

Deals will pick up in 2026, but no gold rush expected



Hotel Investment Today advisory board members chime in on the expected deal pace as a new year once again creates bigger expectations.

NATIONAL REPORT – Deal volume was disappointing once again in 2025 with PwC noting deal value dropping substantially with transaction size down 55% on average.

Will recent Fed activity start to loosen wallets? Will lenders return to the space with more conviction? Will distress finally reach a point of no more can kicking? Will REITs be the deal de jour? Or will soft performance forecasts lead to further pauses by equity players?

Hotel Investment Today reached out to its advisory board for some answer. We asked them if all the promises of a pronounced pickup in M&A will finally come to fruition in 2026? Here are their responses:

Sean Hehir, managing partner, Trinity Investments

“We anticipate a stronger market in 2026 – driven by private equity, strategic/transformational deals, and a release of pent-up demand from 2024-2025. In particular, we believe PE-backed deals, buyouts, and take-privates as key drivers of M&A activity.”

Ben Rafter, CEO, Hotel Equities

“Distress and fatigue may cause M&A to tick up, albeit with Marriott’s embarrassing Sonder problem it likely won’t be coming from the big flags. Management companies are looking for alternatives as a lot of CEOs/owners/founders held on through COVID and are now five years out looking for things to do. Hence the “fatigue” commentary. Properties themselves are going to find themselves in distress and something may actually happen this year.”

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David Duncan, president and CEO, First Hospitality

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Eric Jacobs, chief global growth officer, Aimbridge Hospitality

“I am not convinced the lenders are ready to push the button yet. If there is any way current administration can find a way to lower the rate to open more dollars back into the market then there may be chance. But with declining ‘demand’ (domestic and especially International), I don’t think there is real upside for new buyers unless the Fed opens up the spigot. Our industry needs a reset on “basis,” which no one wants to face.”

Adi Bhoopathy, managing principal, head of Capital Markets, Noble Investment Group

“It has been an active transaction year for Noble, but the overall transaction market has been muted for the past couple of years. Yes, we expect an uptick in hotel M&A in 2026, driven by stabilizing capital markets, owners facing refinancing challenges/PIP costs, and increased underwriting visibility, creating a ‘perfect recipe’ for increased transaction activity.”

Glyn Aeppel, founder, president, CEO, Glencove Capital

“Renewed liquidity (especially credit) is reactivating deal flow, which should be demonstrated through increased M&A and transactional activity. While there remains a gap between buyers and sellers regarding valuation, I am hopeful that this will narrow and results in action.”

Philip “Flip” Maritz, managing director Broadreach Capital Partners, co-founder, Maritz, Wolff & Co.

“I expect more M&A but muted, helped by better debt capital markets plus accelerated action on distressed loans.”

Maki Nakamura Bara, president, co-founder, The Chartres Lodging Group

“Maybe? Not really? While 2025 transactions have definitely underachieved the optimism that was expressed at the end of 2024, there appeared to be some undercurrents of momentum building at the end of the year. But to have a pronounced pickup, uncertainties will need to be resolved, even with a negative outcome (uncertainty is worse than a certain negative outlook for transaction activity). For example, New York City union contract in 2026, tariffs, many other geopolitical issues, etc.”

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David McCaslin, co-founder, CapStar Advisors

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- By [Jeffrey Weinstein](#) | January 8, 2026