

# Atlantic City Tourism Performance Indicators (AC-TPI)

## 3rd Quarter 2014

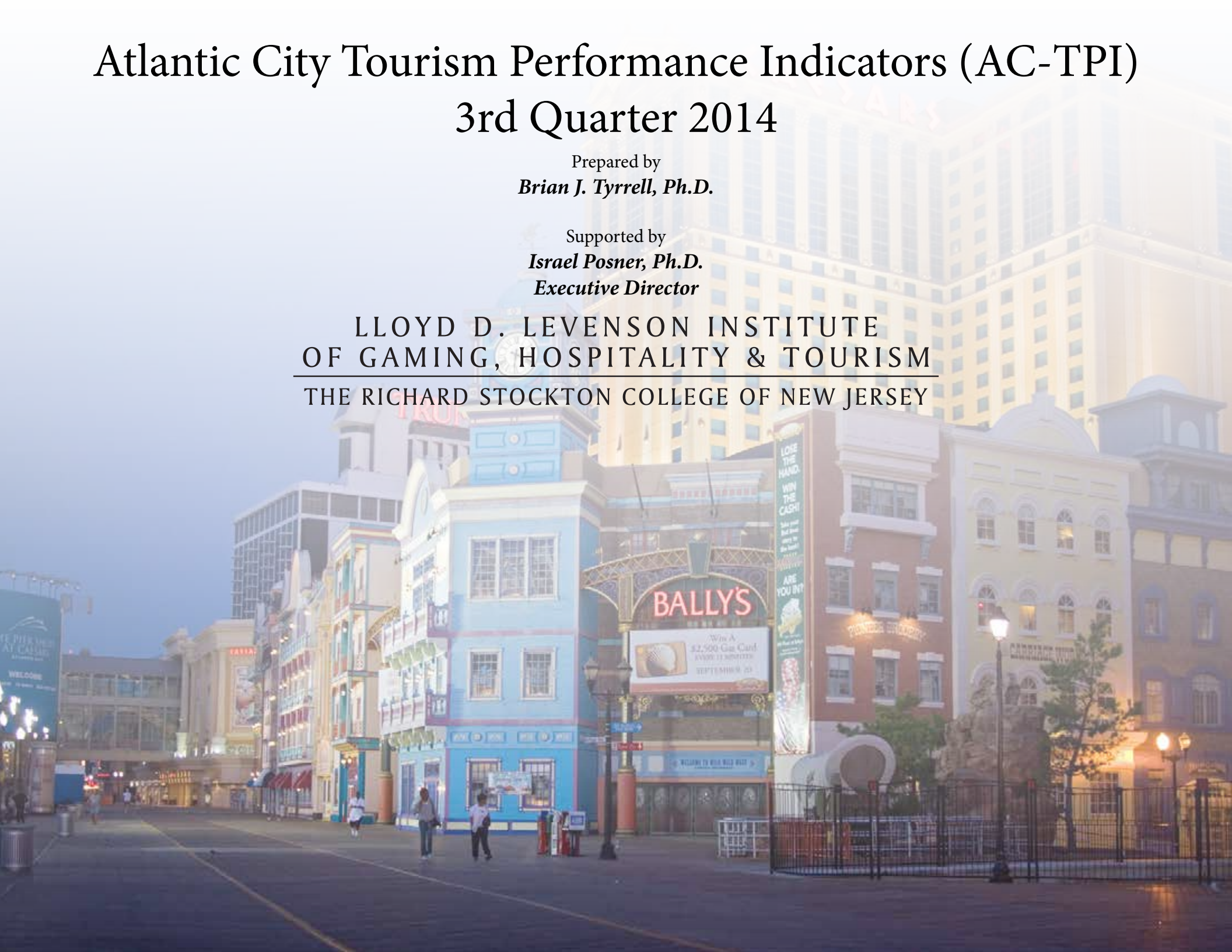
Prepared by  
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Supported by  
**Israel Posner, Ph.D.**  
**Executive Director**

LLOYD D. LEVENSON INSTITUTE  
OF GAMING, HOSPITALITY & TOURISM

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THE RICHARD STOCKTON COLLEGE OF NEW JERSEY



# Atlantic City Tourism Performance Indicators (AC-TPI) 3rd Quarter 2014

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April 5, 2014

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## Acknowledgements

The Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming Hospitality & Tourism (LIGHT) and the authors of this report, Dr. Brian Tyrrell and Dr. Israel Posner, would like to thank the many individuals and organizations in the Atlantic City region and throughout New Jersey for their contributions to this report. In particular, the New Jersey Casino Control Commission was invaluable in providing the bulk of the data for this report. The LIGHT board members' contributions were instrumental to the completion of this report and their ongoing support is much appreciated. Their review, feedback and encouragement are evident throughout this report and it quite simply could not have been completed without their support. Thanks to all that contributed in the past and those that will likely add to that contribution in the future. We are indebted to you for your support.

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## Introduction

Gross Gaming Revenue (GGR) in Atlantic City has largely been declining since 2006 when GGR peaked at \$5.2 billion. As competition for the gaming dollars of Northeast United States residents increased, Atlantic City has reacted by increasingly diversifying its destination offerings. The diversification of products and services to guests of the resort has brought about a renewed focus on increasing the entertainment, restaurant and shopping options for the visitor. This effort has been bolstered by an expanded marketing campaign, aided by state mandated investment by the casinos in a public-private partnership consisting of the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority (CRDA) and the Atlantic City Alliance (ACA) respectively. The ACA has since produced what many have come to know as the “DO AC” campaign, a campaign with a marketing focus that highlights the resorts’ entertainment, restaurants and shopping attractions.

It is clear, however, that as the resort transforms into a more full service destination, a measure of the progress of this transformation is increasingly necessary. Atlantic City’s performance should include criteria by which other destinations are measured. That necessarily includes highlighting the performance in the lodging, food and beverage, entertainment and other tourism related sectors. Strategic success of the resort’s current efforts requires a set of measures for investors and policy makers that measure the efforts at expanding the region’s tourism economy, not just gaming.

This report, the Atlantic City Tourism Performance Indicators or AC-TPI, provides some insight into the growth of this broader tourism economy by examining several taxes related to traveler accommodations, transportation, food services and drinking places, recreation and entertainment, and shopping. It is not the goal of this report to place a value on each of these measures, but rather to report the monthly changes in their related taxes as compared to the prior year, or year over year (YoY) change. In order to achieve this, tax revenue figures that closely track these key measures can serve as a reasonable proxy. The Atlantic City Luxury Tax and Parking Fee, and the Atlantic County Hotel Fee, are examined in the following sections. The tax revenue for all three measures are presented from 2005 to present. They are presented as monthly, quarterly and annually for this time period. The change from the same period the prior year is presented as well.

