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Florida's Most is Florida's first

Tampa Bay breaks ground with Florida's first Tourism Marketing District

TAMPA (April 13, 2017) -- Visit Tampa Bay and 13 hotel partners, spearheaded by the Hillsborough County Hotel Motel Association, have created Florida's first-ever Tourism Marketing District, which will begin collecting a voluntary assessment on May 1 aimed at bringing more overnight visitors to downtown Tampa and historic Ybor City.

The new district moves Florida into the ranks of California and other high-tourism states that use Tourism Marketing Districts to fund tourism marketing. By creating the district, Tampa Bay is setting a trend other Florida destinations may follow.

"This visionary decision will ensure a solid foundation for our community as Tampa Bay continues to grow as a worldwide travel destination," said Santiago Corrada, President and CEO of Visit Tampa Bay. "These funds will boost the destination's ability to boost our out-of-area marketing and incentives in both frequency and breadth without impacting other resources or goals."

The Downtown/Historic Ybor Tampa Tourism Marketing District won approval from Tampa City Council earlier this month. Current estimates are that the district could generate an extra \$1.36 million a year for promoting Tampa Bay as a travel destination.

Under the agreement, participating hoteliers will collect \$1.50 per room-night from the properties in the district. The funds will be collected by the Hillsborough County Tax Collector's Office and forwarded to the Hillsborough County Hotel & Motel Association. A steering committee will determine how best to spend the money to supplement existing destination marketing.

The district was created with the help of travel industry analyst Tourism Economics and Civitas Advisors, which has created similar districts in other states.

Tourism Economics estimates the extra funding could generate an addition 90,000 room-nights per year for local hotels and a return-on-investment of \$10 for every dollar spent.

Bob Morrison, executive director of the Hillsborough County Hotel Motel Association said the agreement is a classic public-private partnership. Hotels will underwrite costs connected with setting up and running the district, putting not new expenses on local governments.

“But those city and county partners will experience concurrent growth in sales and other revenues paid by the additional visitors,” Morrison said.

Under the agreement, the money raised by the district are in addition to – not in place of – bed-tax revenues already collected by hotels and other short-term accommodations. That 5 percent levy has produced \$14.99 million in the first half of the 2017 budget year, which started October 1.

The hotels signing on with the district include:

Aloft Tampa Downtown, Courtyard by Marriott Tampa Downtown, Embassy Suites Hotel Tampa Downtown Convention Center, Epicurean Hotel, Hampton Inn & Suites Ybor, Hilton Garden Inn Tampa Ybor, Floridan Palace Hotel, Le Méridien Tampa, Hilton Tampa Downtown, Marriott Tampa Waterside Hotel & Marina, Sheraton Tampa Riverwalk Hotel, Residence Inn Tampa, and The Barrymore Hotel Tampa Riverwalk.

“We applaud our local hoteliers for stepping up and committing themselves to expand Tampa Bay’s presence in the incredibly competitive world of tourism,” Corrada said. “Their voluntary action is an investment in this community that will produce enormous economic benefits.”

About Visit Tampa Bay

The hip, urban heart of Florida’s Gulf coast beats in Tampa Bay. Visit Tampa Bay encourages adventurous travelers to unlock our trove of unique treasures. We are a not-for-profit corporation that works with more than 800 partners to tell the world the story of Florida’s most diverse destination.