

# “INTENTIONALLY IRVING”



**ICVB Board of Directors**

**FY 2022-26**

**Strategic Plan for Irving’s**

**Recovery & Resilience**

Facilitated by



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**GOAL:** MAXIMIZE ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & GROWTH

**ASSIGNED TO:** Board & Business Development Committee

## Objective A

Make the financial stability of the Irving CVB (and, thus the Irving Convention Center) its top priority through careful and effective stewardship of its resources.

## Objective B

Position the ICVB as the best agent for Irving's long-term recovery from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.

*NOTE: May involve Community Engagement Committee for messaging refinement.*

## Objective C

Analyze opportunities to build and diversify the CVB's revenue streams to guard against any collapse of hotel occupancy tax revenues.

## Objective D

Support legislative initiatives that assure Texas remains open to all.

## Objective E

Assure the organization's performance metrics mirror or exceed that of the industry's best practices.

## Objective F

Become intentional about Succession Planning for both Board and Staff.

## Objective G

Initiate the process of a Brand Assessment Study.

**GOAL:** INCREASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COLLABORATION

**ASSIGNED TO:** Community Engagement Committee

**Objective A**

Enhance Community Awareness, Appreciation and Support of the ICVB and the impact of the Visitor Economy on Irving.

**Objective B**

Continue to work with City Leaders to create a better understanding of the role that Tourism plays in the community's Economic Vitality and Quality of Life.

**Objective C**

Build more Collaborative Relationships with other Community/Economic Development agencies.

**GOAL:** ADVOCATE FOR DESTINATION-ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT

**ASSIGNED TO:** Board & Business Development and Destination Development Committees

**Objective A (BBD)**

Support Legislative Initiatives that would serve to enhance development options at the Texas Stadium site.

**Objective B (BBD)**

Work with the City and Economic Development to reinstate hotel activity as an option for consideration in any incentives, including transient business activity as well as potential group meetings and events.

**Objective C (BBD)**

Research the financing and operating structures that have made possible competing projects in other destinations, particularly in the DFW area.

**Objective D (DD)**

Work with the City to right-size hotel development by continuing to protect the hotel development ordinance that is currently on the books.

**Objective E (DD)**

Identify opportunities for additional retail in Irving.

**Objective F (DD)**

Identify opportunities to generate more tourism revenues in the Heritage District.

**Objective G (DD)**

Work to build Sports Tourism in Irving.

**GOAL:** ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

**ASSIGNED TO:** Destination Development Committees

**Objective A**

Engage DCURD, The Las Colinas Association and other stakeholders to support increased activation of Lake Carolyn and the Mandalay Canal.

**Objective B**

Support the development of transportation solutions that would increase mobility through the City for visitors, workforce and residents.

**Objective C**

Advise the City on initiatives that could enhance the aesthetics of the community from a Visitor perspective.

**Objective D**

Encourage more diverse Arts and Culture attractions and events.

**Objective E**

Advocate for policies to support the Tasting Economy.

## THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The marketing of destinations has been occurring for centuries...but the stakes have never been higher nor the opportunity greater than right now. In American cities and counties, the latest iteration of Destination Marketing began sweeping the nation in the 1980s and 1990s as revenues from hotel occupancy taxes became available to virtually every community.

Today, however, the mandate has grown significantly larger as it is increasingly obvious that communities need effective marketing for more than just attracting visitors; destinations need to be marketed to attract investment, workforce, entrepreneurs and future residents. Every community is in a competition to attract the best and brightest as a way to enhance quality of life and long-range sustainability.

The realization that a Destination Marketing Organization's role has grown stems in part from a 2015 study by Longwoods International that proves that tourism advertising has a marked effect on consumer interest in communities as a place to live, go to college and start a business or career. That means CVBs/DMOs are far more than just "heads in beds." CVBs help plow the road for Economic Development and are intimately involved in enhancing the Quality of Life and Place for communities.

