than others. An industry benchmarking study by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, in fact, shows that Atlantic City is an industry leader in parameters such as number of conventions, trade shows and public shows as compared to other convention centers of similar size, as well as attendance at conventions and trade shows.

In a sea of statistics, one factor stands out: although the total number of conventions, trade shows, meetings and public shows at the Atlantic City Convention Center was 13 percent lower than the previous year, the total number of attendees was the same. In other words, people want to come to Atlantic City for these events.

Good news is on the horizon, too: in 2008, in a business climate when 40 percent of meeting planners said they planned to “postpone, cancel or rebook a meeting” (in a Ypartnership study), the Convention Development department had its second-highest production year ever for future bookings (all future years) at the Convention Center that includes:

- 143 bookings
- Nearly 141,000 estimated room nights
- More than 520,000 estimated attendees
- \$231.6 million estimated delegate spending

The Convention Center welcomed several new events in 2008, as well, including a highly successful “Simply Corvette” car show, the Faux Event/Decorative Arts Show, Snap-On Tools and the National Water Quality Monitoring Council National Convention. WE also welcomed back some old clients, such as US Foodservice, which returned to Atlantic City after a brief hiatus.

2008 events included:

- 131 conventions, trade show and meeting
- 12 public shows
- 111,420 total room nights from the above
- 374,043 total attendance at the above
- Approximately \$155.5 million delegate spending

The Convention Development department also assists clients in booking events at Atlantic City hotels and resort. In 2008, they helped place the following business:

- 108 events
- 25,368 room nights
- 25,904 attendees
- Approximately \$16.3 million delegate spending

An attractive aspect of holding an event at the Atlantic City Convention Center is the high level of personal attention and service that each event receives. The Convention Service staff plays a

large role in that, by providing ancillary services such as organizing spouse programs, attendance building, shuttle coordination, a “Show Me Your Badge” discount program, convention staffing and operation of a popular Restaurant Cart where convention delegates can research local restaurants and make reservations. In 2008, 13,118 total restaurant reservations were booked at the Cart, including activity at 20 shoes that did not utilize the service in the past.

Thanks to an aggressive recycling program, new solar roof (the largest single-roof solar array in the country) and other energy-saving programs, the Atlantic City Convention Center now plays a strong role in the increasingly popular green meetings market. The ACCVA was one of just four convention and visitors authorities/bureaus invited to be a founding member of the prestigious Convene Green Alliance. As the trend toward greener meetings grows, the Atlantic City Convention Center, coupled with other environmental initiatives in the area, will be well positioned to attract this new business.

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Marketing Partnership

A wise person once said, “Together we stand.” Today more than ever, Atlantic City’s attractions and venues need to form partnerships to market the entire destination as a vacation experience.

The ACCVA Marketing Partner program offers an opportunity for members to publicize their business via the ACCVA’s marketing efforts. It also provides educational seminars, networking opportunities, publicity opportunities and participation in citywide events.

In 2008, the Marketing Partner department launched a new program of monumental proportions – the first annual Atlantic City Restaurant Week, to be held in March 2009. The department embarked on a year-long schedule of recruiting restaurant participation, sponsorship sales and coordination. A grant from the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism provided additional impetus. The event began to garner publicity from the day it was announced, highlighting the large number of fine dining establishments in the area and enhancing Atlantic City’s reputation as a dining destination.

The Marketing Partner department also developed tours for specific audiences. A tour to familiarize key staff of the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau helped strengthen our relationship with them in order to jointly build international group tourism programs. A tour for Marketing Partners during National Tourism Week provided first-hand exposure to some of the area’s historical and cultural sites.

The Marketing Partnership Manager represented Atlantic City on a state Way-Finding Signage committee to reduce signage congestion while developing new signage to make it easier for visitors to navigate the area’s roads.

Development of a new Partner Extranet gave them the ability to receive information and update their listings online.

By the numbers, the 2008 Marketing Partner Program:

- Experienced a 10.9 percent increase in partners over 2007
- Hosted one educational seminar
- Hosted two orientations for new partners
- Hosted 4 networking mixers
- Issued 12 monthly partner mailings with tourism leads and convention development updates
- Issued 12 Destination Marketing Update newsletters to keep Partners abreast of ACCVA’s activities to promote the destination

2008 ACCVA Annual Report

E-Marketing

Internet marketing and social media are the fastest-growing segments in marketing and communications, and the ACCVA has capitalized on the trend with an expansive Web site and use of opt-in electronic newsletters, Facebook and Twitter to keep fans and potential visitors updated and to market special events such as the first annual Atlantic City Restaurant Week.

