

Gettysburg lodging sales hit all-time high in 2017

BY JIM HALE Times Staff Writer, February 16, 2018

Overnight lodging revenues in Adams County hit a new high in 2017, surpassing the record set during the Battle of Gettysburg sesquicentennial.

Last year's total was \$52,004,343, up from "slightly more than \$50 million" in 2013, according to a news release issued Thursday by Destination Gettysburg.

Last year's sales generated \$2.63 million via the countywide 5 percent "pillow tax" on overnight accommodations, with Destination Gettysburg receiving the bulk of the pillow tax proceeds, gaining \$1.9 million for its nonprofit tourism promotion work, the release said.

Adams County received \$99,312 in administrative fees. County Treasurer Christine Redding's office tallies the sales and pillow tax.

Also, five municipalities with full-time police departments, Cumberland Township and the boroughs of Gettysburg, New Oxford, Fairfield, and Carroll Valley, split \$316,380, according to the release.

"Tourism is strong in Adams County," Destination Gettysburg President Norris Flowers said.

"Overnight stays are an important barometer for the strength of tourism - and the revenue collected for lodging positively impacts spending by visitors in other areas such as shopping, dining and entertainment," Flowers said.

Destination Gettysburg will use the pillow tax money "to market the destination to potential visitors through paid advertising, video content, social media, public relations, group travel sales and more. In return, these efforts will keep tourism money coming back into local governments and the hands of business owners and their employees," the release says.

"Destination Gettysburg has worked hard to extend visitors' stays by convincing travelers that they need more than a day, often more than two days, to fully experience Adams County," Flowers said.

Annually, tourism generates approximately \$700 million in visitor spending and \$135 million in federal, state and local taxes, according to the release. "These numbers are proof that our marketing is working," Flowers said.

"Marketing a wider variety of experiences throughout Adams County" contributed to the revenue growth, Flowers wrote in an email Thursday.

"The growing craft beverage industry and food scene here - along with outdoor recreation, shopping and venturing up into the Adams County countryside - are a big part of the experience that visitors are now building into their trips," Flowers wrote.

Two new motels have increased local capacity, Flowers said, but one replaced an existing facility, and another facility was demolished as part of restoration of Gen. Robert E. Lee's headquarters site on the west edge of Gettysburg.

"In May last year, a Best Western Gettysburg opened along Gettysburg's Steinwehr Avenue. The new hotel features 81 rooms and overlooks the Gettysburg battlefield. A second hotel - the Holiday Inn Express & Suites Gettysburg South West - opened in August 2017 and includes 99 rooms and suites and is located adjacent to the Outlet Shoppes of Gettysburg," Flowers wrote.

On the other hand, he wrote, "from 2013 to present, Adams County lost two hotels - the Quality Inn at General Lee's Headquarters (48 rooms) and the America's Best Value Inn (76 rooms), where the Best Western is now located."

"The number of hotel rooms opens up the capacity on big event weekends," Flowers wrote, but "the rooms must be filled in order to generate revenue, and that's an important role of marketing tourism."

In addition to its marketing efforts, Destination Gettysburg last year "contributed more than \$50,000 to community organizations and projects including Main Street Gettysburg, Adams County Arts Council, East Berlin VFW, Lincoln Fellowship of Pennsylvania, and the Fourth of July fireworks celebration at Gettysburg College," according to the release.

The pillow tax covers overnight stays in hotels, motels, beds-and-breakfasts, guest houses, and campground cottages. Exempted from the pillow tax, according to the release, are "tent and RV site rentals at campgrounds, which otherwise pay an admissions tax."