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Wednesday August 16, 2006

City Raises the Bar in Tourism

By Adam Clark
Signal Business Writer

Santa Clarita had the highest hotel occupancy rate in the county in June, according to figures from a tourism research group.

With an occupancy rate of 90.9 percent over the month and a January to June average of 84.6 percent, Santa Clarita set the pace for the rest of Los Angeles County, PKF Consulting figures show.

The high percentages are due in part to the growing business community, said Jack Kyser, chief economist for the Los Angeles Development Corp.

"The economy of the Santa Clarita area is growing and you have a diversified business base, as well as the Hyatt Valencia, which is an outstanding hotel," he said.

While Six Flags Magic Mountain and intercepted traffic does contribute to the high occupancy rates, it's the business economy that drives the numbers, Kyser said.

"Six Flags is a day destination," he said. "You are definitely a business market and you have a rapidly growing business base that is key," he said.

Santa Clarita, along with the San Gabriel Valley and the Interstate 5 corridor, comprises some of the major business markets in Los Angeles County, Kyser said, adding that the economy is also a major factor.

While Santa Clarita is not typically a large tourism draw, the summer months do attract more people than normal.

"Tourism in the city was booming in the month of June," Jason Crawford, film and tourism administrator for the city, said in a statement. "Thousands of guests from outside of the Santa Clarita Valley attended prestigious sporting events that were held in the month of June alone."

At 85.6 percent and 86 percent respectively, West Hollywood and Los Angeles International Airport areas rounded out the top three occupancy areas in the county.

Over the month, PKF Consulting reported that the average daily room rate across the county increased by 11.6 percent to \$142.85.

In Santa Clarita, the average increased 13.1 percent to \$130.34.

Through the fall, however, occupancy will begin to drop off, reaching it's lowest point in December, if previous years are any indication.

"We're looking for slower growth next year, so you may not be at the 90 percent rate," Kyser said. "But if you're over 70 percent you're doing great."

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