

FINAL REPORT

Economic Impact Assessment of Mansfield Park

June 2019



STEWARDSHIP STRATEGIES
Design | Planning | Historic Preservation | Economic Development

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Mansfield Park Economic Impact Assessment assessed a facility with multiple events held annually, and the timeline of the project captured event observations for 2018 and the first half of 2019. This assessment looked specifically at events that drew visitors from outside of Bandera County and how many people attended, how long they stayed, whether they spent money, how much, and whether they would have otherwise come to Bandera County.

Mansfield Park's 2018 economic impact to Bandera County was \$3.2 million dollars.

This figure is a conservative estimate based on spending patterns of visitors, vendors, event organizers and on the origins of visitors to Mansfield Park. 35-50% of pro and ranch rodeo attendees come from outside of Bandera County, and **approximately 15% of the 2019 PRCA Rodeo's attendees came to Bandera from outside of Texas, including 34 states, 14 countries and 6 continents.** An additional 33% of the guests came from across Texas, and when asked what brought them to Bandera, nearly every visitor's response was the same: *"I want to see real cowboys, and this is where the Internet said they are."* The role Mansfield Park plays in drawing visitors to Bandera County year-around is much more significant than initially anticipated, and the potential economic loss to the county if the Park were not able to host these events would be much greater than the direct economic impact annually.

The three most important lessons learned in the economic impact analysis are:

- 1. The economic impact of Mansfield Park to Bandera County, combined with the education, leadership and fundraising opportunities provided by Mansfield Park, is critical to the community, including over 180,000 hours of 4-H club participation in 2018.**
- 2. Rodeo arena and fairgrounds facilities that are owned by cities and counties do not directly pay for themselves.** A few facilities with full-time managers are able to stay fully booked and have come close to breaking even, but in most cases facility revenues fall well below costs. While it may appear to be a losing proposition to use property tax revenue to fund such a facility, the economic impact of the facility can support the payment of local rents and mortgages that in turn contribute to maintaining and increasing property values and therefore property tax revenues.
- 3. Large, multi-day, festival-type events such as rodeo finals and biker rallies that utilize the whole park and draw visitors from outside the county to stay overnight in Bandera County have the largest contributions to economic impact.**

Sales tax revenues for Bandera County are up 17% over last year, nearly 6% above the combined average of other Hill Country counties. New investment in building renovations and business growth in Bandera is creating capacity to absorb visitor spending, which can increase the potential for economic impact of the events at Mansfield Park. As local infrastructure is being updated, updates to Mansfield Park's infrastructure may be considered to help support the visitors, vendors and frequent users of this historic asset.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	2
Table of Contents	3
Introduction	4
Summary of Completed Work	5
Origins of Visitors to the 2019 Bandera PRCA Rodeo	6
Mansfield Park’s Economic Impact	7
4-H Usage & Non-Profit Organization Impact	10
Recommendations	12
Appendix A: Monthly Sales Tax Revenues - Bandera County ...	13
Appendix B: Monthly Sales Tax Revenues - City of Bandera	14
Appendix C: History of Mansfield Park	15



2019 Thunder in the Hill Country motorcycle rally at Mansfield Park.

INTRODUCTION

This Final Report for the Mansfield Park Economic Impact Assessment is intended to provide project stakeholders with a wrap-up of the project - including updated sales tax revenues, economic impact figures, lessons learned, recommendations and other relevant factors - so that elected and appointed officials and community leaders can have a solid understanding of the current and potential economic impact, challenges and opportunities of Mansfield Park.

The project has evaluated events and activities at Mansfield Park over the course of approximately 18 months to determine which events and activities draw visitors from outside Bandera County, how long those visitors stay, how much money they spend on average, what facility improvements might be needed now and in the future, how often the facility has local users and what the function of the facility is within Bandera County.

Mansfield Park had an economic impact to Bandera County of \$3.2 million dollars in 2018, and hosted rodeo and motorcycle events that brought visitors from across Texas, dozens of states in the US and over a dozen countries on all six inhabited continents. The renown of the Cowboy Capital of the World attracts visitors from across the globe who come to see real cowboys and to enjoy an authentic Hill Country experience. **Mansfield Park plays a critical role in the attractiveness of Bandera as this destination, and its value to the local economy and identity is far greater than the direct annual economic impact it provides.**



Rafter G Productions bucking horses await showtime at the Bandera Pro Rodeo Association PRCA Rodeo on Memorial Weekend, 2019.

SUMMARY OF COMPLETED WORK

In November 2018 an Interim Report was presented to the Bandera County Commissioners and the Bandera Economic Development Corporation to provide a progress update and lessons learned to the project stakeholders. The Interim Report and the EDC Addendum to the Report are both available at www.stewardshipstrategies.com. The key takeaways from the Interim Report were:

- 1. Rodeo arena and fairgrounds facilities that are owned by cities and counties do not pay for themselves.**
- 2. Rodeo arena and fairground facilities that have a full-time manager have more events and therefore more visibility and revenue.**
- 3. Large, multi-day, festival-type events such as rodeo finals and biker rallies that utilize the whole park and draw visitors have the largest economic impact.**
- 4. Running a facility that is comfortable for and attractive to event attendees will get you the crowds and word-of-mouth advertising you need.**