# Atlantic City Luxury Tax

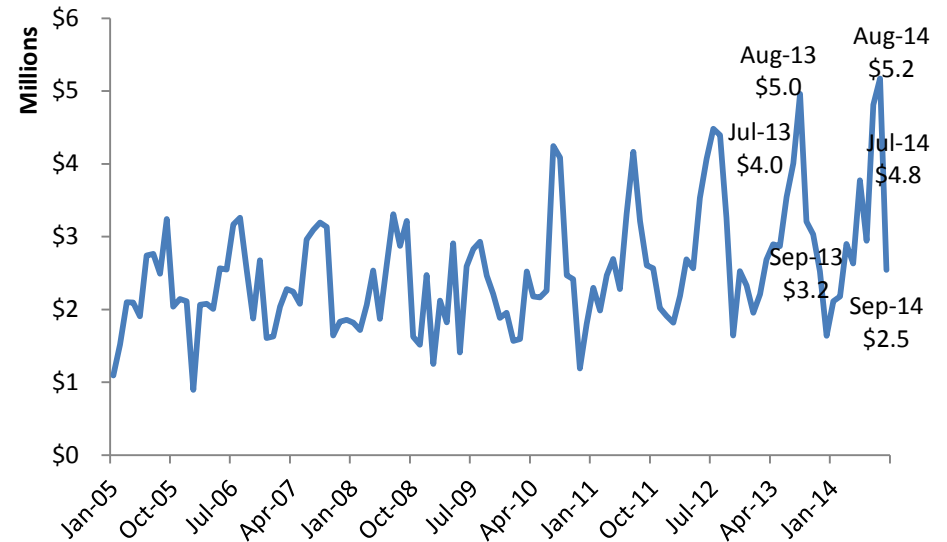
The Atlantic City Luxury Tax provides a very good surrogate for many of the non-gaming measures, namely alcohol, entertainment and traveler accommodation. According to the NJ Division of Taxation:

*“The Atlantic City Luxury Sales Tax applies to the receipts from specified retail sales within Atlantic City, including sales of alcoholic beverages for on-premises consumption; cover, minimum, or entertainment charges; room rental in hotels, inns, rooming, or boarding houses; hiring of rolling chairs, beach chairs, and cabanas; and tickets of admission within Atlantic City... The rate of tax is 3% on sales of alcoholic beverages sold by the drink and 9% on other taxable sales. The maximum combined Atlantic City rate and New Jersey State sales tax rate (excluding the State occupancy fee) may not exceed 13% effective July 15, 2006. The State sales tax rate is reduced to the extent that the city rate exceeds 7%, and the maximum combined Atlantic City rate and New Jersey rate may not exceed 13%. Formerly, the maximum combined Atlantic City rate and the New Jersey sales tax rate could not exceed 12%.”*

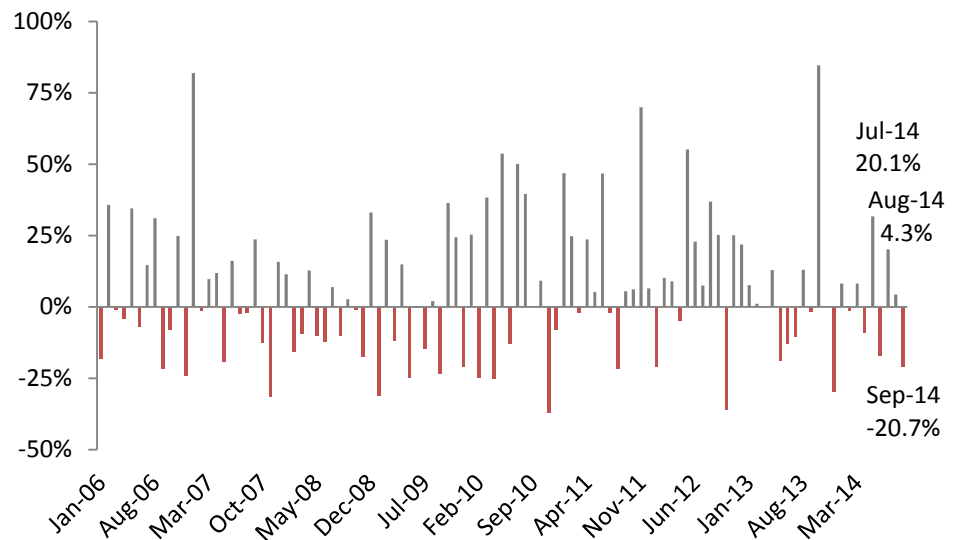
Figure 1 shows the Atlantic City Luxury Tax collections from January 2005 through September 2014. Figure 1 reveals that while July (up \$0.8 million) and August (up \$0.2 million) were both up compared to 2013, September (\$0.7 million) was down. Despite a robust summer season, the closure of three additional casino properties in Atlantic City took its toll on non-gaming revenue in September. The figure shows the seasonal nature of the destination (and the tax), with more tax generated in the summer months, the historically busy months for the tourist destination of Atlantic City. While this tax has been trending upward over the most recent four years, the trend is difficult to discern given this seasonal nature. The growth in the peak period (summer) months has been particularly notable, barring the most recent July and August figures.

Figure 2 presents the year over year change on a monthly basis for the same study period. The most recent three months were mixed, with July and August showing gains of 20% and 4% over the prior year, while September showed a significant decrease of nearly 21%. Again, the three additional casino closures of the Trump Plaza, Showboat and the Revel played a key role.

**Figure 1: Atlantic City Luxury Tax Collections, January 2005 through September 2014, \$millions**



**Figure 2: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Atlantic City Luxury Tax Collections, January 2006 through September 2014**



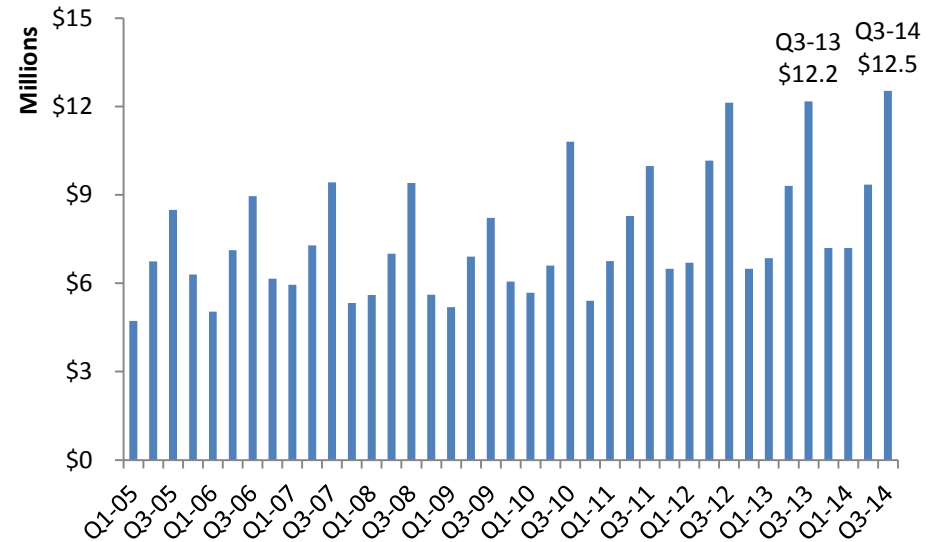
The seasonal trend is also discernible looking at the quarterly revenues (see Figure 3). The 3rd quarter is always the strongest quarter of the year, and has now increased for the third year in a row, reaching a record high in the 3rd quarter of 2014 of \$12.5 million. While September was down, it was not down enough to counteract the positive gains in July and August.

