

## **Orientation Narrative**

### **Irving CVB – Organizational Background**

#### **Our Building Blocks**

Build a place where people want to visit, and you'll build a place where people want to live.  
Build a place where people want to live, and you'll build a place where people want to work.  
Build a place where people want to work, and you'll build a place where business has to be.  
Build a place where business has to be, and you'll build a place where people have to visit.

#### **It all starts with the visit. And the visit starts with US.**

#### **Our Driving Focus**

The destination marketing organization for Irving, Texas – selling, servicing and marketing and promoting Irving to meeting planners, travel managers, leisure travelers, the media and other travel influencers, and visitors in general.

A government agency bringing together the interests and priorities of local government and industry to build and protect visitor revenues for the city. This is handled in a two-fold manner – one in direct sales for meetings and events to fill Irving's hotels and the Irving Convention Center; one in direct oversight of the performance of the Irving Convention Center.

A liaison between potential event organizers and other visitors and the businesses that host them.

A liaison between event organizers and the City of Irving for any permitting requirements, or other services that may be needed to assure the event's success.

A liaison between film and moving image production companies for promoting Irving locations and for providing a direct connection to the City of Irving for any permitting requirements, or other services that may be needed to assure the production's success.

The voice of the industry and of visitors to local government and the community-at-large.

#### **Our History**

Formed in November 1972 by the Irving City Council as a quasi-independent arm of city government, reporting to and through a City Council-appointed Board of Directors. The ICVB operating structure has remained the same since its inception.

Governed by a Board of Directors consisting of 13 City Council appointees (9 residents, 2 hoteliers, 1 industry-at-large, 1 restaurant industry) and 12 non-voting/ex-officio members (2 hoteliers, 2 Industry-at-Large, Chamber President, Chamber Chair, City Manager, Las Colinas Association Representative, TIF Board Chair, DCURD Board Chair, University of Dallas Representative, , and Former ICVB Board Member).

We have been accredited by our official trade association, Destinations International through the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program. This carries an annual renewal process, and a four-year renewal, and a full resubmittal at the eight-year mark.

Maura Gast is our chief executive, the Executive Director, and is the fifth in the organization's history. She began her career with the ICVB in 1991, and was named its Executive Director in October 2003.

### **Our Funding**

100% of our funding comes from the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) collected locally on hotel sleeping rooms. Texas State Law governs very specifically how HOT funds may be used. There is a two-part test every expenditure of local HOT must meet to be valid:

Test 1 – Every expenditure must **DIRECTLY** enhance and promote tourism AND the convention and hotel industry.

Test 2 – Every expenditure must clearly fit into one of six statutorily provided categories for local expenditure of local HOT revenues:

1. Funding the establishing, improvement or maintenance of a convention center or visitor information center.
2. Paying the administrative costs for facilitating convention registration.
3. Paying for advertising solicitations, and promotions that attract tourists and convention delegates to the city or its vicinity.
4. Expenditures that promote the arts (as they relate to tourism) – amount eligible capped by state law
5. Funding historical restoration or preservation programs (as they related to tourism) – amount capped by state law
6. Fund costs in smaller counties (Irving is not eligible) to hold sporting events that substantially increase hotel activity.

In Irving, a total of 15% tax is charged in hotel occupancy taxes, which is the state limit; 6% goes directly to the state and 9% remains locally.

Of the 9% that remains locally, adjusted for 100%, the allocation looks like this:

- 22.22% - Entertainment Venue Fund
- 22.22% - Convention Center Fund (this is for the debt service)
- 3.29% - Transfer from former Arts Center debt percentage to Convention Center debt
- 31.67% - ICVB
- 18.65% - Irving Arts\*
- .56% - Museum
- 1.39% - Preservation

*\*Beginning in the 2008-09 Fiscal Year, the Irving Arts Center percentage was adjusted to 15% plus \$1.6 million to cover its facility operating expenses. State law caps the percentage of hotel occupancy tax at 15% for promotion of the arts as it relates to tourism, and 15% for historic preservation as it relates to tourism. Special legislation was crafted for the Irving Arts Center in 2007 and revised in 2013 that allows it to temporarily exceed that 15% until 2026. The legislation also requires that for as long as the city provides funding to the Arts above the 15%, it may not reduce the funding provided for the CVB's responsibilities. The sunset provision was established to allow the Irving Arts Center sufficient time to grow both its revenues and its reserves to the point that they could sustain their level of operations within the 15% by the time this legislation sunsets.*

## **How the ICVB Staff Is Structured**

21 full-time staff positions currently funded (20% reduction from prior levels)

