

# Hunter Conference Takeaways: Survive 2025

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The **36th Hunter Hotel Investment Conference** took place this week at Atlanta's **Marriott Marquis**, with the theme "Elevate Your Game" inspiring session topics and conversations throughout the event. The inspirational keynote presenter **Molly Bloom** spoke about her rise, fall, and comeback after hosting a series of high-stakes underground poker games. She also shared the importance of "personal appraisal," which is the evaluation of one's own motivations behind risk-taking. Her talk was a highlight of the event.

Conference sentiment reflected that trends may be shifting toward a buyer's market, which certainly was not the case in 2023 and 2024. Times of market inefficiency have historically created the most opportunity to buy. As one panelist put it, "No risk-it, no biscuit." Transaction volume is expected to improve in 2025 over 2024 levels, likely led by individual sales and small portfolio transactions. Larger institutional owners may seek to sell assets and may be less focused on large portfolio acquisitions.

## Occupancy, ADR, and Profitability Trends

Despite headlines about a decline in consumer confidence, the data is not reflecting a clear change in consumer travel behavior yet, at least for the hotels on the higher end of the product scale. Luxury, upper-upscale, upscale, and upper-midscale products are all experiencing demand growth, while demand is contracting for midscale and economy hotels. Household savings accounts are still well set up to handle some economic uncertainty, and hospitality tends to come back quickly because people see travel as a right to a balanced and fulfilled life.

Operationally, as the economic news unfolds, this year's motto is becoming "Survive 2025," versus last year's "Survive until 2025." With uncertainty looming, panelists encouraged hoteliers to harken back to the pandemic days and operate with a spirit of collaboration. By working together, they can help see each other through this period and whatever it may bring. Operators should be creative in developing and augmenting additional revenue streams. Expanded offerings in the market pantry, experiential packages, up-charges for late check-in and check-out, and parking fees are all opportunities for operators to capture revenue outside of rooms revenues.

## Development and Transaction Trends

Development remains somewhat constrained by rising costs, looming tariffs, and the availability of debt; however, lending is warming back up. There is opportunity for the right deal. Hoteliers who have established relationships with lenders will be able to leverage those connections to make deals in the current environment. Developers are planning for rising project costs due to the introduction of tariffs beginning in April. General contractors will need to consider the impact of higher costs in their budgets, and banks will want assurance that the expected increase has been accounted for in proposed budgets as well.

## Conclusion

During the conference, the uncertain times ahead and possibility of a recession were framed as opportunities. Lower interest rates, narrower bid-ask gaps, and more sellers willing to meet the market were all seen as advantages, as long as you can retain access to debt (which can become difficult during prolonged downturns). Do not fear what may come, but plan ahead for how you may not only weather the storm but also thrive through it.

### Summary

The 36th Hunter Hotel Investment Conference took place this week at Atlanta's Marriott Marquis, with the theme "Elevate Your Game" inspiring session topics and conversations throughout the event. This article provides our key takeaways from the conference.

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