The 3rd quarter gain amounts to a 2.9% increase compared to the 3rd quarter of 2013 (see Figure 4). While modest, it does mark the fifth quarter in a row of growth in the Atlantic City Luxury Tax collections. Indeed, these collections have increased in ten of the past twelve quarters.

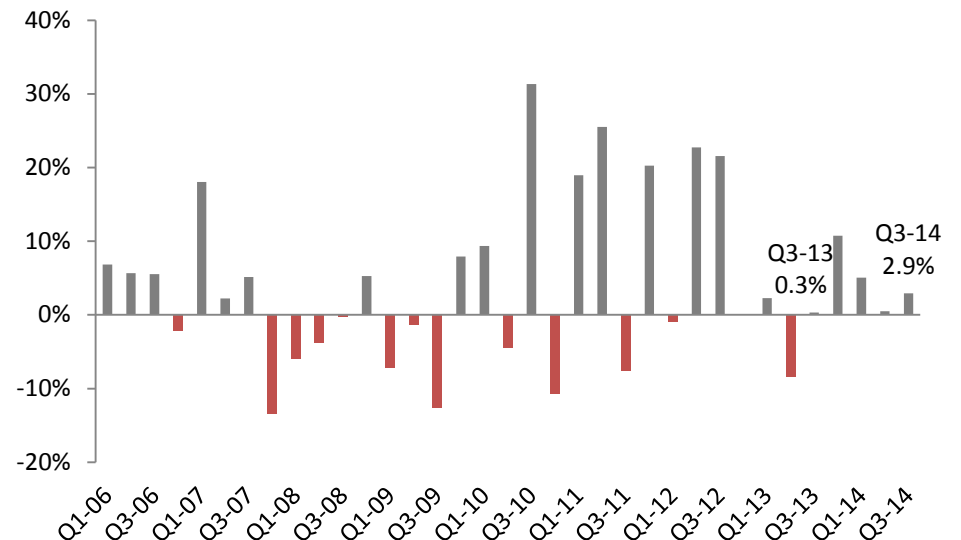
Spending on taxable items subject to the Atlantic City Luxury Tax have largely been on the rise since 2010 (see Figure 5). Four consecutive years of growth in spending on items taxed under the Atlantic City Luxury Tax peaked with a very strong 2013 at \$35.5 million. While this figure is only marginally above the 2012 figure (up 0.1%, see Figure 6), it is notable that both years are significantly higher than the \$26.4 million collected in 2009. Thus far this year, that increase continues, with year to date collections up \$0.8 million (2.6%) compared to the same time period in 2013. The growth in spending displayed by the Atlantic City Luxury Tax receipts over the past three years suggests a shift in the spending by the Atlantic City visitor. While Gross Gaming Revenue has declined, the resort is seeing strong growth in spending on the non-gaming destination amenities covered by the Atlantic City Luxury Tax over the past several years.

In order to clearly see the longitudinal trends, a twelve month trailing total is provided. This figure is the summation of each of the current months and prior eleven months. Figure 7 shows that the twelve month trailing total for the Atlantic City Luxury Tax has been steadily climbing throughout the study period, with the notable interruption in growth that followed the arrival of Hurricane Sandy in October of 2012. Indeed, the twelve month trailing total for September of 2014 of \$36.3 million was only higher a couple of times before, and that was only recently in May, July and August of 2014.

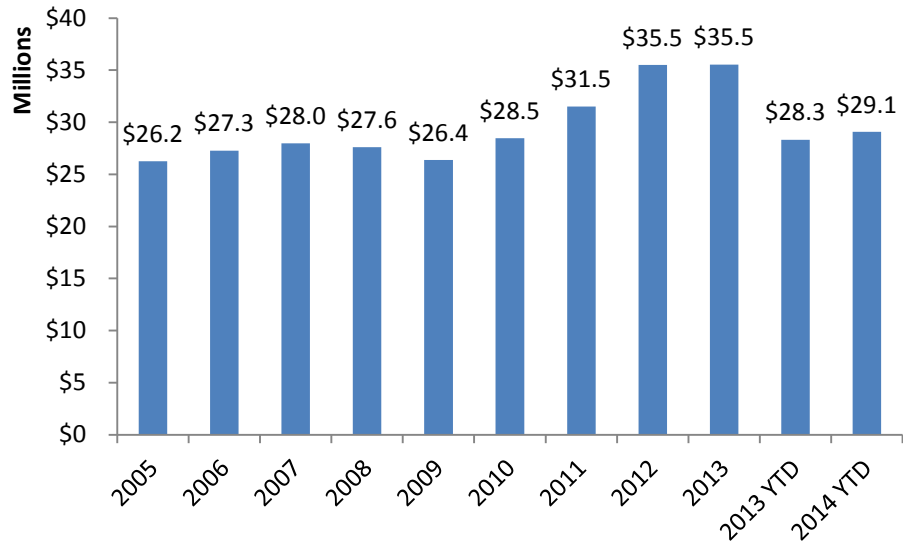
**Figure 3: Quarterly Atlantic City Luxury Tax Collections, 1st Quarter 2006 through 3rd Quarter 2014, \$millions**



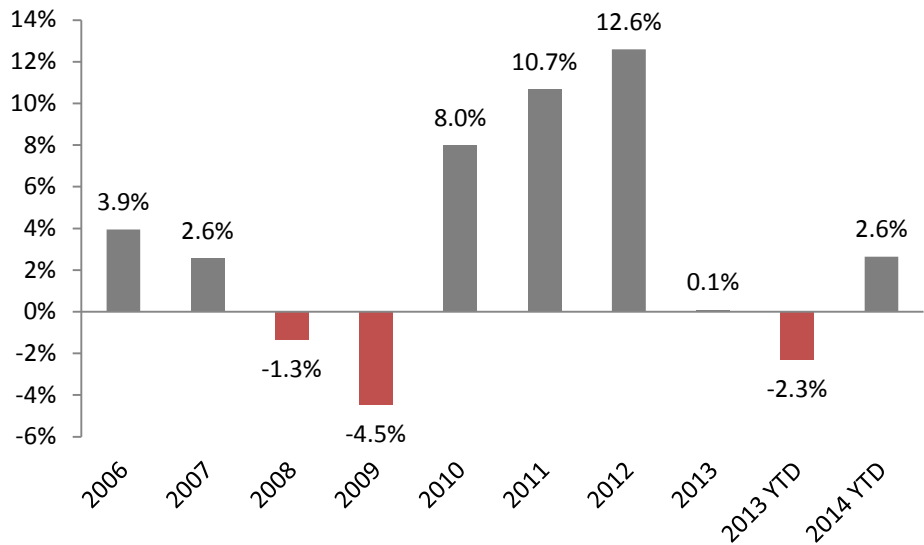
**Figure 4: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Quarterly Atlantic City Luxury Tax Collections, 1st Quarter 2006 through 3rd Quarter 2014**



