



July 7, 2020

Dear Room Tax Commission,

I know you have difficult decisions to make due to the greatly diminished room tax fund, and I want to thank you for your careful consideration as you deliberate on these decisions. Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center like everyone in the hospitality industry has been severely impacted by COVID-19. What started off as a promising year quickly turned into what will be recorded as the most challenging in our 23-year history.

To allow us to meet this challenge I am requesting that you continue to invest in and strongly support Monona Terrace during this most difficult time for our industry, city, state and nation. Adequately funding Monona Terrace's future is a necessary investment in our local economy and our community. Please continue to fund Monona Terrace at the current levels adjusted for the room tax shortfall so it can continue to be an important generator of economic activity for Madison and Dane County. Proper funding will ensure Monona Terrace can continue to be a place where organizations and individuals want to host their events, a place where tourists want to come to visit, and a place where the community comes together.

The economic impact for the community from conventions and conferences held at Monona Terrace averages \$33 million per year. Monona Terrace will be at the forefront in helping to lead the economic and social recovery we will need as a community and industry. The partnerships and collaborations that we have established will be even more essential in the months and years to come. The local and state business we are currently booking for 2021 will help lift the City of Madison's economy. For example, to date for 2021, we already have 217 events on the books including 54 conventions and conferences, and 93 banquets and weddings. The community gathers at Monona Terrace for fundraisers, weddings, anniversaries, memorial services, banquets, meetings, and sporting events among others. It's these future events Monona Terrace is currently booking that will help lead the recovery of our local economy. And we cannot generate this business and maintain the building without a sufficient investment now.

Gathering and connecting with others is a fundamental and important reason for Monona Terrace's existence. The businesses and industries that need to come together to advance their work in areas such as the environment, sciences, technology, medicine, agriculture, finance, and many others, will still need to do so. While those gatherings may look and feel different for a while, it will be the gathering and connection of people who come together to figure things out that will make a significant difference during this period of recovery.

Since Monona Terrace opened, it has played a significant role in attracting visitors from around the country and the world. Many of those visitors are Frank Lloyd Wright enthusiasts who travel to Madison specifically to tour Wright's masterpiece. They often spend several days in Madison exploring other Frank Lloyd Wright sites in the city and surrounding areas. Beyond its role as a tourism destination for the city of Madison, Monona Terrace is a center for community gathering. Community programming brings Madison together in a very positive way. Events such as Moon Over Monona Terrace, Concerts on the Rooftop, Dane Dances and Terrace Town, are examples of free or low-cost and very popular community events for Madison's children, families and community members. Nearly 40,000 people each year take advantage of the wide

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variety of programs offered at Monona Terrace. In response to the community's needs, Monona Terrace community programs have gone online via Zoom with Lunchtime Meditation and Yoga, Lakeside Kids, virtual field trips for school kids, and a virtual tour and kids' activities page on our website.

Monona Terrace has always been innovative in finding ways to meet the changing needs of our clients and our industry while continuing to provide an exceptional experience. For example, to meet clients' current needs, Monona Terrace staff have created virtual meetings marketing materials and training for sales staff, and designed Zoom virtual building tours for existing and prospective customers.

Monona Terrace will compete and succeed by innovating in the new economy with expanded virtual meetings, conferences, and program offerings. We have increased our focus on short term local, state, and regional business opportunities with targeted marketing and sales strategies. We continue to pursue and book future business such as meetings, banquets, weddings, conferences and events booking one to two years in advance.

The Room Tax Commission faces serious choices regarding allocation of the greatly diminished room tax fund. Please bear in mind that adequately funding Monona Terrace represents a critical investment in the local economy and the community. I urge you to continue to fund Monona Terrace at its current levels adjusted for the room tax shortfall so that it can continue to be a catalyst for economic activity in the heart of the city as well as a vibrant destination for tourists and community members alike.

Sincerely,

Connie Thompson
Executive Director