It is with all this in mind that the Irving CVB Board of Directors and the organization's staff leadership team met September 23-24, 2021 to discuss and ideate the future growth and direction for the destination and the organization. During their time together, Board members identified the realities of the present and the dreams for tomorrow, examining new ways to increase visitor spending throughout the city.

While most strategic plans these days are for two to three years based on rapidly changing environments and circumstances, the Board intentionally made this a five-year plan in order to maintain a top priority focus – that of the sunset of specific legislation in Irving impacting the availability of \$1.6 million annually in hotel occupancy taxes that will be available to be re-allocated for any legal purposes as of September 1, 2026.

This document was developed after a substantive discussion of present environments, threats and opportunities that followed online surveys of the Board and staff to better understand the expectations of and opportunities before the Organization and the destination. The subsequent goals developed in the document are designed to power future discussions and actions of the Board, community leaders and industry stakeholders to develop collaborative opportunities to enhance the impact of visitor spending in the region.

## VISION & MISSION

Vision propels us forward. Mission focuses us.

Vision and Mission Statements are crucial to the success of organizations as they power us forward and keep us on task. The Board of Directors of the ICVB took these concepts into consideration as they sought to update the Vision and Mission Statements for the Destination, the Organization and themselves.



The ICVB Board reviewed its Destination Vision and determined that it was on point...but could use a slight edit to be more elegant and visionary.

### EXISTING DESTINATION VISION

Irving will be a uniquely vibrant destination welcoming visitors of all kinds for unforgettable experiences.

### REVISED DESTINATION VISION

Irving will be a uniquely vibrant destination welcoming the world for unforgettable experiences.

The Board affirmed its Organization Mission Statements, and further refined that of the Board.

### **ORGANIZATION MISSION**

The Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau enhances Irving's economy and quality of life by marketing and advocating for the development of Irving as a premier destination.

### **EXISTING BOARD MISSION**

The Irving CVB Board will take ownership of the opportunities on its horizon, doing everything in its power to move the visitor vision of the destination forward by proactively putting the ideas, desires and priorities on every table it can.

### **REVISED BOARD MISSION**

The Irving CVB Board will take ownership of the opportunities on its horizon, doing everything in its power to move the visitor vision of the destination forward by proactively putting the ideas, desires and priorities on every table it can.

The Irving CVB Board takes seriously its responsibilities, including its fiduciary and operational oversight of the Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Convention Center, as outlined in the City's Charter and City Ordinances.



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**GOAL:** MAXIMIZE ORGANIZATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY & GROWTH

**ASSIGNED TO:** Board & Business Development Committee

**Objective A**

**Make the financial stability of the Irving CVB (and, thus the Irving Convention Center) its top priority through careful and effective stewardship of its resources.**

**IMPERATIVES:**

- Pay back the City of Irving loan (FY21)
- Maintain minimum General Fund Balance of \$2 million by FY22 (contingent on subsequent years' ARPA funding)
- Maintain minimum Computer Reserve Fund Balance of \$300K by FY24 (contingent on subsequent years' ARPA funding)
- Establish a Tourism Public Improvement District no later than FY25, while being sensitive to hotel needs and their operative environment before re-starting this process
- Maintain minimum Catastrophic Reserve Fund Balance of \$5 million by FY26
- Maintain minimum ICC CIP Reserve Fund Balance of \$3 million by FY26
  - Capital expenditures average \$600K-\$800K/year
  - Utilize ASM funds and HOT funds in the short-term
  - Utilize any excess in the ICC 2% HOT, as allowed
  - Re-allocate \$1.6 million excess in HOT revenue to CIP when Irving legislation ends Sept. 1, 2026
- Continue to build the revenue pipeline for the future (ongoing)
- Ensure sufficient sales and marketing resources are available to continue to supply the pipeline with future business opportunities

## **Objective B**

**Position the ICVB as the best agent for Irving's long-term recovery from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic.**

