

Tourism touches everything – and is working to create a vibrant Arlington!

By Ron Price, President and CEO of The Arlington Convention & Visitors Bureau

The changes in Arlington offerings have been dramatic over the past few years. Arlington has grown to become a top tourism destination in the state of Texas. Whether football or baseball fans, thrill-seeking family vacationers, or international tourists, travelers from around the world find their way here to Arlington.

The recipe that makes a great city ready for beneficial growth is a diverse culture, a can-do attitude and a pro-tourism spirit, and Arlington has all three. I love working in a city whose residents understand that the same things that make Arlington a great place to live also make it a great place to visit, which is why we are regarded as one of the most pro-tourism cities. They understand that while visitors may come and go, their tax dollars stay here – and ripple through the community, touching everything from local businesses to city services, ultimately improving the quality of life for all Arlington residents.

It is impossible to overstate just how important tourism has become to our area. Since 2017, Arlington attracts 14.5 million visitors annually, which generates \$1.4 billion in economic impact. Our ability to appeal to travelers fuels our local economy and generates nearly 1 in 10 private employment jobs, which means you probably know someone who works in the tourism and hospitality industry.

Do you know someone who ever worked at Six Flags Over Texas? Do you know a local retail, restaurant or hospitality

business owner? Are you a resident who has ever visited one of our Arlington restaurants featured on Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives? Tourism Touches Everything!

The new Texas Live! development shows exactly what a commitment to tourism and building our economy looks like. Opened in August, Texas Live! is a 200,000-square-foot, sports-themed complex that has restaurants, bars, and entertainment facilities. Whether it's Cowboys fans enjoying a drink before a game, or a group of friends seeing a live concert in the 5,000-seat amphitheater, Texas Live! offers the versatility we need to expand the already significant tourism market.

Texas Live! has ushered in new visitors to our city and brings with it 1,500+ permanent jobs. Time and time again the tourism industry has proven that if you invest in it, it will yield greater returns than you can imagine.

With this idea in mind, Arlington and Dallas-Fort Worth travel leaders met with Rep. Marc Veasey over the summer to stress ways the tourism industry can grow, from local projects like Texas Live! to favorable federal policies that impact the industry.

Take Brand USA, the United States' tourism marketing arm that advertises the U.S.'s destinations to visitors across the world. While international visitors might have their eyes on New York or Los Angeles, Brand USA partners with local tourism bureaus to lead international travelers to great cities in between our great coasts, places like Arlington.



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Photo: Southern Flair Photography

Just \$1 put into Brand USA marketing returns \$27 for our country's economy, proving again that an investment in tourism pays dividends. Over the past four years, Brand USA has brought an additional 4.3 million visitors to the U.S. and supported an average of 50,900 jobs annually.

We are grateful for leaders in Washington like Congressman Veasey, who understand what tourism can mean for communities across the country. Whether it is developments like Texas Live! or continued investments in public-private partnerships like Brand USA, travel and tourism can grow entire regional economies.

Still don't think your life is touched by tourism? Let's talk about taxes. Taxes generated by visitor spending saves each Arlington household \$616 per year. If visitors stop coming to Arlington and stopped spending money here, your taxes would go up or the current level of government services would go down. We would also see a significant number of jobs lost in the tourism industry, affecting many of our Arlington families.

We are lucky to have some of the top tourism destinations in Texas. But expanding on the economic possibilities the tourism industry can offer takes strategy and planning, and all of the ingredients of a good city recipe.

You can help Arlington's tourism numbers grow even bigger. Keep inviting family and friends to visit. If your business, association, or industry hosts meetings, conferences, trade shows, reunions, or any other special event, invite them to Arlington! When community residents become "ambassadors" of the city they love, that pride and feeling also ripples through neighborhoods, businesses and people. It can also be as simple as suggesting a new spot to a neighbor, visiting one yourself, or helping an out of townner with directions. It makes a difference in your life, your neighbor's life, and all of those around you.

May each of you who call this city home have a great holiday season, and a Happy New Year! 🇺🇸



Photos courtesy of Texas Live!, Six Flags Over Texas, ACVB and The Highlands



Tourism – and all it entails – helps drive the Arlington economy to keep the city thriving.