

HOTEL INDUSTRY BOOMING IN BRAZOSPORT AREA

The Facts : September 24, 2007

Hotel industry booming in Brazosport area

By John Tompkins

The Facts

Published September 24, 2007

CLUTE — Visitors looking to stay the night in the Brazosport area are likely to have a harder time finding room on a Tuesday than any day on the weekend.

“During the weekend you can get a room,” Clute Best Western manager Sharon Ward said. “Never come in on a Tuesday or Wednesday night.”

Though many hotels are busy during the summer months with vacationers, industrial workers are the bread and butter for the Brazosport hotel market, she said. That usually means a packed lobby during the week.

Construction projects, such as the LNG terminal in Quintana, also bring in more long-term hotel bills from the workers, officials said.

“They bring in a tremendous amount of business for the hotels,” Clute Visitors Bureau Director Jan Scott said.

Looking to cater to business-related travelers, the Brazosport area has four new hotels in the works, with one of them currently under construction.

“There’s a demand right now,” said Jay Parshottam, owner of the Clute Holiday Inn Express and the future owner of the Hampton Inn now being built in Clute. “We’ve done our feasibility. We feel the market demands another hotel.”

Hotels in Lake Jackson and Clute that are priced more than \$50 a night had occupancy rates at or above 80 percent in the first quarter of 2007, according to data from the Governor’s Office of Economic Development and Tourism. The average rate in that same time period was 63.3 percent for all of Brazoria County.

Hotels in Clute and Lake Jackson, which cater to the industrial and construction workers visiting the area, drew in about \$2.7 million in sales tax revenues in the first quarter, according to the statistics. Both Clute and Lake Jackson also had the highest number of nights in the first quarter with no vacancies with 32 nights and 19 nights, respectively, compared to all other areas in the county.

Though the county’s overall occupancy rate hovers around 60 percent, developers are looking at the Brazosport area in particular because of its proximity to industry and the beaches, said Ian Fisher, vice president of development for K Partners Hospitality Group, which is planning to build a Springhill Suites hotel on the lot between Brazos Mall and Highway 288.

“It’s about location,” Fisher said. “We think Lake Jackson is a good business community and has been under-served over the years with quality rooms.”

Springhill Suites is part of the Marriott chain of hotels.

Hotel companies usually do their own market research before deciding to start construction in a particular area, Parshottam said.

"They look at the growth in the area and whether there's room for demand," he said.

Though many of the hotels rely on industry for the bulk of their profits, they do gain customers from recreational visitors, Lake Jackson City Manager Bill Yenne said.

"We have a lot of regional and statewide (athletic) tournaments down here," he said. "People will come down here from all over the state and fill the hotels up."

Summer usually means stuffed rooms because of beach visitors and those looking to charter a deep-sea fishing boat, Ward said.

"There's so much to do," Brazosport Area Chamber of Commerce President Sandra Shaw said. "It's good to have more choices and more rooms available."

Having the new hotels also will help encourage more visitors to come, she said.

John Tompkins is senior reporter for The Facts. Contact him at (979) 237-0149.

Copyright © 2007 The Facts