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# Big bashes' bubbles burst

## Hotels, restaurants, clubs report falloff for New Year's Eve

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No plans yet for New Year's Eve? Not to worry.

Many of the city's nightclubs, restaurants and hotels remain hungry for revelers as the economic downturn is shaking the fizz out of their splashiest evening.

Tickets remain plentiful for many of the city's flashiest parties, and at prices that in some cases are 30 percent to 40 percent less than last year. And tables remain open at many of the city's flashiest parties, and at prices that in some cases are 30 percent to 40 percent less than last year. And tables remain open at many of the city's flashiest parties, and at prices that in some cases are 30 percent to 40 percent less than last year.

"New Year's went from being a moneymaker to being just a good time for our customers, and hoping they will support us the rest of the year," said Bob O'Connell, owner of Outfit Events, which is hosting

parties at Manor, Stay, Rino, Bon V, Crescendo and Lucky Lady nightclubs.

Other New Year's Eve events have been canceled, including a soiree at the Sheraton Chicago. A hotel spokeswoman declined to comment.

The bubbles even burst for Chicago Scene magazine, which hosts glitzy bashes at the Drake Hotel. The company has hosted fetes for nine years, and always sold out by Dec. 15, even in 2001, after the 9/11 tragedy.

"This is, by far, our slowest year. We will not sell out," said Ted Widen, publisher of Chicago Scene. Last year, it sold out at 2,200 tickets; this year, it's aiming for 1,900.

To try to boost excitement, and attendance, Chicago Scene is partnering with the Chicago 2016 Olympic bid, donating a portion of proceeds to the organization.

"They have a big database, a big following, so we're hoping it's a win-win," said Widen.

Global Adrenaline and Tommy Z Productions, hosts of a megaparty at the Hilton Chicago, are taking a similar route, adding a casino component for the first time, with a slice of its proceeds going to United Cer-

bral Palsy. Even so, they expect 3,000 partygoers, down from 3,200 a year ago and way off their goal of 4,000.

Suburban resorts are smarting too. Lincolnshire Marriott had dinner/theater and overnight packages available on Tuesday, in spite of stepped-up marketing.

What's happening across the region, said O'Connell, is that groups of friends are failing to commit on party plans, particularly if a few have lost jobs or are tight on cash.

As a result, some party prices are coming down. Tickets for O'Connell's parties are averaging \$100 per person, down from about \$140 last year, he said.

Restaurant prices are easing as well, among them Cyrano's Bistrot & Wine Bar, which brought its prix fixe menu down by \$10 from last year. Now, the place is "pretty much sold out," said Didier Durand, chef and owner.

"I'm shocked, but people in large groups are thinking of celebrating and getting out," he said.

Some event planners have scaled back the number of New Year's Eve events they are hosting, among

them Lincoln Park Young Professionals, a social networking business that cut back from three events last year to one this year; at the Hard Rock Hotel Chicago. That event sold out three days ago.

Not everyone is feeling a significant pinch. At Peninsula Chicago, reservations for its dinner seatings, which range from \$275 to \$390 per person, are on par with last year, though "not quite sold out," said Marc Anderson, director of marketing.

"The only dip we've really seen is about 5 percentage points on occupancy for that night," he said. The hotel has not cut rates but has offered a perk: \$80 in credits toward spa use and dining.

And the new Key Lime Cove Water Resort in Gurnee is sold out, as families are opting for close-by vacations over trips to Florida or Mexico.

"Even though the economy is difficult, people still want their kids to have a good time," said Jennifer Evans, marketing manager for the resort near Six Flags Great America.

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