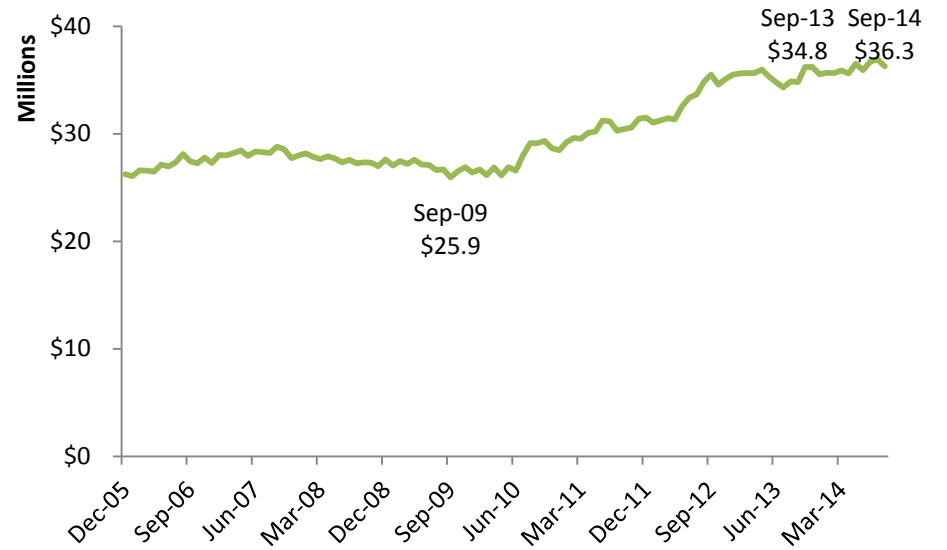
**Figure 5: Annual Atlantic City Luxury Tax Collections, 2005 through 2014 Year to Date, \$millions**



**Figure 6: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Annual Atlantic City Luxury Tax Collections, 2006 through 2014 Year to Date**



**Figure 7: 12 Month Trailing Total for the Atlantic City Luxury Tax, December 2005 through September 2014, \$millions**









## Atlantic City Casino Parking Fee

The Casino Parking Fee figure is provided by the NJ Casino Control Commission (NJCCC). This figure serves as a surrogate for transportation, assuming that if the number of vehicles taxed has gone up or down, then so too will other expenditures on transportation to and from as well as within the resort. The tax is described by the NJCCC as:

*“By law, casinos remit a fee of \$3.00 per day for each parking space used by patrons in their facility. \$0.50 of the parking fee is deposited into the Casino Revenue Fund, with the remaining \$2.50 forwarded to the Casino Reinvestment Development Authority for public projects in Atlantic City. The commission audits and certifies the amounts payable by each casino under the law.”*

Figure 8 shows that the Casino Parking Fee is also seasonal in nature, peaking every July or August, similar to the Atlantic City Luxury Tax described in the earlier section. The highest month in this study period was August 2005 at \$3.7 million. Generally, the Casino Parking Fee has been trending downward since the introduction of gaming in Pennsylvania in 2006. Exceptions to this general decline however are present, beginning in late 2011.

The most recent three months were all lower than the prior year. July produced \$2.6 million via the Casino Parking Fee, down from \$2.9 million in June of 2013. August was down as well from \$3.0 million to \$2.8 million. September was the largest decline, producing \$1.9 million in September of 2014 compared to \$2.4 million in September of 2013.

The near continual declines in the Casino Parking Fee are more clear when looking at the percentage change displayed in Figure 9. The months of July, August and September were -9%, -7.8% and -22.8% respectively. Certainly the macro trend of declines dating back to the introduction of Pennsylvania gaming in 2006 continued into this past summer. The impact of the closure of the Trump Plaza, Showboat and Revel in September of 2014 is prominently visible in Figure 9 at -22.8%. Indeed, the only month where there was a larger decline in the Casino Parking Fee was in November of 2012, the first month after Hurricane Sandy struck New Jersey.

Figure 8: Casino Parking Fee, January 2005 through September 2014, \$millions

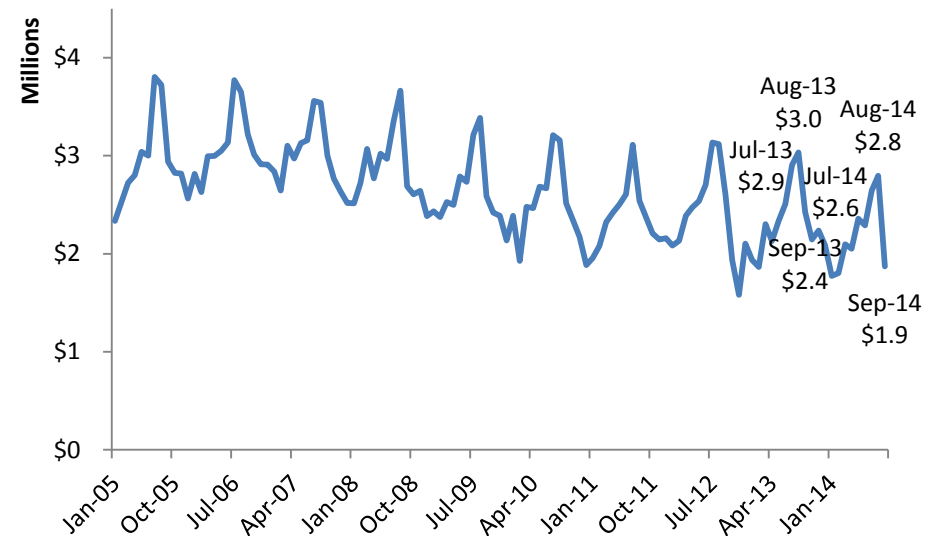


Figure 9: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Casino Parking Fee, January 2006 through September 2014