In 2008, the ACCVA made significant enhancements to the e-marketing program. In particular, a completely redesigned www.atlanticcitynj.com Web site was launched, which reflects a more sophisticated image and updated messaging. A notable addition to the site is a “Live Chat” feature for interested parties to interact in real time with a visitor information counselor.

Additionally, a Marketing Partner Extranet site was implemented to allow Partners to access information and update their listings at any time. The ACCVA also created a site specifically for Atlantic City Restaurant Week information.

The popularity of obtaining travel information and booking trips via the Internet are evident in the ACCVA Web site’s 2008 use statistics:

- 4.5 million visits to the Web site (a 21 percent increase over 2007)
- Nearly 2.8 million unique visitors (a 30 percent increase)
- 5,315 room nights booked through the site (a 13 percent increase)
- Room night impact of \$2.9 million

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Media Relations

One of the most cost-effective ways to circulate any message is through positive stories and mentions in the media, whether it's print, broadcast or online. The Media Relations department is charged with getting the Atlantic City story told.

Through a number of familiarization tours, interviews, press releases and media alerts, advertorials, television segments, deskside meetings with editors and special events, ACCVA Media Relations staff and representatives of the Lou Hammond & Associates public relations agency reached a myriad of media and garnered international media notice.

Special events and new ventures such as the Valentine's Day Group Wedding, installation of the Convention Center's solar roof, the Atlantic 10 Men's Basketball Championship, the upcoming Atlantic City Restaurant Week and the Atlantic City Airshow provided extensive opportunities for media stories throughout 2008.

The Media Relations department's results:

- News and feature stories in publications with approximately 261.4 million circulation
- Participated in five familiarization (FAM) tours, hosting a total of 24 media members
- Hosted 30 media members for individual visits
- Provided media support for 25 community events
- Provided media support for 49 conventions, meetings and public shows
- Hosted 22 media representatives during the ACCVA's annual New York City Media Night
- Hosted four media during the annual Washington, DC Showcase
- Hosted a media representative from the United Kingdom and provided a tour for all members of the joint Philadelphia/Atlantic FAM tour for the UK
- Met with 29 media representatives during Travel Media Showcase
- Deskside meetings held by ACCVA President Jeff Vasser with six editors in the New York City area
- Hosted, along with key casino executives, nine business media at a reception in New York City

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Visitor Services

When visitors and prospective visitors need information, they need a reliable source. Even in an era of electronic communications, it's essential for the ACCVA to maintain a professional Visitor Services department, which staffs two visitor welcome centers and answers phone-in and online questions.

In 2008, the Visitor Services counselors:

- Responded to 65,294 visitors via email
- Assisted 170,000 visitors to the welcome centers with general information, room reservations and directions

To respond to the growth of online communications and the desire for instant communication, the ACCVA implemented a Live Chat program. Visitors can access the feature from the www.atlanticcitynj.com Web site and maintain an online conversation with an information counselor to ask questions about a visit to Atlantic City.

Additionally, the Visitor Services department again produced the annual Host Awards, recognizing individuals in the hospitality industry throughout the Atlantic City area for outstanding service.

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Graphic Communications

By maintaining an in-house Graphic Communications department, the ACCVA can maintain a consistent visual brand image and provide continuity to all advertising, signage, brochures and collateral. In 2008, the Graphic Communications staff continued to produce edgy, high-energy images for targeted Internet marketing, advertising and promotional use.

As a value added service for Marketing Partners and Convention center clients, the Graphic Communications staff provided 3,500 hours of in-kind design and wide format print services throughout the year.

For the first time in the department's history, Visitor Guide and Visitor Map were outsourced to a third party as advertising-based collateral, with a revenue share agreement.

In keeping with the ACCVA's efforts to become "greener," the department created interactive versions of the press kit, Destination Planning Guide and Event Planning Guide on custom USB drives, which eliminates the need for printed versions.

In 2007, the department spent \$360,000 for design and printed collateral. In 2008, we were able to produce the same type and volume of collateral for \$160,000 -- 56% overall savings.

