

CRAIN'S DETROIT BUSINESS

January 3, 2010

2009 NEWSMAKER OF THE YEAR

Beth Chappell
CEO, **Detroit Economic Club**

By Nancy Kaffer

Last month, **Detroit Economic Club** President and CEO Beth Chappell made good, delivering the output from The National Summit to U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke in Washington, D.C.

Locke had been a speaker at The National Summit's June conference that brought top speakers from around the country to address about 4,000 attendees over three days in Detroit. While in the Motor City, he invited the summit's organizers to bring the event's output, "America's To-Do List," to him.



Along with summit co-chairmen — **Ford Motor Co.** Executive Chairman William Clay Ford Jr. and Thomas Dekar, principal and vice chairman of **Deloitte L.L.P.** — Chappell traveled to Washington to meet with Locke.

The summit was Chappell's brainchild, an attempt to take a crack at crafting a national economic policy path.

The event ultimately drew thousands to the Motor City, including more than 270 local, national and foreign journalists. And the spin was good — reports focused more on the event's content than the Detroit-in-decline narrative that characterizes much of the city's buzz in the national press.

But it wasn't an easy road.

The summit was announced just weeks before the economic crisis began in fall 2008.

As the event approached, plans changed: to a smaller venue, to lower-priced tickets. The week before the summit, Chappell sent an urgent appeal for funds to

the Econ Club's board members, warning that the fate of the club and the summit were linked, and that failure for one meant failure for both.

After the summit ended, the Econ Club was still in trouble, ending the fiscal year with a \$350,000 operating deficit.

Chappell told *Crain's* that the club was adding to its programming in an attempt to draw more attendees to its regular luncheons.

Just two weeks ago, Chappell told *Crain's* that the Econ Club's gambits had been successful, saying that the club was on its way to financial terra firma.

The To-Do List, she said, will be taken to the Econ Club's membership for further discussion and input.