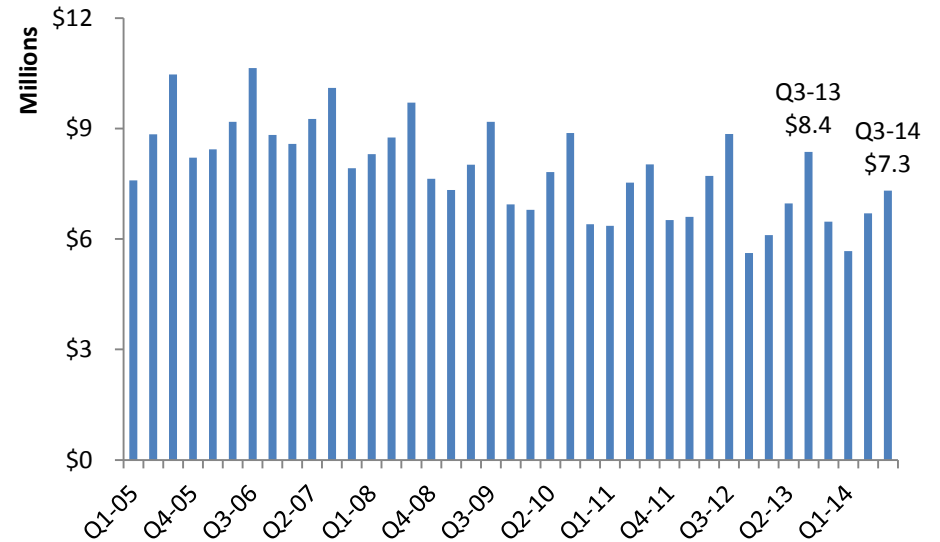


The 3rd quarter of 2014 showed a decline from \$8.4 million in the 3rd quarter of 2013 to the present figure of \$7.3 million (see Figure 10, representing a decline of 12.6% year over year (see figure 11). These declines will likely persist to some extent over the remainder of the calendar year because for the next eleven months the new figures will be compared to a time when not only Trump Plaza, the Showboat and Revel were open, but also the Atlantic Club casino which closed in January of 2014.

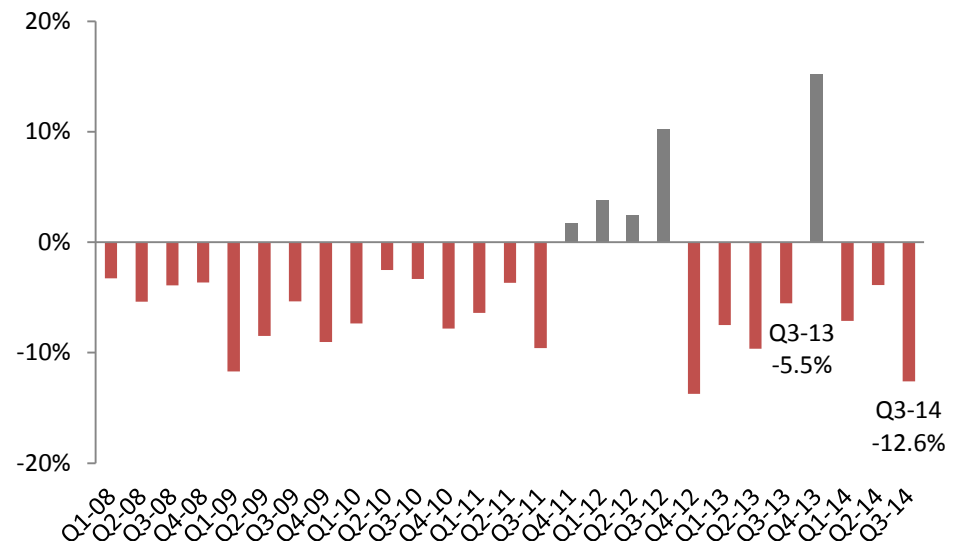
Despite some positive gains in 2012, collections of the Casino Parking Fee have been on the decline on an annualized basis since 2007 (see Figures 12 and 13). The year to date decline of 5.4% was a slightly smaller decline than that in 2013 through the 2nd quarter (8.7%).

Once again, it is instructive to look at a twelve month trailing total to discern the longer term trend in the Casino Parking Fee (see Figure 14). Here, the picture is quite different than the analysis of the Atlantic City Luxury Tax in the prior section. The highest twelve month period in the study period was the twelve months ending June 2007, when the 12 months through June 2007 saw the Casino Parking Fee generate \$37.3 million. That figure is now at \$26.2 million for the twelve months ending in September of 2014, only slightly higher than the historic low for the Casino Parking Fee.

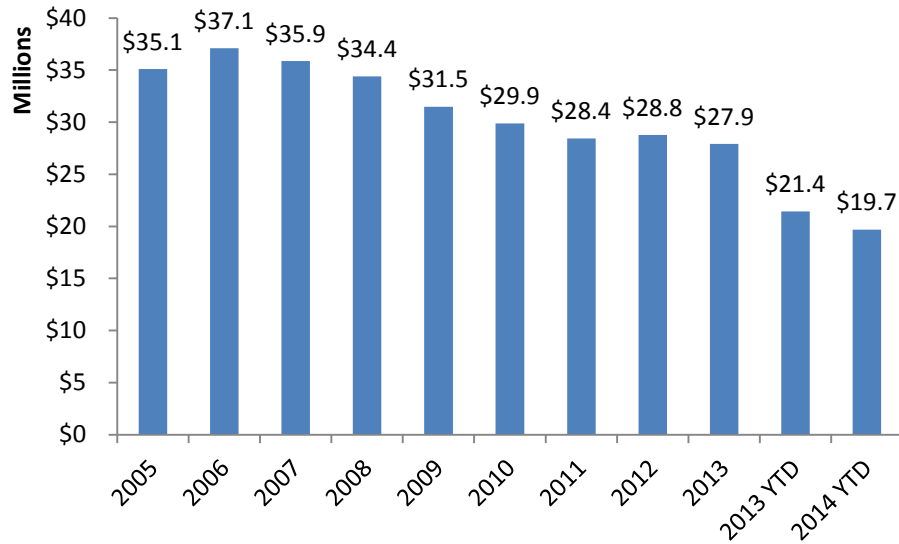
**Figure 10: Quarterly Casino Parking Fee, 1st Quarter 2005 through 3rd Quarter 2014, \$millions**



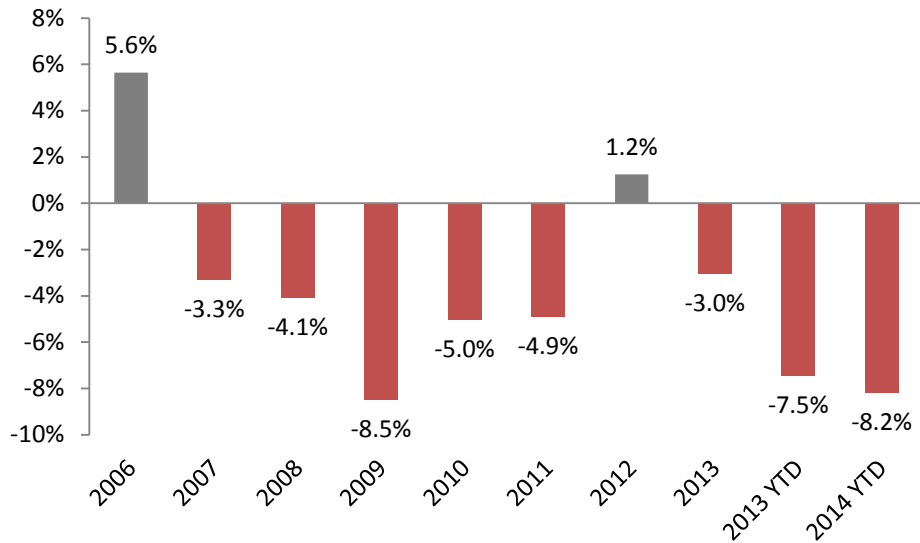
**Figure 11: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Quarterly Casino Parking Fee, 1st Quarter 2006 through 3rd Quarter 2014**