***NOTE: May involve Community Engagement Committee for messaging refinement.***

### **SUGGESTED TACTICS:**

- Develop concise and impactful messaging for the Board that positions the CVB as a "best in class" DMO that is critical to the future success of the City on a variety of fronts
- Communicate the value of the organization that is responsible for Irving's largest employer
- Create and deliver messaging in a way that enables citizens to better understand how their quality of life is so much better because of what tourism's impact, and thus the CVB's work, makes possible

## **Objective C**

**Analyze opportunities to build and diversify the CVB's revenue streams to guard against any collapse of hotel occupancy tax revenues.**

### **SUGGESTED TACTICS:**

- Clearly communicate that this isn't about growth for growth's sake but, rather, the public infrastructure dependent on HOT revenues to support bond payments and maintenance
- In the short term, advocate for a meaningful and continuing investment of the next round of ARPA funds
- Identify opportunities that may exist for utilizing the stadium site theme towers for messaging and/or revenue

## **Objective D**

**Support legislative initiatives that assure Texas remains open to all.**

### **SUGGESTED TACTICS:**

- Work with City and industry partners to support State and local legislation that keep Texas, and therefore Irving, open for all business and for visitors of all kinds

- Educate the community, as needed, at a grass roots level on the effects of any legislation that can negatively impact the stability and viability of the city's visitor economy, thus impacting the city's overall financial picture

## **Objective E**

**Assure the organization's performance metrics mirror or exceed that of the industry's best practices.**

### **SUGGESTED TACTICS:**

- Maintain the organization's Accreditation status through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program
- Provide annual updates to the Board and Business Development Committee on any Opportunities for Improvement that may be noted between application periods

## **Objective F**

**Become intentional about Succession Planning for both Board and Staff.**

### **SUGGESTED TACTICS FOR BOARD SUCCESSION:**

- The Board, working with its City Council liaison, will develop a succession planning matrix that identifies the skills, talents and diversity it will require to be successful and to maintain and build on institutional knowledge of the organization in future years
- The Board will work to diversify its own relationships in the community to build on those established by long-tenured Board and staff members
- Continue to build relationships with key community organizations and leaders with which the Board can effect meaningful introductions for new Board leaders

### **SUGGESTED TACTICS FOR PROFESSIONAL STAFF SUCCESSION:**

- Recognize that the institutional knowledge of the organization resides in a very few veteran staff members
- Identify opportunities to both codify this knowledge and to expand the circle of less tenured staff who can learn from veteran staff
- Perform regular (every 3-5 years, pending budget capacity) compensation studies to ensure the ICVB remains competitive enough to attract top talent

- Support budget expenditures (as funds are available and retirement dates are known) that will fund “shadow” opportunities for key positions
- Be intentional about creating professional development opportunities for junior staff to escalate their ability to be eligible for future leadership positions as they come available

## **Objective G**

### **Initiate the process of a Brand Assessment Study.**

#### **THE RATIONALE & PROCESS:**

- Irving’s visitor product has changed greatly since the last Brand Assessment process, as have the primary players involved (the latter of which ultimately led to the process being shelved) and a new process started, which was then shelved again.
- Engage an experienced Brand firm/consultant to guide the process at the staff’s direction.
- While engaging other partners will be important to the outcome, the process should be designed in such a way that the Irving CVB can move forward with the resulting work on its own, if necessary.

**GOAL:** INCREASE COMMUNITY OUTREACH & COLLABORATION

**ASSIGNED TO:** Community Engagement Committee

**Objective A**

**Enhance Community Awareness, Appreciation and Support of the ICVB and the impact of the Visitor Economy on Irving.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Revisit current Engagement and Advocacy strategies (i.e., Spirit of Irving awards, Annual Meeting, High Spirited Citizens) and update/revise to better achieve the Board's outreach priorities
- Develop clear talking points for the Board to use in its public outreach initiatives
- As part of Board Member orientation, consider requiring a shift worked at the Volunteer Visitor Information Center as it re-starts to showcase the work being done to welcome consumers
- Work with ICTN to create a series about the importance of the Visitor Economy and ICVB's role
- Engage with Neighborhood Associations to tell the ICVB story

