

Singing praises of the new Doubletree by Hilton hotel in Reading

Thursday December 10, 2015 12:01 AM

By [Samantha Tighe](#)

READING, PA

They came for a concert, but many of those in attendance were also singing their praises of the new DoubleTree by Hilton hotel Wednesday night.

Musician Peter Mayer and his band performed a holiday-themed concert in the ballroom, making it the first concert to be held at the hotel. But many of the nearly 400 people that turned out also wanted to take a peek at the new hotel situated in a prime location downtown, 701 Penn Street, directly across from the Santander Arena.

For some, the DoubleTree isn't just a hotel, it's the start of a new tide of revitalization in Reading.

"Ordinary would have never made it," said Craig Poole, the hotel's general manager. "So we went extraordinary.

"Holiday wreaths and decorated Christmas trees covered much of the free space in the hotel.

"It's such a nice hotel," Suzanne Walsh, 71, of West Reading, said. With a glass of wine in hand, Walsh said she had been paying attention to the hotel's construction.

Not only would it be bringing jobs to the area, she said the hotel's presence would benefit the city.

Mark Thompson, 47, of Mount Penn shared a similar sentiment.

"It might not be a game changer, but it's a start," he said. "Being so close to the (Santander) Arena, it may motivate people to stay in the city. You know, attend a show and make a weekend out of it.

"Already there's hype surrounding the hotel's opening. Though it only began taking reservations Tuesday afternoon, Poole said the hotel will have 70 percent occupancy over the next several days. Already many local organizations, and private parties, have begun booking ballrooms to host their holiday events.

"This was built for the city of Reading," Poole said.

Cheryl Madej, 39, of Reading, said the DoubleTree's presence is a good omen for the city.

"Listen, it's good that we're not hearing about another business closing," she said. "It's bringing jobs and it's attracting people and the city needs that.

"The Peter Mayer concert benefited Crime Alert Berks County. So, before he and his band took the stage, Crime Alert board member Denny Lorah said a few words.

Instead of flickering the lights to signal the show was starting, a DoubleTree employee walked around the ballroom gently tapping on chimes. Lorah referenced the chimes, joking that Reading residents would need to become accustomed to the new level of sophistication now with the DoubleTree around.

The funds raised during the concert will go toward Crime Alert's Blue Ribbon Campaign, Ribbons of Respect. In June, when National Police Week takes place, hundreds of ribbons will be displayed along the major roadways in Berks County, he said.

Lorah estimated about \$4,500 was expected to be raised from the event.

Poole also took the stage, pointing out various law enforcement officers, military personnel and local governmental figures who were present in the crowd.

The city should consider the hotel its baby, he said.

"I hope you leave here today with a hope in your heart," he told the crowd. "This is what Reading could be.

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