In February 2019 a Financial Report was presented to the Bandera County Commissioners to provide a progress update and lessons learned to the project stakeholders. That report is available at www.stewardshipstrategies.com. The key takeaways from the Financial Report were:

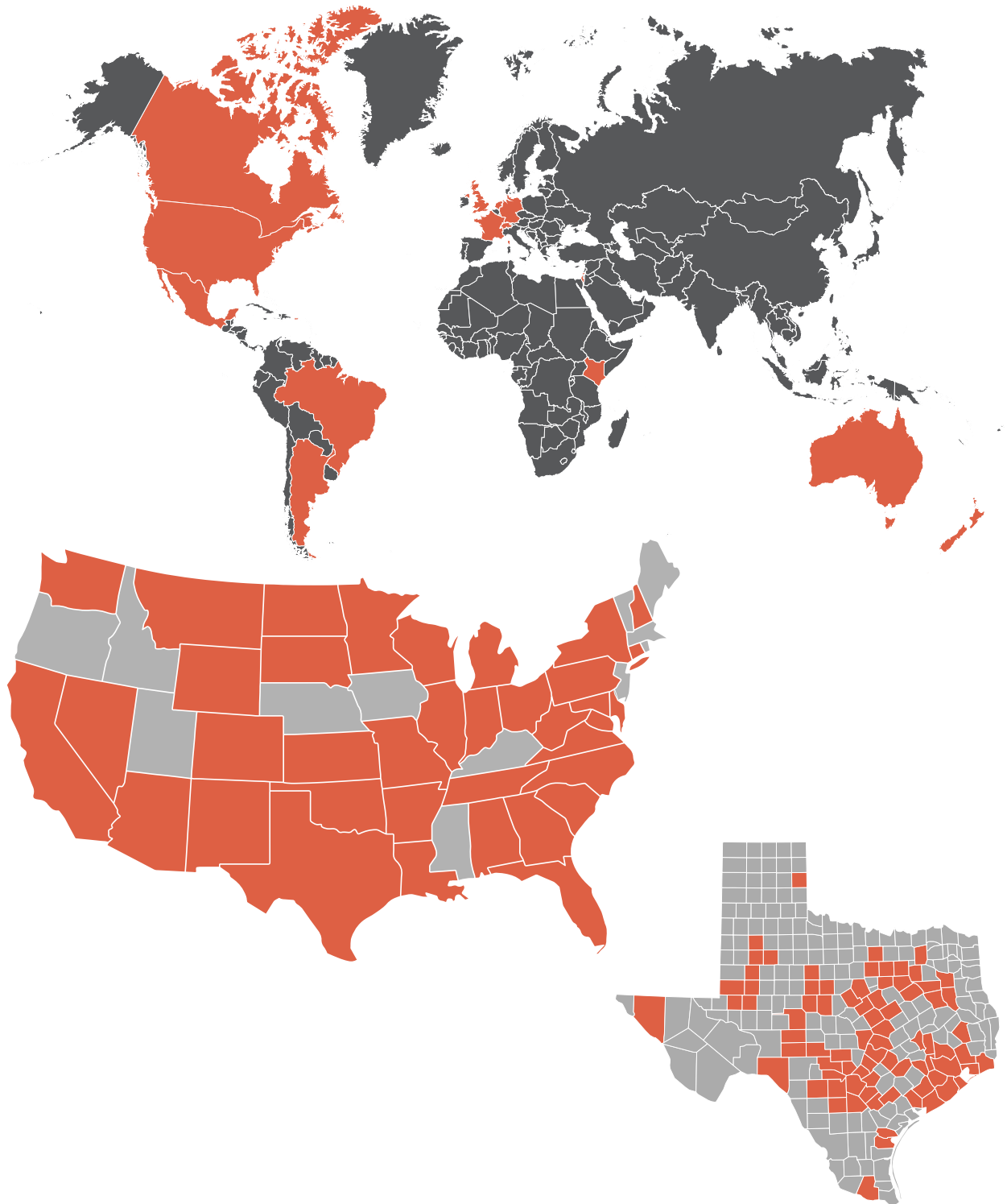
- 1. The economic impact to Bandera County is maximized when local businesses are making sales, not when event attendees are spending money with out-of-town event vendors.**
- 2. The greater the attendance from out-of-town visitors, the greater the economic impact to Bandera County.**
- 3. The amount of money spent per visitor is highest for those who attend multi-day festivals and rallies.**

The events and activities at Mansfield Park that were directly observed for this project:

- Wild Hog Explosion (March 2018)
- Thunder in the Hill Country Motorcycle Rally (March 2018)
- Bandera PRCA Rodeo (May 2018)
- Riding the River Cowboy Church Ranch Rodeo (July 2018)
- Frontier Times Museum Ranch Rodeo (September 2018)
- Rumble on the River Motorcycle Rally (September 2018)
- Thunder in the Hill Country Motorcycle Rally (March 2019)
- Bandera PRCA Rodeo (May 2019)

In addition to the event, activity and resulting attendance and traffic observations, a number of business owners, county officials and residents have generously provided information through interviews, and tax revenue reports have been collected from the Texas Comptroller.

ORIGINS OF SURVEYED VISITORS AT THE 2019 BANDERA PRCA RODEO



Mansfield Park visitors who were surveyed at the 2019 PRCA rodeo came to the Cowboy Capital from across the world.

