

Karel stays on lookout for new venues

By David Perry

AVENTURA, Fla. – Larry Karel, who has hosted regional furniture and accessory shows all across the country, is always looking for new show venues. West Palm Beach, Fla., could join his show mix next year. And he will take a good hard look at Kansas City, he says.

But don't ask him about Chicago or St. Louis. "I won't go there," he said, firmly.

The Midwest is one part of the country that Karel has been asked about a number of times. He's not in that area now, although he has hosted shows in the past in Chicago, Indianapolis and Columbus, Ohio.

Karel wants to make sure the economics and drawing power of his potential show sites are compelling before he enters new markets. And even when those factors are favorable, shows wax and wane over the years. Karel's list of former show cities is a long one, including Las Vegas, Nashville, Denver, New York, Hartford, Conn., Fitchburg, Mass., Atlanta, Miami Beach, Ft. Lauderdale and Tampa.

In recent years Karel Exposition Management, Karel's trade show company, has successfully added Houston and Atlantic City, N.J., to its show schedule. They join stalwarts like Edison, N.J., Orlando and Los Angeles on his show calendar.

Edison, a city on the outskirts of New York City named for Thomas Edison, has always shined bright for KEM, sometimes hosting three of its shows in a single year. The Edison show, with two editions this year, has been sold out at just over 1,000 booths. "We could have 2,000 booths there," Karel asserts, if the space was available.

Orlando, KEM's biggest show, was down by 160 booths this year, Karel said, but he believes the show will be larger next year.

Here is KEM's 2007 schedule, as it stands at this time:

- * Edison, N.J., Feb. 4-6.
- * Los Angeles, April 28-30.
- * Atlantic City, N.J., May 6-8.
- * Houston, May 20-22.
- * Edison, N.J., Aug. 5-7.
- * Orlando, Aug. 24-26.
- * Los Angeles, Oct. 27-29.