

City of Long Beach
Many Unique Neighborhoods
One Great City



Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council

September 4, 2012

From: Suja Lowenthal, Second District 

Subject: Smarter Cities Challenge 2013

REQUESTED ACTION:

Respectfully request to receive and file a report from the City Manager on the status of Long Beach's application for the Smarter Cities Challenge 2013.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Smarter Cities Challenge was created by IBM Citizenship in 2010, to assist cities needing to deliver greater basic services with less resources, improve collaboration and data sharing between their departments, and expand civic engagement to drive good public policy and infrastructure investment. Over a three-year period, 100 municipalities from around the world will receive a portion of the \$50 million grant offered by IBM that partners their top experts and technology with city leaders to analyze a city's data and systems and help them make more efficient and effective choices by prioritizing. The application cycle for Smarter Cities Challenge 2013 will close on September 7, 2012. Sixty-four cities worldwide have received the grant thus far including Austin, Boulder, Houston, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Baltimore and Atlanta.

Cities need to be prepared to match IBM's investment with their own commitment of time and resources. Proposals that could be addressed by implementing "smarter" technologies and processes receive higher marks. Also important is the ability of cities to make publicly available data accessible in order to leverage the capabilities of *City Forward*, "a web-based platform that enables users – city officials, researchers, academics and interested citizens world-wide – to view and interact with city data while engaging in an ongoing public dialogue." Finally, cities that demonstrate a solid track record of innovative problem solving will also be viewed favorably.

Long Beach is similar to other cities nationwide struggling to ensure a better quality of life with shrinking budgets and increasing fixed costs like employee pensions and health care. With help from IBM's experts and technology, Long Beach has an opportunity to become even more efficient across departments and access information in real-time revealing patterns, trends and data from other cities and their departments that could inform our long-term decision making process. Consider the infinite number of data transistors imbedded in public

information related to safety, public works, financial management, parks and city planning that could help us determine the best practices and alternatives for providing services. In addition, the Smarter Cities Challenge grant could greatly enhance our existing efforts to engage residents and businesses in developing priorities and suggesting ideas that improve Long Beach. In short, if used thoughtfully, this technology could help us do more with less.

I first learned about the Smarter Cities Challenge from a colleague on Heal the Bay and later through my participation in the 2012 TED Conference, where the Annual TED Prize was awarded for the first time, not to an individual with "One Wish to Change the World", but an idea called *The City 2.0* – "a platform and a social network for helping people who want to make their cities work better find each other, collaborate and make good things happen." Among the businesses offering pledges to make *The City 2.0* a reality was IBM with its Smarter Cities Challenge. From that initial conversation with IBM's Smarter Cities organization, introductions were made with our Information Technology Department and City Manager's office.

For more information and to learn more about cities already benefiting from the Smarter Cities Challenge, please go to www.smartercitieschallenge.org. For more information about The City 2.0, go to www.thecity2.org.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.