MANSFIELD PARK'S ECONOMIC IMPACT

Measuring Economic Impact

Economic impact is a measure of how much revenue is brought into a defined area by specific events or spending patterns. This project used data, observations and surveys for the calendar year 2018 to estimate the economic impact of Mansfield Park on Bandera County - that is, the money that was brought into Bandera County in 2018 from events and activities at Mansfield Park that could not have happened elsewhere in the county because a similar venue was not available or did not exist.

**Mansfield Park's Economic Impact to Bandera County
in 2018 was \$3.2 million dollars!**

Mansfield Park's 2019 Economic Impact

Sales tax trends as of June 2019 support increased taxable sales activity in both the City of Bandera and Bandera County this year, particularly in February and April. Those revenues are available in detail in Appendices A & B of this report. Cowboy Mardi Gras in February is the likely driver behind the over 30% increase in sales tax revenues for both the City of Bandera and Bandera County from February 2018. Unexpectedly, March sales tax revenues were up 5.53% over 2018 for Bandera County in March and down 7.21% for the City of Bandera for the same reporting period. March sales activity is largely affected by Spring Break travel and the Thunder in the Hill Country motorcycle rally, and total rally attendance was down slightly from 2018, although more people who attended the rally arrived in Bandera by Friday than did last year, contributing to longer visitor stays for the event.

What was not anticipated was the national and international visitor draw of the 2019 Bandera PRCA rodeo, held on Memorial Weekend.

Based on more than 1,100 visitor surveys over the three days of the rodeo, approximately 48% of the rodeo attendees came from outside of Bandera County. With attendance at its highest yet, that translates to over 1,500 out-of-town visitors for the weekend because of the rodeo. While approximately 33% of those surveyed came from other parts of Texas, from as nearby as Boerne and as far away as Lubbock and Tyler, approximately 15% came from outside of Texas: 34 US states and Puerto Rico, 14 other countries and 6 continents, as shown in the map on page 6. When asked what brought them to Bandera, the response from out-of-county visitors was almost unanimous:

"I want to see real cowboys, and this is where the Internet said they are."

MANSFIELD PARK'S ECONOMIC IMPACT (Continued)

Current trends are indicating that Mansfield Park's economic impact on Bandera County will be similar in 2019 to what it was in 2018, and is anticipated to be slightly increased due to expected continued increases in rodeo attendance this year. The Frontier Times Museum Ranch Rodeo, while smaller in total attendance numbers than the PRCA rodeo, also has a significant number of out of town attendees, with more than 40% of attendees surveyed in 2018 coming from outside of Bandera County and dozens of US and international visitors. So far in 2019 the Riding on Faith summer rodeo series has had attendees hailing from at least 13 other states, with dozens of young visitors participating in the Mutton Bustin' event.

Economic Considerations

The two annual motorcycle rallies have the largest economic impact to the county, accounting for a total combined impact of approximately \$3 million of the \$3.2 million in impact for 2018. The rodeos had a combined impact of approximately \$200,000 in 2018, which is anticipated to increase to \$250,000 or more in 2019. As discussed in the Financial Report for the project issued in February 2019, the motorcycle rallies have a much greater economic impact than any other event at Mansfield Park because they attract the most visitors from outside the county, their participants have the highest spending rates per person and they have more visitors stay longer in Bandera County.

The economic impact of Mansfield Park is one aspect of evaluating the facility. Another is understanding the role that the facility plays in the community. With so many visitors from other states and countries attending rodeo events at Mansfield Park throughout the year, and visitors coming in search of an authentic Texas experience and "real cowboys", indications are that ***Mansfield Park, by hosting events that reinforce Bandera's identity as the Cowboy Capital of the World, is critical to the year-round tourism economy of Bandera County.***

"We started this club to strengthen the community through rodeo and continue the traditions of the generations that came before us, and what better place to do that, than the 'Cowboy Capital of the World'."

- Bandera Rodeo Club

While the annual economic impact of the facility can be measured by counting visitors, surveying spending patterns and accounting for the local spending that is necessary to make the events happen (including overtime pay for Sheriff's Deputies who provide security and the costs for on-site County EMS for rodeo events), the potential economic loss from losing Mansfield Park or of not maintaining it to be able to continue to host these events is far greater. Mansfield Park could benefit from some strategic improvements that would help to support the events that are contributing more than \$3 million dollars and counting to the Bandera County economy, and to be able to host even more visitors to these events. ***Were Mansfield Park lost, however, the loss to the county economy would be multiples of \$3 million annually, and would directly impact Bandera County revenues.***

MANSFIELD PARK'S ECONOMIC IMPACT (Continued)

Bandera County non-profit organizations financially benefit from Mansfield Park. The facility is a venue for multiple fundraising events annually, and not only do non-profit organizations pay reduced rental fees (or in some cases use the facility rent-free), organizations like Bandera Fire & Rescue, the Boy Scouts, Young Life, the Frontier Times Museum and others host or help park vehicles at events, which are significant fundraisers for those organizations. The Boys & Girls Clubs of Bandera County benefitted from record-breaking attendance at the Bandera Bacon Fest (reorganized from the former Wild Hog Explosion) held in March 2019.

