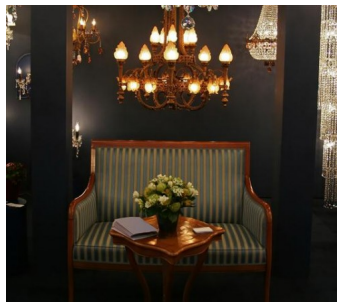


LUCERNE: TOURISM ZONE TO PROTECT LUXURY HOTELS



The city council of Lucerne suggested creating a special zone protecting luxury hotels from turning to apartment buildings. The proposal faces fierce opposition.

Lucerne, the Swiss city on the shore of Lake Lucerne, lives on tourism. The industry brings directly or indirectly about one billion Swiss Francs to the city budget every year. More than 8,000 people currently work in the travel trade. Four and five star hotels are therefore very important for further development of tourism in the city.

With decreasing revenues however the threat for luxury hotels to close down is increasing. Some hotels, Hotel Tivoli for instance, had to go and were turned into apartment buildings. The conversion of hotel rooms into apartments is also currently being discussed at the Palace Hotel, Château Gütsch and Europe, reported Htr.ch.

The city council of Lucerne is however alarmed by this development and plans to create a special tourism zone that would make changing hotel rooms into apartments more difficult. Currently, there is a special 'construction zone 2' that prevents hotels to be turned in another facility. Hotels Hermitage, Seeburg and Gütsch fall into this zone. The other Lucerne hotels are located in zones that allow for the change of the purpose of the hotels. Therefore another tourism zone needs to be formed.

The proposed zone would include eight hotels - Hermitage, Seeburg, Gütsch, Europe, Palace, National, Schweizerhof Montana, Casino, Castle Utenberg and Seerestaurat Tivoli.

It is nevertheless clear that the zone is politically a very sensitive topic and also that the profitability of the affected hotels cannot be granted. The city council of Lucerne wants to make sure with the new tourism zone that profitable hotels are not disadvantaged by greater revenues of hotels turning to apartments.

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