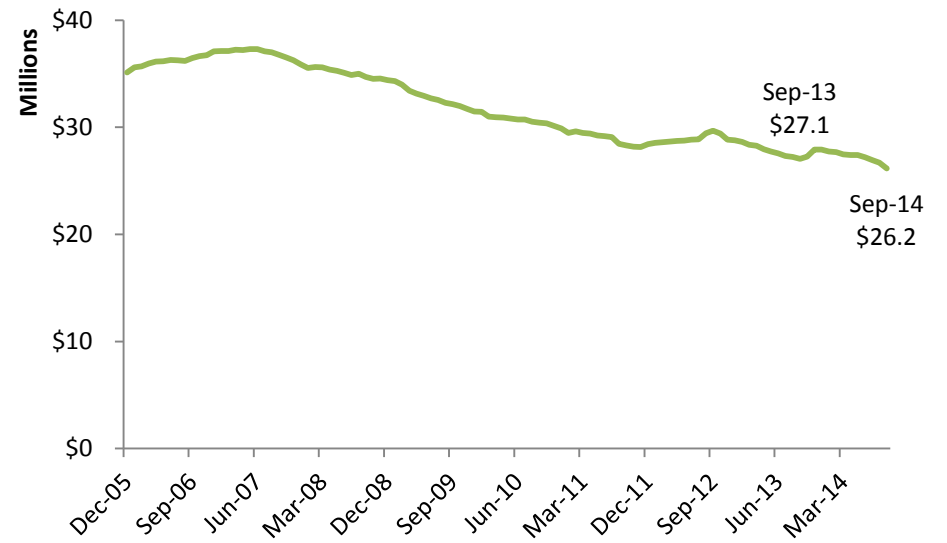
**Figure 12: Annual Casino Parking Fee Collections, 2005 through 2014 Year to Date, \$Millions**



**Figure 13: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Annual Casino Parking Fee Collections, 2006 through 2014 Year to Date**



**Figure 14: 12 Month Trailing Total for the Casino Parking Fee, December 2005 through September 2014, \$Millions**





## Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee

The Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee is utilized to get a clearer picture of traveler accommodation for the region. While this figure is not Atlantic City specific, there is general consensus that the Atlantic City tourism market impacts the hotel industry throughout the county and thus is a reliable measure of the Atlantic City tourism economy. The figure is released by the NJ Division of Taxation and is described as:

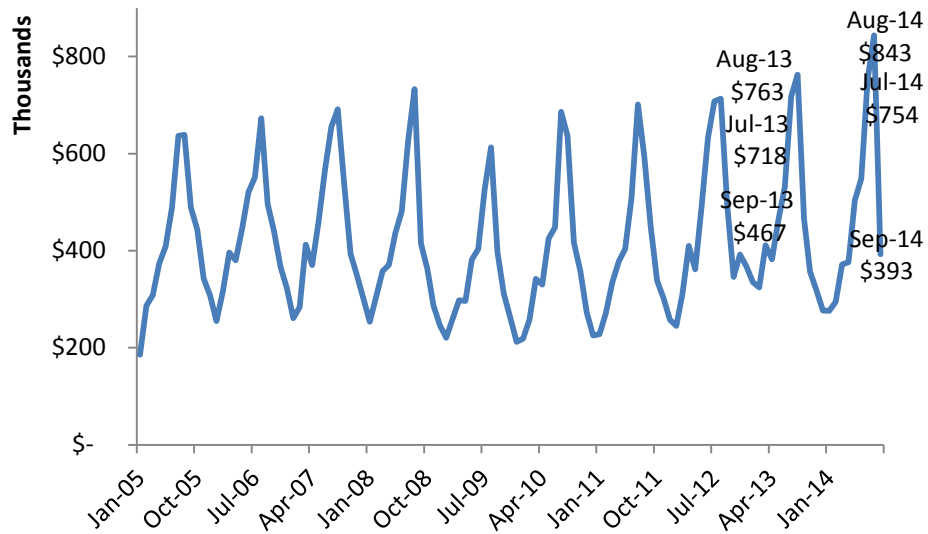
*“Legislation enacted in 2003 (P.L. 2003, c. 114) imposed a 7% State Occupancy Fee on the rent for every occupancy of a room in a hotel, motel or similar facility in most New Jersey municipalities, between August 1, 2003 and June 30, 2004. For occupancies on and after July 1, 2004, the Fee was reduced to 5%. A hotel/motel is a building regularly used and kept open for the lodging of guests, including bed and breakfasts, inns, etc. The State Occupancy Fee is imposed on the room rentals that are currently subject to the 7% New Jersey sales tax and is in addition to the sales tax. Special Rate Provisions: Since Newark, Jersey City, Atlantic City, Wildwood, Wildwood Crest, and North Wildwood already impose local taxes or fees on hotel/motel occupancies, the new State Occupancy Fee is imposed at a lower rate in those areas: Newark & Jersey City: State Occupancy Fee is 1%; Atlantic City: State Occupancy Fee is 1%; The Wildwoods: State Occupancy Fee is 3.15%.”*

Figure 15 shows the Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee collections from January 2005 through September of 2014. Once again, the figure is very seasonal in nature, with the summer months producing more tax revenue than the off-season. The highest month on record for the tax was August of 2014 when \$843 thousand was collected in Hotel Occupancy Fee for Atlantic County, up from the previous high from last August of \$763 thousand. The most recent month, September of 2014 showed a decline however from \$467 thousand in September of 2013 to \$393 thousand in the current month down (15.9%, see Figure 16). The July and August gains were 5.0% and 10.6% respectively.