One of the key questions at the beginning of this project was whether there could be justification for Bandera County to use property tax revenue to effectively subsidize the costs of Mansfield Park, as the facility was not paying for itself. As has been learned in the course of this project, rodeo arena facilities owned by cities and counties in Texas do not pay for themselves, and some operate at a considerable deficit. However, closing the Mansfield Park budget deficit with property tax revenue, as is the current practice, does provide for a funding cycle that is intact and which can be reasonably continued. As Mansfield Park provides economic impact, or increased revenues for businesses, employees and organizations, the ability to pay rent or mortgage is improved in the community. With increased ability to fund rent and mortgage payments and to make building improvements, property values increase, thus increasing property tax revenue, which then supports the facility, and thus closing the funding cycle. While funding the facility through county sales tax revenues may appear to be a more direct and clear policy, funding with property tax revenues is still providing a complete and connected funding cycle.



11th Street in Bandera during the 2019 Thunder in the Hill Country motorcycle rally.

4-H USAGE AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IMPACT

Bandera County 4-H clubs are the most frequent users of Mansfield Park, accounting for 36% of the 2018 facility calendar. While not a direct driver of economic impact to the county in the terms that have been used to develop the \$3.2 million impact value for 2018, the club activity level presents another key insight into the role and benefit that Mansfield Park provides to Bandera County. While 4-H clubs provide minimal economic impact to Bandera County through Mansfield Park, as the participation is largely local, the 4-H clubs add to the profound economic loss to Bandera County should Mansfield Park cease to be able to host these clubs, especially given the **over 180,000 hours of 4-H club participation in 2018.**

Many other Bandera County non-profit organizations financially benefit from the activity at Mansfield Park. Not only does Mansfield Park serve as a venue for multiple fundraising events annually, organizations like the Boy Scouts, Young Life and Bandera Fire & Rescue park PRCA Rodeo attendees and the donations the Boy Scouts receive from parking hundreds of vehicles are their largest single source of fundraising annually. The Frontier Times Ranch Rodeo and Riding the River Cowboy Fellowship Ranch Rodeo are also significant fundraisers for those organizations, including any ticket, parking, sponsor and concessions fees they collect to reinvest in the community.

Bandera County 4-H 2018 Mansfield Yearly Usage Report

4-H Club	Participants	Hours Per Participant	Total Hours
Pioneer Club	270	19	5,130
4-H Leadership Club	40	18	720
Rifle Club	568	150	85,200
Shot Gun Club	368	15	5,520
Horse Club	100	9	900
County Council	106	18	1,908
Total/Avg/Total	1,452	38.167	99,378
4-H Projects			
Photography	30	6	180
Swine	35	10	350
Fashion & Interior Design	54	40	2,160
Archery	47	12	564
Food & Nutrition	46	27	1,242
Livestock Judging	510	153	78,030
Clover Kids	29	5	145
Total/Avg/Total	751	36.143	82,671
Total Hours			182,049

Source: Texas A&M Agrilife Extension Bandera County

4-H USAGE AND NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION IMPACT (Continued)

The rents that are charged for the use of Mansfield Park do not cover operation costs, and more than one third of the activity in the Park does not pay any rent. Bandera County 4-H is the most frequent user of the facilities, and they do not pay for the use, nor do the many county residents who train and work with animals on the grounds throughout the year. When non-profit organizations rent the facility or parts of it, the rates they are paying do not nearly cover the costs. However, like many publicly-owned facilities of its kind, Mansfield Park has benefitted from community contributions and the efforts of multiple individuals and organizations who have helped make improvements to the park, from the arena to the show barn.

The mutually beneficial relationships that exist at Mansfield Park exist at many other facilities of this type across Texas for a key reason: were cities and counties to charge rents at the level required to break even, many members of the communities that these facilities serve would not be able to afford them, and the benefits to the community when these relationships exist are much more extensive than what is captured in economic impact figures.

2018 Mansfield Park Utilization Report

2018 Days with Scheduled Events: 144

Event Days by Month

January Events	7	4.9%
February Events	4	2.8%
March Events	15	10.4%
April Events	10	6.9%
May Events	13	9.0%
June Events	18	12.5%
July Events	13	9.0%
August Events	17	11.8%
September Events	15	10.4%
October Events	12	8.3%
November Events	9	6.3%
December Events	11	7.6%
Total Events	144	100.0%

Event Days by Type

4H Events	52	36%
Reunion/Bday/Wed/Grad	16	11%
Rodeo	31	22%
Rally/Festival/Travel Group	21	15%
Community	15	10%
Other	9	6%
Total Events	144	100.0%



Appreciation sign on the south grandstands recognizing community contributions to the arena.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are based on extensive observations and interviews during the course of the project:

1. Upgrade Electrical and Water Systems.

Electrical service demands have changed substantially for facilities of this type in the last decade. Vendors, visitors and event managers are now requiring 30-50 amp electrical service to power cooling systems, RVs, cooking equipment and other electric-powered equipment. Electrical service at Mansfield Park was not designed for these demands, and has rather been upgraded on an as-needed basis. Upgrading the system in a single, planned project would help support existing and future demands. Similarly for the water system, some of the components have aged to the point that water quality improvements could be achieved with new system components.

2. Establish improved accessible parking spaces.

Many visitors require accessible parking spaces to safely and comfortably attend events at Mansfield Park. Establishing permanent accessible parking spaces for the arena and buildings with appropriate surfaces, striping and signage would help many Bandera County residents and visitors.