2008 ACCVA Annual Report Boardwalk Hall Facilities and Operations (SMG)

Atlantic City is now firmly established as an entertainment powerhouse, with Boardwalk Hall at the epicenter. For several years, Boardwalk Hall has maintained its standing as the top-grossing venue of its size – a trend that continued in 2008.

The Hall provides the space and backdrop needed for events like the Atlantic 10 Men's Basketball Championships (which will continue to make Atlantic City its home through 2012), ethnic shows and major concert tours. The range of events is complemented by those at the city's casino resorts, giving a well-rounded entertainment offering to visitors.

Operated by SMG, a number of marketing programs were implemented in 2008 to provide operating and marketing efficiencies, and several notable improvements were completed:

- Boardwalk Hall, along with the Convention Center, became part of one of the East Coast's largest free WiFi hotspots with installation of a FreeFi network.
- A modern new electronic marquee on Pacific Avenue provides greater opportunity to advertise upcoming shows and events to passing motorists and pedestrians, as well as provide a welcome message to all visitors.
- Improved e-marketing efficiencies were utilized in 21 campaigns, resulting in more than \$480,000 in ticket sales from 4,200 individual purchases.
- Improvements related to pre- and post-event readiness has reduced set-up costs and received compliments from promoters and show producers.
- More cost-effective ordering of inventory supplies and cleaning equipment lowered non-event expenses by 4.5 percent from the previous year.
- Boardwalk Hall and Convention Center management became Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certified by receiving training in basic disaster response skills.
- The Boardwalkhall.com Web site was enhanced with features that increase site visitation and e-database collection, including a quarterly CyberClub promotion and virtual tours of the pipe organ chambers and console.
- SMG marketing staff successfully funded and executed the FanZone during the Atlantic 10 Men's Basketball championship, recruiting more than a half-dozen sponsors and attracting 7,000 fans.

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- 34 ticketed shows
- 298,258 attendance
- \$26,314,572 gross ticket sales
- 5 private, non-ticketed events
- Ballroom shows
 - 5 ticketed shows
 - 9,068 attendance
 - \$653,706 gross ticket sales
 - 7 private, non-ticketed events

2008 Annual Report Convention Center Facilities and Operations (SMG)

Atlantic City has a long history as a top convention and meeting destination in the Northeast, and its reputation continues to grow as a cost-effective and convenient location for conventions, tradeshows and meetings. As resort hotel expansions include new ballroom and meeting space, the Atlantic City Convention Center remains at the heart of the city's convention and meetings business.

Operated by SMG, facilities, marketing and operational efficiencies that were brought to both Boardwalk Hall and the Convention Center helped keep the Center at the forefront of the regional convention and meetings business. Customer-pleasing improvements include the addition of the FreeFi WiFi network which, in combination with the same network at Boardwalk Hall, created one of the East Coast's largest free WiFi hotspots.

The "green meetings" trend has grown in numbers and stature within the past year, but locally for several years the Convention Center has been a conscientious recycler. In 2008, a unique arrangement led to the installation of the country's largest single-roof solar array on the Convention Center roof, providing as much as 26 percent of the Center's power needs. These efforts garnered national attention and brought Atlantic City to the forefront of the green meetings industry.

Additionally:

- Recycling efforts expanded to include lamps, ballasts and batteries (3,006 pounds); demolished conduit copper (more than 2,600 pounds); miscellaneous iron and steel (more than 16,450 pounds); out of use stainless steel dispensers and ductwork (more than 6,350 pounds); solar panel pallets and cardboard; and food service stainless steel and light iron from old dollies and trash cans. In total, the building recycles nearly 100 tons of materials annually.
- In line with green initiatives, the Event Planning Guide went electronic. The 85-page document was converted to a PDF and placed on our Web site and flash drives for clients to review and use. This is part of a long-term plan to convert all printed promotional materials to 75 percent electronic.
- "Meeting Matrix" software was installed. This space diagram program allows us to give clients 100 percent certifiable diagrams of their set-ups in both linear and three-dimensional formats.
- In September, the Events Department coordinated several local, state and federal agencies to land an HH-70 military helicopter on the bus lot for use in a Homeland Security symposium.
- Convention Center and Boardwalk Hall management became Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) certified by receiving training in basic disaster response skills.