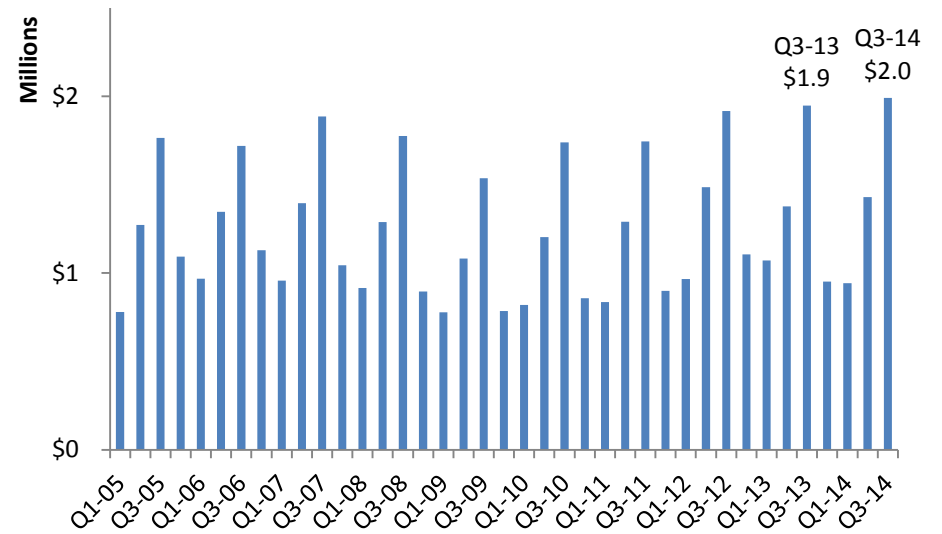
Despite the decline in September, the gains in July and August were enough to offset this and show an increase from \$1.9 million in the 3rd quarter of 2013 to \$2.0 million in the 3rd quarter of 2014 (see Figure 17), representing a gain of 2.2% for the 3rd quarter of 2014 (see Figure 18).



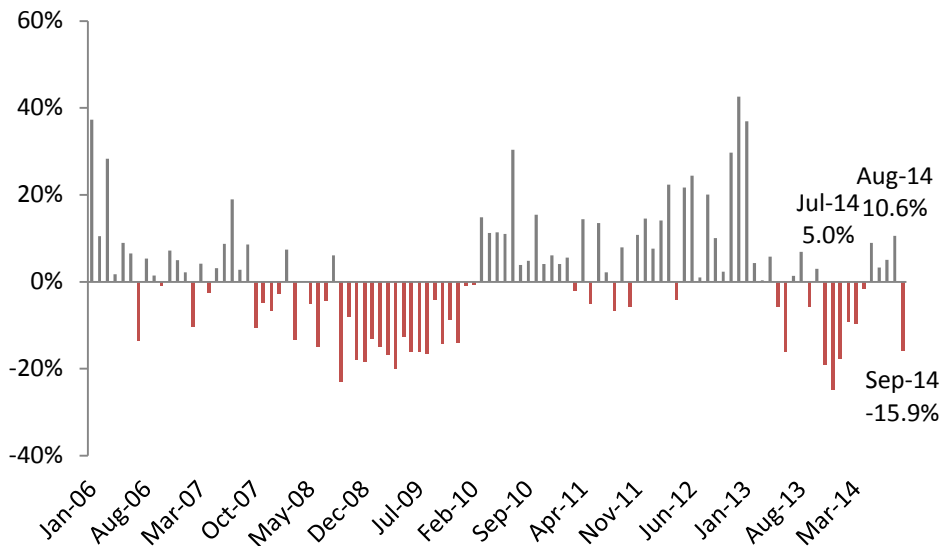
**Figure 15: Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee, January 2005 through September 2014, \$thousands**



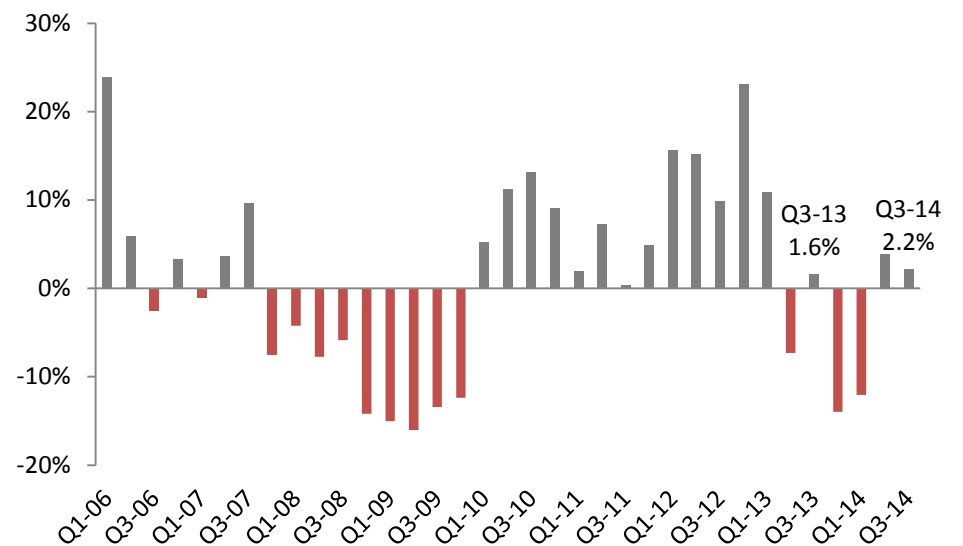
**Figure 17: Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee, 1st Quarter 2005 through 3rd Quarter 2014, \$millions**



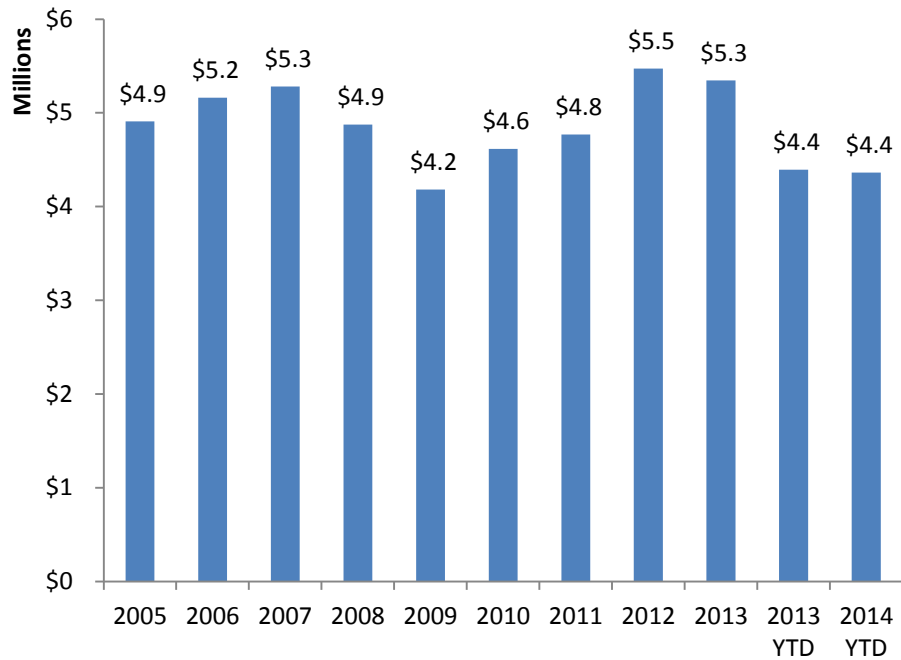
**Figure 16: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee, January 2006 through September 2014**



**Figure 18: Year over Year (YoY) Change in Quarterly Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee, 1st Quarter 2006 through 3rd Quarter 2014**