3. Upgrade restroom facilities.

One of the most frequent comments from visitors to Mansfield Park is related to the lack of adequate restroom facilities, which are normally supplemented with portable restrooms during events. Bandera County may consider whether improving the existing restroom facilities is a feasible or desirable project to undertake, and if so may consider improving shower facilities, which would benefit campers and overnight event attendees.

4. Consider covering and rebuilding the stock pens.

There is a charm to the stock pens on the west side of the rodeo arena at Mansfield Park, and one of the attractive aspects of the arena facility is the look and feel of it. However, the stock pens have served their use, and the PRCA Rodeo stock contractor has rightly recommended that the pens be covered and rebuilt to protect the animals.

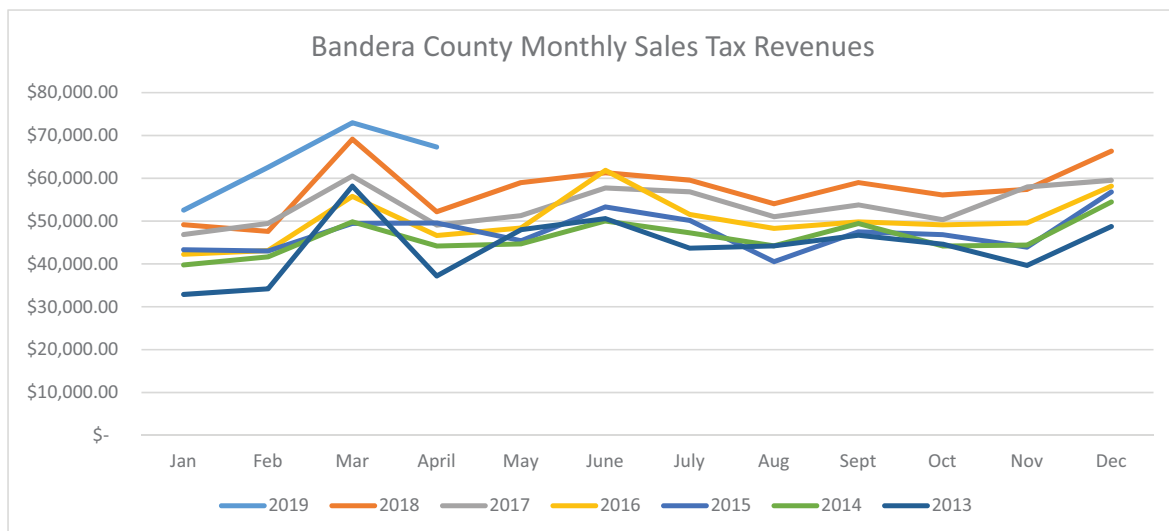
5. Improve the web presence and advertising of the facility.

Simply put, Mansfield Park is **not** easy enough for out-of-town visitors and perhaps even local residents to find online. By improving the facility's online presence, including events and availability, the facility's visibility could be improved to the point that more bookings (and therefore more income) could be attained.

Appendix A: Monthly Sales Tax Revenues - Bandera County

Month	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Jan	\$ 52,573.42	\$ 49,164.71	\$ 46,864.96	\$ 42,251.87	\$ 43,317.95	\$ 39,761.67	\$ 32,883.55
Feb	\$ 62,561.37	\$ 47,593.27	\$ 49,487.41	\$ 43,126.42	\$ 43,039.38	\$ 41,662.84	\$ 34,206.97
Mar	\$ 72,972.38	\$ 69,150.87	\$ 60,522.30	\$ 55,790.81	\$ 49,463.87	\$ 49,838.37	\$ 58,181.02
April	\$ 67,319.56	\$ 52,197.46	\$ 49,081.88	\$ 46,648.81	\$ 49,578.77	\$ 44,194.46	\$ 37,195.33
May		\$ 58,988.89	\$ 51,288.43	\$ 48,408.17	\$ 45,426.50	\$ 44,689.93	\$ 48,028.54
June		\$ 61,312.21	\$ 57,749.97	\$ 61,858.73	\$ 53,329.80	\$ 50,050.27	\$ 50,608.97
July		\$ 59,566.07	\$ 56,837.96	\$ 51,563.25	\$ 50,177.49	\$ 47,294.90	\$ 43,686.66
Aug		\$ 54,055.95	\$ 51,024.91	\$ 48,317.94	\$ 40,529.90	\$ 44,236.27	\$ 44,216.20
Sept		\$ 58,989.07	\$ 53,778.04	\$ 49,842.61	\$ 47,510.69	\$ 49,454.51	\$ 46,704.07
Oct		\$ 56,103.80	\$ 50,352.05	\$ 49,133.70	\$ 46,841.56	\$ 44,182.39	\$ 44,631.20
Nov		\$ 57,405.15	\$ 57,967.81	\$ 49,561.09	\$ 43,939.09	\$ 44,422.17	\$ 39,635.05
Dec		\$ 66,341.10	\$ 59,538.80	\$ 58,160.19	\$ 56,810.60	\$ 54,477.77	\$ 48,729.31
Total	\$255,426.73	\$690,868.55	\$644,494.52	\$604,663.59	\$569,965.60	\$554,265.55	\$528,706.87