**Objective B**

**Continue to work with City Leaders to create a better understanding of the role that Tourism plays in the community's Economic Vitality and Quality of Life.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Design an advocacy plan that speaks the language of civic leaders
- Continue twice-a-year Board presentations to City officials communicating progress towards the community's economic recovery and stabilization in future years
- Develop periodic FAM excursions to highlight areas of opportunities for City leaders and reinforce the critical work being done by the ICVB
- Identify specific and targeted ways to engage former Board members to keep them up-to-date on the Bureau's activities, efforts and needs
- At the Chair's invitation, and based on funding availability, host an annual Past Chairs and/or Past Board Members gathering, with an agenda for discussion.

- Look to use social media channels (Impacting Irving, ICVB LinkedIn page) as tools for local, targeted communications
- Consider creating a series of “back-of-the-house” videos to show the work that Irving hospitality workers do every day to provide the platform for great visitor experience

### **Objective C**

#### **Build more Collaborative Relationships with other Community/Economic Development agencies.**

##### *Suggested Tactics:*

- Identify the top 100 thought leaders in the community for personal contact by Board members
- Increase inter-agency communication between Chambers, Economic Development and others to maximize opportunities and eliminate duplicative efforts and spending
- Invite key stakeholders and influencers to sit in on Board meetings
- Identify opportunities for joint board meetings at least once a year with agencies such as DCURD and the TIF Board at the invitation of the ICVB Board Chair
- Work with the Parks & Recreation Department (Board to Board and Staff to Staff) to develop a plan for the pursuit of sports tournaments to best align resources and to avoid duplication of efforts

**GOAL:** ADVOCATE FOR DESTINATION-ENHANCING DEVELOPMENT

**ASSIGNED TO:** Board & Business Development and Destination Development Committees

**Objective A (BBD)**

**Support Legislative Initiatives that would serve to enhance development options at the Texas Stadium site.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Support State legislation that would make developing the site more attractive to developers and that could create a positive impact on visitor revenues
- Investigate opportunities to create an Entertainment and Economic Development Zone that could encompass the Urban Center and the former Stadium site to become eligible for federal funding

**Objective B (BBD)**

**Work with the City and Economic Development to reinstate hotel activity as an option for consideration in any incentives, including transient business activity as well as potential group meetings and events.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Encourage those developing relocation and retention incentive packages to include provisions to encourage the staging of future corporate meetings in Irving
- Protect hotel development ordinances and continue to support “right-sizing” of future development

### **Objective C (BBD)**

**Research the financing and operating structures that have made possible competing projects in other destinations, particularly in the DFW area.**

*Suggested Tactic:*

- Review projects such as like Grandscape (The Colony), Texas Live! and its new Loews hotels (Arlington), the PGA courses and Omni hotels (Frisco) and the Epic project just announced in Grand Prairie

### **Objective D (DD)**

**Work with the City to right-size hotel development by continuing to protect the hotel development ordinance that is currently on the books.**

*Suggested Tactic:*

- Stress the importance of a 200 sleeping room minimum and 5000 sf of meeting space minimum, among other requirements

### **Objective E (DD)**

**Identify opportunities for additional retail in Irving.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Partner with the Chambers, Las Colinas Association and Economic Development to commission a citywide leisure (non-service) retail needs and wants assessment that responds to what residents and visitors want with a realistic assessment of the resources necessary to make it happen
  - The study should also evaluate lost leisure retail “leakage” out of Irving, identify where the leakage overlaps with needs and what barriers must be mitigated to bring those retail opportunities inside Irving
  - The study should also identify the top retail storefront brands and their geographic requirements and restrictions
- Conduct an assessment/inventory of retail sites (and users for same) that may be utilized as temporary pop-ups in high visibility/high traffic/high target areas



