



HARFORD COUNTY, MARYLAND

Office of the County Auditor

AUDIT OF HOTEL OCCUPANCY TAX - HOME2 SUITES BY HILTON, ABERDEEN

Report Number:
2023-A-20D

Report Date:
8/8/2023

Council Members and County Executive Cassilly:

In accordance with Section 213 of the Harford County Charter, we have performed an audit of Hotel Occupancy Tax paid by Home2 Suites by Hilton for the period of 7/1/2021 through 5/31/2023. This audit was conducted as part of the County Auditor's risk-based Annual Audit Plan approved by the County Council for FY2023.

The objective of this audit was to confirm that Hotel Occupancy Tax reported and paid to Harford County was complete. The scope was limited to the sampled hotels' processes for recording revenue and reporting revenue to Harford County. The results of the audit, our findings and recommendations for improvement are detailed in this report.

We would like to thank the members of management for their cooperation during the audit. Although none was required, they have been provided an opportunity to respond to this report; accordingly, no response was provided.

Sincerely,

Chrystal Brooks, CPA

Chrystal Brooks
County Auditor

CONCLUSIONS

Our opinion, based on the evidence obtained, is taxes were reported and paid completely and accurately. This assessment is based on the strengths and weaknesses identified for the operational objectives below.

Business Process Objective	Assessment ⁱ
Hotel revenue is fully reported to the County	Effective
Tax payments are complete and timely	Effective

BACKGROUND, OBJECTIVES, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Harford County adopted a Hotel Occupancy Tax, via Bill 14-035, for the purpose of expanding its tourism and tourism related activities. The legislation requires hotel operators within the County to collect a 6% tax from all occupants. All hotels within the County are required to register with the County Treasurer and remit the collected occupancy tax monthly.

The audit approach focused on testing the key controls that address management's objectives. Our audit procedures included interviewing personnel, observation and testing as described in the table below.

Process / Control Objective	Scope of Review
Revenue Reporting	
Monthly and Daily occupancy reports agree to the revenue reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review a sample of monthly payments to confirm the total revenue reported was supported by the daily occupancy reports• Agreed reported amounts to the taxes that were remitted to the County
Non-financial records support the revenue reported	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For a sample of dates, confirm the daily occupancy reports were supported by Housekeeping and other records
Tax Payments	
Tax payments are sent to the County on time and completely.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Recalculate a sample of payments based on reported revenue• Recalculate late fees, if applicable

The hotel operator's management is responsible for establishing and maintaining effective internal controls. Internal control is a process designed to provide reasonable assurance that objectives pertaining to the reliability of financial records, effectiveness and efficiency of operations including safeguarding of assets and compliance with applicable laws, rules and regulations are achieved. Because of inherent limitations in internal control, errors or fraud may nevertheless occur and not be detected.

We conducted this performance audit in accordance with Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

Report Distribution:

Mr. Dante Brown, General Manager, Home2 Suites
Ms. Candace St. Germain, Sr. VP of Accounting, The Cherry Cove Group
Mr. Robert Sandlass, County Treasurer

Audit Team:

Chrystal Brooks Brad DeLauder, CPA
CPA, CIA, CGAP, CISA, CGFM, CRMA
Senior Auditor
County Auditor

ⁱ Definitions

Effective: The design and effectiveness of the internal control environment address key risks. The business unit complies with external laws and regulations, and internal policies, procedures, and guidelines. Business processes are managed effectively resulting in achievement of expected outcomes.

Generally Effective: The design and/or effectiveness of the internal control environment generally address key risks; however, the number and severity of findings relative to the size and scope of the business unit being audited indicate that some minor areas of weakness in the control environment need to be addressed. Isolated instances of non-compliance with external laws and regulations, and internal policies, procedures and guidelines may exist. Business processes may not be managed effectively in all areas resulting in reduced achievement of expected outcomes.

Not Effective: The design and/or effectiveness of the internal control environment does not address key risks. Non-compliance or historical patterns of non-compliance with key regulatory requirements and internal policies, procedures and guidelines exist which expose the audited entity to financial, reputational, and operational risks. Business processes are not managed effectively, and expected outcomes are not achieved.