Annual % Change	17.11%	7.20%	6.59%	6.09%	2.83%	4.83%
Jan	6.93%	4.91%	10.92%	-2.46%	8.94%	20.92%
Feb	31.45%	-3.83%	14.75%	0.20%	3.30%	21.80%
Mar	5.53%	14.26%	8.48%	12.79%	-0.75%	-14.34%
April	28.97%	6.35%	5.22%	-5.91%	12.18%	18.82%
May		15.01%	5.95%	6.56%	1.65%	-6.95%
June		6.17%	-6.64%	15.99%	6.55%	-1.10%
July		4.80%	10.23%	2.76%	6.09%	8.26%
Aug		5.94%	5.60%	19.22%	-8.38%	0.05%
Sept		9.69%	7.90%	4.91%	-3.93%	5.89%
Oct		11.42%	2.48%	4.89%	6.02%	-1.01%
Nov		-0.97%	16.96%	12.79%	-1.09%	12.08%
Dec		11.42%	2.37%	2.38%	4.28%	11.80%

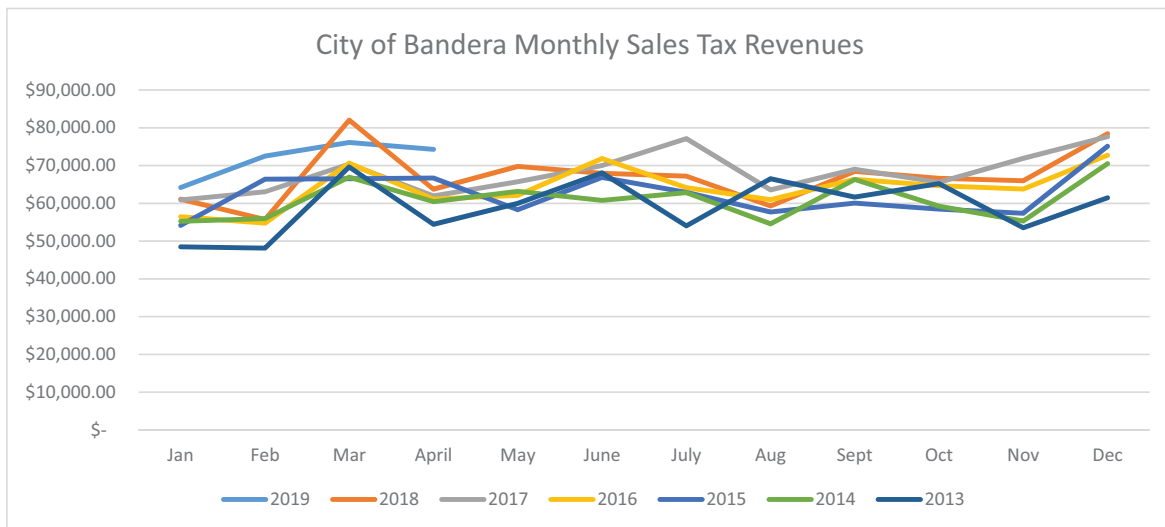


Source: Texas Comptroller, 2019. The Comptroller's monthly sales tax allocation report months have been adjusted back two months to reflect the actual month collections rather than the reporting month collections.

Appendix B: Monthly Sales Tax Revenues - City of Bandera

Month	2019	2018	2017	2016	2015	2014	2013
Jan	\$ 64,189.85	\$ 61,075.86	\$ 60,881.71	\$ 56,456.25	\$ 54,162.54	\$ 55,235.83	\$ 48,484.06
Feb	\$ 72,517.31	\$ 55,713.76	\$ 63,042.50	\$ 54,759.10	\$ 66,402.95	\$ 55,951.61	\$ 48,141.63
Mar	\$ 76,114.06	\$ 82,031.50	\$ 70,384.88	\$ 70,637.95	\$ 66,502.83	\$ 66,927.09	\$ 69,624.93
April	\$ 74,301.57	\$ 63,757.89	\$ 61,950.74	\$ 61,118.64	\$ 66,699.26	\$ 60,437.62	\$ 54,455.10
May		\$ 69,789.22	\$ 65,703.04	\$ 62,112.59	\$ 58,298.09	\$ 63,187.45	\$ 59,977.75
June		\$ 67,953.87	\$ 69,984.48	\$ 71,868.59	\$ 66,856.24	\$ 60,781.88	\$ 68,081.86
July		\$ 67,192.82	\$ 77,151.89	\$ 64,157.33	\$ 62,919.69	\$ 62,830.57	\$ 54,024.52
Aug		\$ 59,291.99	\$ 63,543.42	\$ 60,986.50	\$ 57,711.42	\$ 54,568.67	\$ 66,501.21
Sept		\$ 68,442.01	\$ 69,009.11	\$ 66,340.49	\$ 60,067.88	\$ 66,320.94	\$ 61,662.48
Oct		\$ 66,639.77	\$ 65,547.00	\$ 64,657.51	\$ 58,446.25	\$ 59,241.26	\$ 65,216.07
Nov		\$ 65,965.40	\$ 71,909.18	\$ 63,791.53	\$ 57,349.90	\$ 55,324.69	\$ 53,537.29
Dec		\$ 78,422.29	\$ 77,647.16	\$ 72,726.67	\$ 75,111.51	\$ 70,492.17	\$ 61,458.55
Total	\$287,122.79	\$806,276.38	\$816,755.11	\$769,613.15	\$750,528.56	\$731,299.78	\$711,165.45