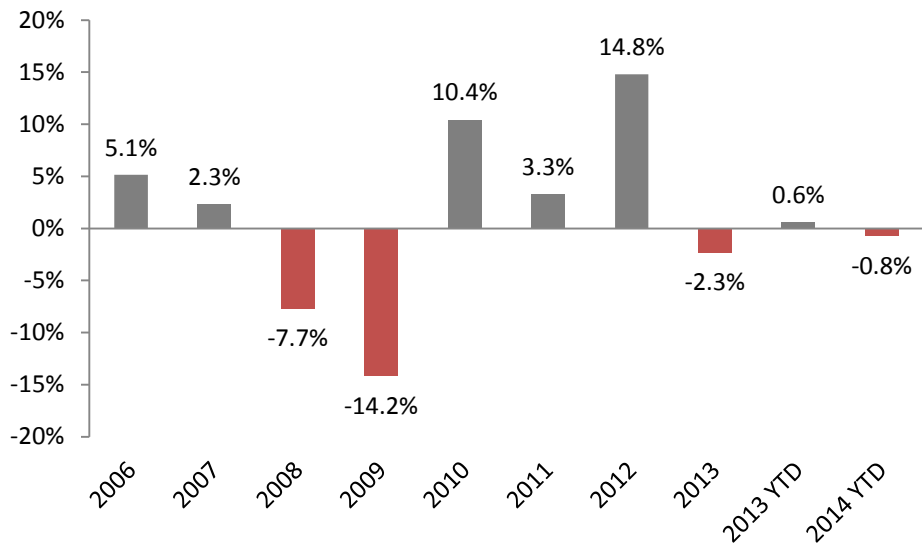
**Figure 19: Annual Atlantic County Hotel Fee Collections, 2005 through 2014 Year to Date, \$millions**



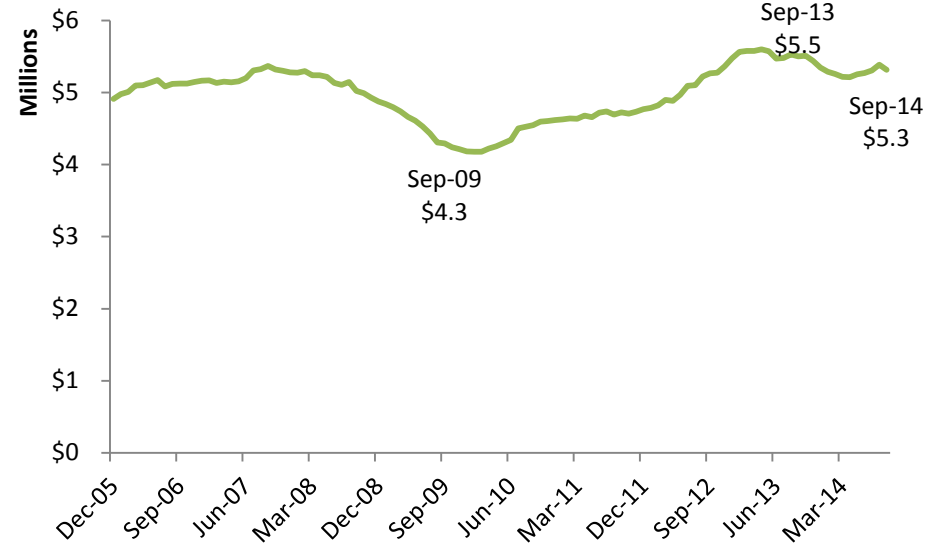
Year to date, the Atlantic County Hotel Fee at \$4.4 million in 2014 is only marginally lower than year to date in 2013 by 0.8% (see Figures 19 and 20). Despite the closure of four casinos this year, the decline of the Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee year to date is not very severe. The 4th quarter performance will provide further evidence of the impact of casino closures on hotel revenue in the area.

The 12 month trailing total in Figure 21 illustrates the long term trend of this tax. \$5.3 million was collected for the 12 months from October 2013 to September 2014. That figure is down \$0.2 million for the 12 month trailing total from September of 2013. Likely, without the reopening of hotel rooms at some or all of the four closures, this figure will trend negatively through September of 2015.

**Figure 20: Year over Year (YoY) Change in the Annual Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee Collections, 2006 through 2014 Year to Date**



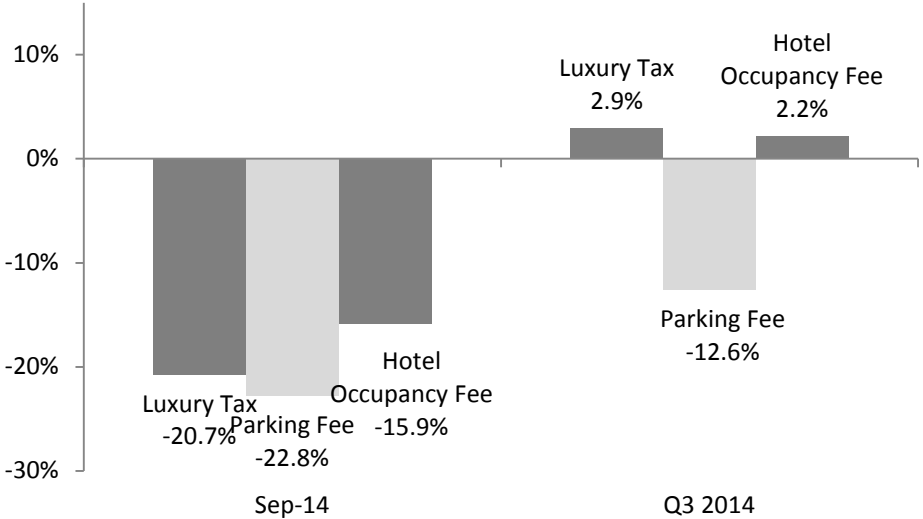
**Figure 21: 12 Month Trailing Total for the Atlantic County Hotel Occupancy Fee, December 2005 through September 2014, \$millions**



# September 2014 Atlantic City Tourism Performance Indicators (AC-TPI) Snapshot

The Lloyd D. Levenson Institute has concluded that these three taxes can serve as an effective proxy for the performance of the tourism economy in Atlantic City. These taxes, or more precisely the year over year change in the monthly figures for these taxes, are compiled into an Atlantic City Tourism Performance Index Snapshot at the end of each quarter. A more detailed annual report will be provided to give the longer term picture of what is happening to the Atlantic City tourism economy. In between these reports, however, the Lloyd D. Levenson Institute of Gaming Hospitality and Tourism (LIGHT) provides a snapshot, on a monthly basis, as to the performance of the Atlantic City tourism economy as shown in Figure 22 below. The goal is to provide key measures with analysis that can describe the results of the resorts current efforts at revitalizing the Atlantic City tourism economy.

**Figure 22: September 2014, 3rd Quarter 2014 Year over Year Change, Atlantic City Tourism Performance (AC-TPI) Index Snapshot**



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