



Los Angeles Area  
Chamber of Commerce

## **Chris Essel**

### **Incoming Chief Executive Officer, Community Redevelopment Agency**

Chris began her career as a businesswoman at a young age, teaching piano lessons in her neighborhood at age twelve for 75 cents a half hour. She also worked as a cashier at Greenthumb Nursery in Canoga Park. In the late seventies, Chris moved into her first home in Studio City when she began working as an accountant at a small entertainment business. She began her tenure at Paramount Pictures managing budgets as a facilities accountant, and worked her way up to become a community affairs Vice President. At Paramount, Chris oversaw the creation of hundreds of jobs as she worked to rebuild the dilapidated Paramount lot into a state-of-the-art production facility. Chris also created mentoring and internship programs at Paramount, to give L.A.'s youth an opportunity to get experience in the entertainment industry.

Chris has also used her leadership skills to protect neighborhoods. When Los Angeles County decided to allow a rock promoter to hold events at the John Anson Ford Theater, Chris' Cahuenga Terrace neighborhood was overrun with traffic, crime, and drugs. In response, Chris created the Hollywood Terrace Homeowners and worked successfully with L.A. County and LAPD to stop the events and return the theater to its appropriate status as an acoustic-only venue.

Chris has served California and the City of Los Angeles as an appointed commissioner on numerous boards. Chris was chair of the California Film commission from 1999-2007, serving as the lead representative for L.A.'s entertainment industry in Sacramento. As Commission Chair, Chris worked to create incentives to keep production jobs in Los Angeles for city residents. In 1992, Chris was appointed to the Community Redevelopment Agency board by Mayor Tom Bradley. After being appointed commission chair by Mayor Richard Riordan, Chris led the effort to turn around Hollywood Boulevard to make it a safe and attractive destination for tourists and residents alike. Chris also led efforts to develop what became the Agency's stringent green building guidelines.

Chris served on Tom Bradley's Hollywood Mobility Action Committee, where she helped to reduce traffic by working to add left-hand turn signals at congested intersections and synchronize stop lights. As a member of the State Workforce Investment Board, Chris worked to create policies to enhance worker training opportunities. Chris served most recently as a Los Angeles World Airports Commissioner, where she worked advance the cause of LAX modernization.