## **Objective F (DD)**

**Identify opportunities to generate more tourism revenues in the Heritage District.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Support City leaders in identifying parking solutions in the Heritage District that will accommodate larger scale events
- Advocate for better street lighting to ensure a greater sense of visitor safety and enhanced aesthetics
- Encourage economic development initiatives that support the importance of retail in their efforts to land new businesses
- Advocate for the elimination of barriers to entry for restaurants, retail and nightlife in the Heritage District and identify incentives that can mitigate these barriers

## **Objective G (DD)**

**Work to build Sports Tourism in Irving.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Work with the Parks and Recreation Department/Parks Board to make facilities more available at desirable times for tournaments that can generate both visitor and rental revenues
  - Provide the Parks Department an informal “prospectus” of potential tournament impact to proposed new fields well as for re-prioritization of existing field use
- Provide leadership to support the return of the PGA TOUR to Irving with the ClubCorp Champions Classic in April 2022
- Encourage attendance at ICVB Board Meeting of Parks Board leadership at least once annually at the invitation of the ICVB Board Chair

**GOAL: ENHANCE THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE**

**ASSIGNED TO: Destination Development Committees**

**Objective A**

**Engage DCURD, The Las Colinas Association and other stakeholders to support increased activation of Lake Carolyn and the Mandalay Canal.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Support the LCA as they look at opportunities to celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a signature event on the water
- Encourage DCURD to investigate opportunities to re-launch water taxis on the canals that can meet transportation needs efficiently such as solving a “last mile” need, as well as provide leisure activity
- Encourage DCURD and hotel partners to identify potential “loading docks” for increased hotel guest access and use
- Support event organizers and developers to create activity that would create more life along the Promenade
- Encourage DCURD to identify other opportunities for waterfront activity and providers
- Support all parties (DCURD, City of Irving, Las Colinas Association) in identifying a means to “book” the Promenade for organized activity

**Objective B**

**Support the development of transportation solutions that would increase mobility through the City for visitors, workforce and residents.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Advocate for opportunities to create unique public transportation links between and around the Historic Downtown and the Convention Center District
- Advocate for opportunities to enhance DART connectivity
- Advocate for additional wayfinding signage throughout the city to encourage visitors and residents to explore more
- Advocate for trolley/shuttle system opportunities for various “visitor last miles” in targeted areas throughout the city



## Objective C

**Advise the City on initiatives that could enhance the aesthetics of the community from a Visitor perspective.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Support potential public art concepts that would be “Instagram-able”
- Continue to analyze opportunities to build upon and activate the Mustangs and its museum with the renovation of Williams Square Plaza, including supporting its role as a defacto visitor information center
- Support the concept of the return of Irving’s prior Public Art Ordinance
- Support Parks and Recreation and other entities to generate appropriately scaled activity with the City’s downtown waterfront assets, i.e. Centennial Park/Founders Plaza, Delaware Creek
- Advocate for the beautification of public infrastructure (e.g., painted utility boxes, water towers, wrapped public transportation/stations) as a means of reinforcing Irving’s newfound positioning as a “music mecca” and/or diverse cultural center
- As funds are available and a Customer Advisory Board can be convened, utilize this body as an ongoing focus group on these and other initiatives (retail, arts/culture, etc.)
- Encourage neighborhood grants that could support murals or other public art

## Objective D

**Encourage more diverse Arts and Culture attractions and events.**

*Suggested Tactics:*

- Support the creation and activation of distinctive and scalable cultural events throughout the City
- Support the creation of events that will attract visitors and are sustainable and scalable
- As funds become available, consider a destination study for the specific assessment, recruitment and potential production of signature event opportunities
- Continue to ideate opportunities to develop an iconic event

## Objective E

### **Advocate for policies to support the Tasting Economy.**

#### *Suggested Tactics:*

- Support simplifying the process for restaurants/venues to get zoning and licensing to serve alcohol to allow existing and emerging opportunities to succeed
- Support efforts to designate/promote “tasting trails” for various food and beverage categories
- Embrace the city’s cultural diversity through promotion of its distinctive food offerings in addition to those expected