

Carlisle Barracks, IHG begin journey to privatize Army Lodging

Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos, USAWC Public Affairs

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Arthur Holst, Vice President of Operations InterContinental Hotels Group, Army Hotels and Wendi Kent, manager of the Carlisle Barracks Army Lodging, examine a hotel room in Washington Hall during a visit by IHG on Jan. 12. The visit was the first in a series of visits over the next year that will transfer operations of the hotel to IHG as part of the Privatization of Army Lodging program. Photo by Staff Sgt. Corey Baltos.

On Jan. 12, representatives from Lend Lease and InterContinental Hotels Group (IHG) traveled to Carlisle Barracks to take the first step in a 15-month process that will culminate with a private operator taking over the post lodging facilities.

Carlisle Barracks is part of the third and last group of Army hotels that have been privatized under the Privatization of the Army Lodging program. Under this plan, Lend Lease, operating as Rest Easy LLC, will be the owner/developer/design builder while IHG will be the hotel operator.

The purpose of the visit was to tour the existing facilities and establish the preliminary requirements for the changeover. Later this spring contractors and architects will examine the existing framework and existing structure.

One of the first things that Lend Lease will determine is whether they want to assume operation of the existing hotels or build a new hotel on post.

“I think IHG will find that the long term maintenance costs of taking over the existing hotels will be

cost prohibitive,” said Lt. Col. William McDonough, garrison commander. “The historic buildings are pretty expensive to maintain.”

“To build a new hotel we would need five to six acres of land for the building and a dedicated parking lot,” said Rhonda Hayes, Chief of the Army Capital Ventures Directorate.

With land at a premium on this post, possible sites for a new hotel were discussed. Two places under consideration are behind Garrison Lane and on Bouquet Road. Lend Lease is scheduled to make their decision on whether to build new, or renovate the old in a few months.

“In order for us to achieve the goal of getting a state of the art facility, we all will have to give up something,” said Elaine Leist, deputy garrison commander, during a discussion about parking facilities for the hotel.

If the existing hotel is renovated it will be turned into a Holiday Inn Express.

“Obviously it will not look like most Holiday Inn Expresses, because the hotels are in historical buildings,” said Hayes. “However, on the inside it will have the same amenities that the public has come to expect from those hotels.”

A new hotel would be a Candlewood Suites.

Both options would provide the military traveler with several amenities to include: weekly “get to know you” BBQ socials, complimentary hot breakfasts for guests, business and fitness centers and the acceptance of the Priority Club Rewards Card.

Hotel rate will be based on whether the guest is staying there in an official capacity or in a non-official capacity.

“Guests who stay at our on-post facilities in an official capacity, (such as PCSing or TDY) would pay 75 percent of the going per-diem rate for the area,” said Hays. “Guests who are staying with us in a non-official capacity would pay a rate comparable to what is being charged outside the gate.”

One of the biggest concerns for the garrison command team was how privatizing Army lodging would affect the current employees.

“Every Army Lodging employee has the opportunity to work for IHG,” said Hayes. “We grant the right of first interview for all positions to Army Lodging staff members. 80 percent of the line level employees, and 67 percent of the general managers that are working at IHG privatized military hotels, were former Army Lodging employees.”

Wendi Kent, the current manager of the Carlisle Barracks Army Lodging expressed concern that her employees, if hired by IHG would have to start at the bottom.

“That is not the case,” said Hayes. “Their seniority as far as pay and vacations will transfer over. So, an employee who worked for Army lodging for 10 years would not lose that time. However the seniority is only figured out for time working at an Army hotel, not total federal service.”

Later this year, IHG is planning on going over their employee benefit plan with the current hotel employees.

“I see our partnership with IHG as a positive win/win situation,” said Leist.

U.S. Army War College Archives - News Article - 17 January 2012