

Study to determine need for convention center

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A feasibility study beginning in January will determine whether Nelson County is large enough and has enough business for opening a new hotel and convention center.

With the title of The Most Beautiful Small Town in America and increased traffic on the Bourbon Trail, Bardstown receives many requests from companies and organizations to have conferences, said Kim Huston, president of the Nelson County Economic Development Agency.

Pinkowski and Company, a consulting company that specializes in development activities in the hospitality industry, was hired to conduct the study.

According to a letter the consultants sent to Huston, NCEDA is looking at the possibility of acquiring an 11-acre tract of property from Mitsuba Bardstown Inc. near the intersection of KY 245 and Kelly Drive. The agency is considering using a portion of the existing building on the site for a redeveloped community center.

The Bardstown Tourism Commission will meet with Pinkowski and Company in early January to provide information the firm needs, and Pinkowski and Company will then give the tourism board a timeline for the study, Huston said.

“When they do that, it may take two to three months to finish the study,” she said. “After the study is completed, they’ll come back to us and make a presentation to us on what they found.”

Pinkowski and Company will assist in determining the type of hotel, national brand affiliation, size of the hotel, kind of accommodations, performance of hotels of the same type, and services and amenities to complement the property, according to the letter sent to Huston.

Huston added that the agency is hoping for Pinkowski and Company to tell local leaders Nelson County is large enough and has enough business.

“Because of Nelson County’s popularity, a lot of people want to hold their conferences and conventions here, but we can’t accommodate these large convention groups of over 200 people,” she said. “We need this study so we can say that Bardstown is prime for another hotel and/or convention center and we will have the study as a tool to recruit one here.”

There are hotel developers out there that want to build, Huston said, but local officials wouldn’t ask them to develop property until someone can give the facts and statistics.

“If I have those facts and statistics that can back up my thoughts, I can tell them that Bardstown has enough business to build another hotel and/or convention center,” she said.

My Old Kentucky Home State Park is probably the biggest conference space in Nelson County, Huston said. However, the county needs a place that can host over 200 to 300 people.

“I truly believe that the Bourbon Festival could expand its events and grow the festival if we had another venue,” she said. “It will be real interesting what this company comes up with and will present to the Bardstown Tourism Commission.”

Huston said the commission would like to see both hotel and convention center.

“Ideally, a new hotel with a convention center attached would be the ultimate and ideal scenarios,” she said.