22 as-needed convention services staff

4 Internal Departments – Sales & Services, Marketing, Communications and Administration

1 External/Contractor Department – SMG (Convention Center Operations)

### **Sales & Services**

- Solicit meetings, conventions, hotel-driven events and corporate travel accounts for Irving
- Through client relationships and market development, generate leads and business opportunities for Irving hotels, restaurants, venues and other industry-related businesses.
- Develop and implement business plans based on market demands in specific segments, responding to short-term and long-term priorities.
- Conduct sales trips to target markets and events and participate in industry trade shows.
- Conduct site inspections for qualified meeting, travel and event planners of area facilities and attractions.
- Represent Irving at trade and travel shows and sales missions
- Work in partnership with Marketing and Communications departments to identify messaging needs and to track and fulfill inquiries generated as a result of those messaging efforts
- Develop strategic partnerships with industry organizations and partners
- Provide housing/reservation services to groups utilizing multiple hotels for the Irving Convention Center
- Provide client event support as required by each client – including but not limited to name badges, promotional material, registration assistance, vendor referral, proposal gathering, event management, etc.
- Manage post-event client satisfaction survey process
- Plan and manage all ICVB events (non-festival), including but not limited to outer-market Client Events, Meet the Bureau, Hospitality Industry Annual Meeting, etc.
- Database management, analysis and reporting output from CRM system
- Represent Irving in regional strategic sales alliances – Dallas Fort Worth Area Tourism Council, Visit Dallas Fort Worth, North Texas Sports Alliance, etc.
- Outsourced services may include: contract representation, telemarketing services, database updates, housing coordination

### **Marketing & Communications**

- Develop and manage the marketing of Irving, Texas to all categories of visitors
- Work in partnership with Sales to develop market-specific messages and opportunities
- Develop marketing initiatives for increasing occupancy, awareness and key need time business for Irving
- Develop strategic partnerships with industry organizations and partners
- Develop and produce all marketing collateral for the Bureau's use – brochures, ads, website, social media presence, invitations, etc
- Develop and produce all promotional campaigns, including direct mail, contests, etc.
- Develop and produce all advertising campaigns – print, broadcast and electronic
- Develop and produce all social media campaigns, in conjunction with Communications
- Develop and produce promotional and social media campaigns in support of client events and activities as requested
- Manage advertising agency relationship
- Manage all research campaigns
- Film industry inquiries

- Develop and manage all sponsorship programs, for locally held events as well as industry relationships
- Represent Irving in regional strategic marketing alliances – Dallas Fort Worth Area Tourism Council, Visit Dallas Fort Worth, etc.
- Develop and manage the public relations initiatives for promoting Irving, Texas and the ICVB to all categories of visitors
- Work with the media to encourage placement of positive, targeted stories about Irving and the Irving CVB
- Generate stakeholder communications on behalf of the destination and the organization
- Develop short-term collateral – invitations, calendars of events, annual meeting collateral, etc.
- Generate press releases about Irving on a targeted basis
- Primary liaison for any media inquiries
- Media liaison for signature Irving events – AT&T Byron Nelson Championship, LPGA North Texas Shootout, etc.
- Client media liaison as needed
- Manage and develop community relations program, including the High Spirited Citizens program
- Develop strategic partnerships with industry organizations and partners
- Monitor news coverage of Irving, Texas, competing destinations and key industry issues
- Monitor online “word of mouth” coverage of Irving, Texas
- Coordinate National Travel & Tourism Week media events
- Outsourced services may include: advertising agency, public relations agency, search engine optimization, research services

#### **Administration**

- ICVB Board
- Convention center contract administrator/oversight
- Operating policies\*
- Internal audit
- Liaison with City of Irving for Purchasing, Agenda Items, Human Resources, City Attorney’s office, Financial Services, etc.
- First-level Benefits Information
- Payroll and Timecards
- General visitor inquiries and front office operations
- Visitor Information Center Pilot Program
- All other levels of support for missions of selling and marketing Irving to visitors – Purchasing, Accounting, Technology and Network Management
- Direct interaction with City Manager, city staff
- Outsourced services may include: network support, project consultants as needed

\*NOTE: Any operating policies that diverge from the City’s policies of significance are brought to the ICVB Board of Directors for review and approval.

#### **Convention Center Operations – SMG/ASM Global**

A critically important and strategic decision was made early on by the ICVB Board to seek a third-party management firm for the Irving Convention Center, and an RFP was issued which ultimately led to the selection of SMG as that firm. The RFP awarded both management and food and beverage services, the latter to SMG’s catering division, SAVOR. This allows the Irving Convention Center to function efficiently and flexibly at the speed-of-business, by experts in this specific business. More than 98% of the publicly-owned exhibition space in North America is operated by private companies. All Use License Agreements

for events at the Irving Convention Center are signed by SMG/ASM Global, on a contract form that has been reviewed and approved by the Irving City Attorney.

SMG/ASM Global provides:

- Direct responsibility for all operations aspects of the convention center
- Direct responsibility for food and beverage services at the convention center
- Direct responsibility for catering and other defined convention center sales (under 12 months)

The management contract includes an annual management fee, a performance incentive fee (total cannot exceed the amount of the management fee), and a commission on gross food and beverage sales. The performance incentive includes performance on both the revenue generated by the building according to budget (which includes adherence to the established annual operating subsidy), as well as room night sales and customer service ratings. The incentive levels are finalized by the executive direction following the conclusion of the annual audit of the convention center.

Convention center specific policies beyond standard operations are reviewed and adopted by the ICVB Board of Directors.

The management agreement was renegotiated in Fall 2020 with an expiration date of 2035 and included access to \$2 million for operating capital or capital improvement projects.