Annual % Change	9.35%	-1.28%	6.13%	2.54%	2.63%	2.83%
Jan	5.10%	0.32%	7.84%	4.23%	-1.94%	13.93%
Feb	30.16%	-11.63%	15.13%	-17.54%	18.68%	16.22%
Mar	-7.21%	16.55%	-0.36%	6.22%	-0.63%	-3.87%
April	16.54%	2.92%	1.36%	-8.37%	10.36%	10.99%
May		6.22%	5.78%	6.54%	-7.74%	5.35%
June		-2.90%	-2.62%	7.50%	9.99%	-10.72%
July		-12.91%	20.25%	1.97%	0.14%	16.30%
Aug		-6.69%	4.19%	5.67%	5.76%	-17.94%
Sept		-0.82%	4.02%	10.44%	-9.43%	7.55%
Oct		1.67%	1.38%	10.63%	-1.34%	-9.16%
Nov		-8.27%	12.73%	11.23%	3.66%	3.34%
Dec		1.00%	6.77%	-3.18%	6.55%	14.70%



Source: Texas Comptroller, 2019. The Comptroller's monthly sales tax allocation report months have been adjusted back two months to reflect the actual month collections rather than the reporting month collections.

Appendix C: History of Mansfield Park

Written by Janna Lindig and originally published in The Bandera Bulletin on May 16, 2018

Mansfield Park can be viewed as the birthplace of Bandera's legacy as the Cowboy Capital of the World. How the park came to be is part of the history of the Mansfield family. Andrew Mansfield came to Bandera County from Washington County, Pennsylvania in 1860, bringing with him the first Merino sheep to Bandera. He married Laura Thalman after moving here, and in 1862, he was conscripted into the Confederate army, which took him away from Bandera until the war between the states was over.

Beginning in 1870, Mansfield purchased property in Bandera County and brought more registered sheep and the first registered Durham cattle to Bandera. Another important contribution that Mansfield and his wife made to Bandera County was that they had a son named W.E. "Ed" Mansfield. Part of the property purchased by Andrew Mansfield lies on Highway 16 between Bandera and Medina. Ed Mansfield eventually inherited, or was given, part of this Highway 16 property by his parents. In 1897, Ed Mansfield built a home on the property, to which he could bring his new wife, Cora Buck. Ed and Cora lived in this home the rest of their lives. The home, though changed over the years, can still be seen today. Ed and Cora had nine children - Laura, Homer, Dolly, Bruce, Luella, Bill, Minnie Mae, Hayden and Frank. They lived a life of ranching, rodeo, raising children and giving to the community.

Around 1920, the town of Bandera held its first rodeo. It was held on the Bandera County Fair grounds, which are where the old wool and mohair warehouse, now known as the Western Trail Antiques & Marketplace, was along with the rest of the block from the ice house, now the Chevron station, to the old Texaco station, now the Old West Imports. The stock used for Bandera's first rodeo was owned by Ed Mansfield. That was only one of his contributions to the development of Bandera's rodeo legacy. Another was Mansfield Park itself. Ed Mansfield, who came to be known as "Uncle Ed," is said to have carved the Mansfield Park Rodeo Arena out of the bare ground. The date of the very first rodeo at Mansfield Park is uncertain. A 1953 story in a publication known as The Dude Wrangler reported that Uncle Ed began putting on a rodeo about 30 years earlier at his own place, "the now famous Mansfield Park near Bandera." That would put the beginning date of rodeos at Mansfield Park at about 1923.

Today, Mansfield family members say the first rodeo at Mansfield Park that was advertised, and for which an admission was charged, took place in 1924. The charge for these rodeos was 25 or 50 cents, which included a free barbecue meal. At night, an open-air dance on the pavilion, which still exists, was part of the festivities. Uncle Ed put on a rodeo at his place every 4th of July in connection with the Old Settlers Reunion. The main events at the Independence Day rodeos were steer riding, goat roping and calf roping. The contestants did not have to pay entry fees. Rather, Uncle Ed paid the boys \$1 apiece to ride the steers, and there was no limit to how many times they could ride. The ropers would organize a jackpot, putting up \$1.00 or so apiece.

Appendix C: History of Mansfield Park (Continued)

Throughout the years, cowboy competitors included Slick Jones, Lee Walker, Hayden, Bill and Bruce Mansfield, August and Preston Whitley, Booker Davenport and son Claybourne Davenport, Rhea and Bob Mansfield, Louie and Jack Storms, Lane Langford, John Stevens, Earl Davenport, Gene Mangum, Ray Wharton, Harold Wharton, Ray McDonald, Paul Hubble and more.

Uncle Ed also competed in calf roping during that time and was known to say, “I entered 25 roping contests—never missed a throw and never won a prize.” For decades, Uncle Ed and the Bandera community, including local dude ranches, combined to ensure that rodeos took place at Mansfield Park. A March 5, 1951 article in the Bandera Bulletin reported that for years, “Uncle Ed’s place furnished the entertainment every Saturday night for the whole town. He had a good roping arena at his ranch and there was always a dance to boot.”

