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For additional information, contact:

Kevin Wiatrowski
Regional Media Relations
Office: (813) 218-3894/Cell: (813) 395-4043
Twitter: @kwiatrowskiVTB
kwiatrowski@VisitTampaBay.com

Visit Tampa Bay launches “30 in 3” effort to join state’s biggest tourism counties *Record bed-tax collections puts Hillsborough County on track for 2018*

TAMPA (Nov. 6, 2014) – Coming off a record year of Hillsborough County tourism, Visit Tampa Bay has launched a new effort to boost the Tampa Bay area into the ranks of Florida’s top tourism counties.

The “30-in-3” campaign, unveiled during Visit Tampa Bay’s annual meeting in October, has set a goal of reaching \$30 million in county bed taxes by 2018.

“Ten percent growth a year over the next three years is doable. The industry is in a position to do that,” said Visit Tampa Bay President and CEO Santiago Corrada. “We think with a strong strategy, some smart marketing and with the kind of events we’ve already landed it’s achievable.”

By crossing the \$30 million limit, Hillsborough County will join the eight Florida counties now designated high-impact tourism counties. That list includes Pinellas, Duval, Volusia, Orange, Osceola, Broward, Miami-Dade and Monroe counties.

“We’ll join an elite group of counties in Florida tourism,” Corrada said. “It opens a lot of doors.”

High-impact tourism counties are allowed by the Legislature to raise their hotel bed tax to 6 percent. Counties that don’t hit the \$30 million threshold are limited to a 5 percent bed tax.

Hillsborough County reached \$23.7 million in bed taxes during Fiscal Year 2014 – beating the FY 2013 figure by more than 12 percent and surpassing the old record set in 2007 by nearly 9 percent.

Bed taxes were part of a year that saw Hillsborough County’s lead tourism organization set new records for attracting both convention and leisure travelers. As a whole Visit Tampa Bay directly generated more than 760,400 room nights for county hotels and \$374 million in estimated economic impact for the county.

In Fiscal Year 2014, Hillsborough County hotels also hit new year-over-year peaks for average occupancy (up 4 percentage points to 68.4 percent); average per-room revenue (up 13.8 percent to \$66) and overall revenues (up 13 percent to \$523.7 million).

Along with strong numbers in 2014, Visit Tampa Bay booked nearly 500,000 future room nights through meetings and conventions from Fiscal Year 2015 and beyond.

The list of near-term bookings includes: the 2015 NCAA Women's Final Four, in conjunction with the Tampa Bay Sports Commission; the 2015 Florida Governor's Conference on Tourism (coming to Tampa Bay for the first time); the 2016 imperial sessions of both Shriners International and Prince Hall and – also in conjunction with the Tampa Bay Sports Commission – the 2016 NCAA Frozen Four hockey tournament.

ABOUT VISIT TAMPA BAY

Visit Tampa Bay leads the effort of economic development through tourism. The mission of Visit Tampa Bay is to create vibrant economic growth for the Tampa Bay area by selling and promoting the Tampa Bay destination. The independent not-for-profit organization represents more than 700 businesses throughout the area and works to ignite interest for Visiting Tampa Bay.

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