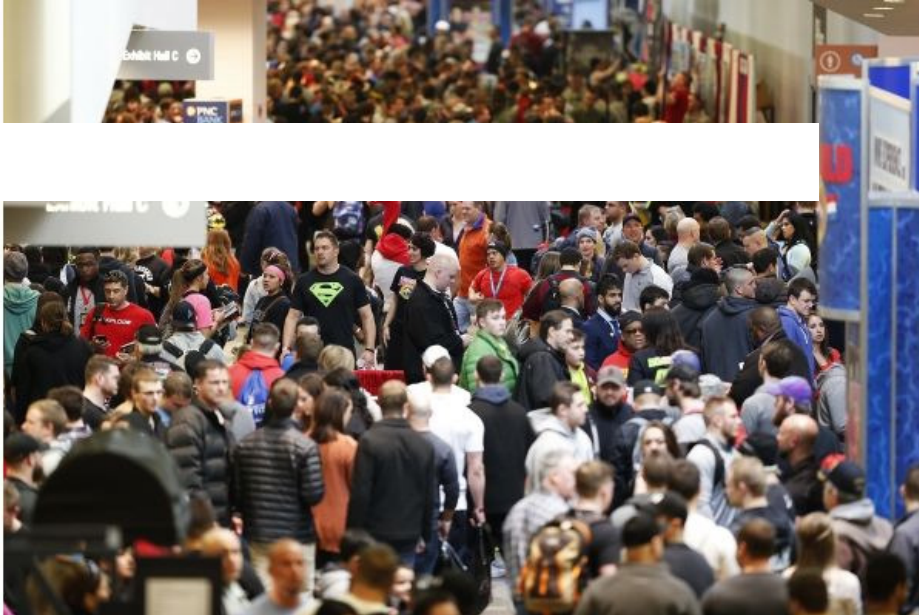


The Columbus Dispatch

» Hot Links:

Columbus hotels boosted by record year in 2015



REQUEST TO BUY THIS PHOTO

EAMON QUEENEY | DISPATCH FILE PHOTO

The Arnold Fitness Expo at the Greater Columbus Convention Center and the accompanying Arnold Sports Festival are major tourism draws for Columbus.

COLUMBUS HOTELS

Key 2015 statistics

Occupancy: 65 percent, up 3 percent

Revenue per available room: \$64.47, up 8.7 percent

Average daily rate: \$99.22, up 5.5 percent

Source: *Smith Travel Research for Experience Columbus*

By **Marla Matzer Rose**

The Columbus Dispatch • Thursday January 21, 2016 6:24 AM

0

0

1

Columbus area hotels had a record year in 2015 by every key performance measure, reflecting strong visitor numbers for conventions and special events.

Buoyed by such things as the NHL All-Star Game in January, big volleyball and softball tournaments and annual groups such as horticultural trade association AmericanHort, Columbus hotels saw strong gains in occupancy and revenue for the year.

Brian Ross, CEO of convention and visitors bureau Experience Columbus, touted the numbers to the group's board during a meeting Wednesday morning at the Arthur G. James Cancer Hospital at Ohio State University. He pointed out that although Columbus still was ranked toward the bottom in key measures compared with 10 cities it considers key competitors, Columbus' growth in those measures — occupancy, average daily rate and revenue per available room — ranked third among its competitors.

Further, Ross said, Columbus' revenue per room is now within a dollar of the cities that ranked just above it, including Cleveland, St. Louis and Milwaukee. The other seven competitive cities are Cincinnati, Nashville, Pittsburgh, Charlotte, Louisville, Indianapolis and Kansas City.

Columbus long has struggled to bring up its room rates in comparison with competitive cities, in part because many of the groups that hold meetings in the state capital are state associations or other organizations that can only pay government-approved rates. On the flip side, Columbus competes favorably with other cities because of its relative affordability.

CONNECT WITH US

Facebook

Twitter

E-Newsletters

RSS Feeds

Mobile Text Alerts

My Yahoo!

THE BOTTOM LINE

» Power outages increasingly costly for data centers

OTHER BUSINESS FEATURES

» Schwarzenegger pumped on Columbus for movie making

» Honda sales slip in central Ohio

LOCAL STORIES FROM THISWEEK

» PUCO agreement levies \$200,000 fine in UA house explosion

» Powell Grand plans move forward despite council rookies' objections

» Ginther's alma mater will host his first State of City address

» New Northam plan cuts costs, leaves courts, fields

» Supreme Court sides with Keep Hilliard Beautiful

» Griffith remembered as leader who helped CCAD grow

» Board approves assistant-superintendent contract for Schmidt

MORE ARTICLES

ThisWeek COMMUNITY NEWS

THE DISPATCH E-EDITION



The E-

Edition includes all of the news, comics, classifieds and advertisements of the newspaper. And it's available to subscribers before 6 a.m. every day.

SUBSCRIBE

All current subscribers have full access to Digital D, which includes the E-Edition and unlimited premium content on Dispatch.com, BuckeyeXtra.com, BlueJacketsXtra.com and DispatchPolitics.com. Subscribe today!

Downtown hotels were a particular bright spot, driven in part by very successful publicly-financed Hilton Columbus Downtown that opened in fall 2012 across from the Greater Columbus Convention Center. Downtown occupancy was 70.3 percent, up 6.3 percent over 2014; average daily rate was \$136.17, a 5.6 percent increase; and revenue per room was \$95.72, a 12.3 percent increase.

Since the year the Hilton opened, during which time several other Downtown hotels also have undergone renovations, Downtown properties have seen a huge surge in revenue while also increasing occupancy from about 66 percent in 2012 to the current 70.3 percent. That's significant because there was some fear that adding a big publicly financed hotel might drain business from others Downtown and not contribute to an overall increase in business.

The possibility of adding more full-service hotels near the convention center is being studied by the Franklin County Convention Facilities Authority, which oversees the convention center, the downtown Hilton and Nationwide Arena.

Chris Coffin, general manager of the Hilton Columbus Downtown, cautioned that it may be hard to have another record year of growth in 2016 given the ongoing renovation of the convention center. Construction is being done to accommodate longstanding groups such as the Arnold Sports Festival in March but may preclude being able to take in some new business this year. But Coffin stressed that the \$125 million renovation is a good investment for the future.

Also with an eye to the future, Experience Columbus is going after the annual convention in 2018, 2019 or 2021 of the American Society of Association Executives, a national group representing thousands of professional who book meetings for their own groups on a regular basis.

Brian Ellis, an Experience Columbus board member and president of Nationwide Realty Investors, told fellow board members that getting the executive association would be on par with the biggest conventions Columbus has sought in recent years, including the Democratic and Republican national conventions that this year are going to Philadelphia and Cleveland, respectively.

"It would be a game changer," Ellis said.

mrose@dispatch.com

Favorite Print Story

0