Uncle Ed’s Mansfield Park Arena was open to anyone who asked, and he was known to go turn on the lights at night to help practicing ropers. While Uncle Ed conceded that the best riders came from Montana, Wyoming and Colorado, he was quick to proclaim that “the best ropers in the U.S. come from around Bandera.” Throughout the years, Uncle Ed and his arena were integral parts in the success of the national and world champion ropers that have come from Bandera.

On May 29, 1982, the Bandera County Chamber of Commerce dedicated the Funtier Days and the Champion Cowboy Homecoming Souvenir program to the memory of Uncle Ed Mansfield. The souvenir program touts Mansfield Park as “the house that Uncle Ed built” and records the placement and dedication of the Bandera County Cowboy Champion Monument on the Bandera County Courthouse lawn. This Champion Monument was a tribute to seven cowboys, Toots Mansfield, Ray Wharton, Buddy Groff, Scooter Fries, Clay Billings, Todd Whitewood and Jimmy Adams. The dedication of the souvenir program to Uncle Ed, and statements contained in the cowboys’ stories, signify the support Uncle Ed and Mansfield Park provided for these champion cowboys. The cowboys’ stories include the following. Uncle Ed’s nephew, “Toots” Mansfield first learned to rope on “Uncle Ed’s Mansfield Park Arena.” Toots won the title of World Champion Calf Roper seven times and was inducted into the Rodeo National Hall of Fame in 1981. Ray Wharton (World Champion Calf Roper 1958), moved “across from Mansfield Park,” where he “got down to serious business.”



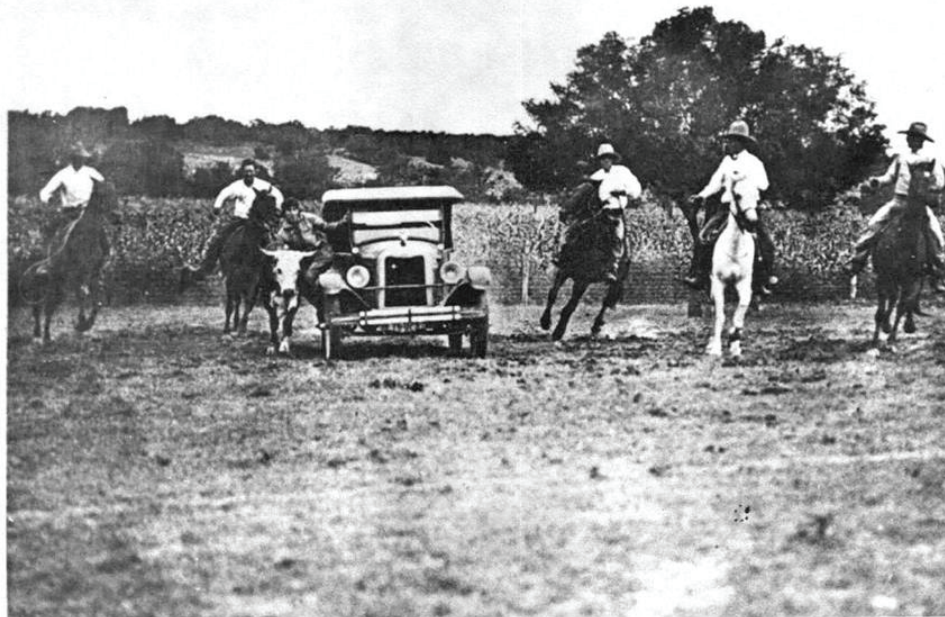
Photo sourced from <http://www.banderaprrodeo.org>

Appendix C: History of Mansfield Park (Continued)

Buddy Groff (Reserve World Champion in 1954 and 1956 and Central Texas Cowboy Hall of Fame inductee) said “We lived across from Mansfield Park, and this is where I truly learned how to rope.” Scooter Fries (State High School Champion Calf Roper 1948, National High School Champion Calf Roper 1950, Reserve National High School Champion Calf Roper 1951 and State High School Champion Steer Dogger 1950) credited Ed Mansfield with helping him in his formative years by making the Mansfield Rodeo Arena available for almost daily practice sessions.

Uncle Ed’s establishment of Mansfield Park as a place to rodeo survived his death in 1956. For 94 years, rodeos have been held at Mansfield Park, the “house that Uncle Ed built.” The rodeos have helped Bandera maintain its prosperity, while other small towns in Texas have dwindled. This year will mark the 35th anniversary of professional rodeos at Mansfield Park, which is now owned by Bandera County. These 2018 rodeos are dedicated to Mansfield Park. It is anticipated that members of the Mansfield Clan will join the Bandera ProRodeo Association for the celebration of Mansfield Park later this year. Two of Uncle Ed’s granddaughters, Luella Mansfield’s daughter, Loretta Vandever Nash, and Bill Mansfield’s daughter, Jayne Mansfield Young, contributed the information contained in this article.

The community enjoys the title of The Cowboy Capital of the World. You could say that “but for” Ed Mansfield, we would not have Mansfield Park, and “but for” Mansfield Park, champion cowboys would not have been produced in Bandera, and “but for” our champion cowboys, the community would not have gained the title it has.



RODEOING AT MANSFIELD PARK

Here is a scene at Mansfield Park in 1926. Mrs. Snow of Oklahoma is shown here bulldogging a steer from a Ford car driven by Frank H. Mansfield, while local cowboys ride along.

Photo sourced from <http://www.banderaprorodeo.org>