



2025

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# OLD GOVERNOR'S MANSION

ECONOMIC IMPACT  
ANALYSIS



The Old Governor's Mansion, located on a live oak-lined boulevard four blocks from the Mississippi River, is a 95-year-old former Governor's residence in Downtown Baton Rouge. Built in 1930 by Governor Huey Long, the site was home to nine Louisiana governors until 1963 when a new governor's residence was constructed closer to the State Capitol Building.<sup>1</sup>

Today, the Old Governor's Mansion is operated by the Louisiana Secretary of State's Office and is one of nine museums operated by the state agency. It's open to the public five days a week and offers free admission for guided and self-paced tours of the historic property. The museum doubles as an event venue available for weddings, receptions, banquets, meetings, luncheons, and other gatherings.

With nearly 9,000 visitors in 2024 and projected to surpass 10,000 in 2025, the Old Governor's Mansion supports significant economic activity across Greater Baton Rouge and Louisiana. Event space at the Old Governor's Mansion is generally more affordable to rent than similar spaces at comparable venues in Downtown Baton Rouge. And because Downtown Baton Rouge has fewer museums and historical sites than comparable southern downtowns, the Old Governor's Mansion fills an important cultural gap, enhancing regional quality of life and providing tourists from all 50 states and at least 30 countries with a valuable cultural attraction to visit.

This report explores the Old Governor's Mansion's impact, including its impact on the state's economy and the region's quality of life.

## Key Facts

- The Old Governor's Mansion supported \$1.1 million of annual economic activity in 2024, including \$473,000 in economic activity supported by visitors to the museum and its events.
- The economic activity supported by the Old Governor's Mansion is expected to grow 13% to \$1.2 million in 2025.
- The average spend-per-visitor, which includes spending by the Old Governor's Mansion's visitors at the region's restaurants, hotels, and other retailers, is between \$4 and \$5 greater than the average cost-per-visitor, which includes the state funding used to operate the facility.
- Every \$1 in state funding for the Old Governor's Mansion supports \$3.55 in total economic activity across Louisiana.
- The Old Governor's Mansion charges \$11.67 per person for a maximum capacity after-hours reception, making it more affordable than comparable venues with similar offerings in Downtown Baton Rouge.
- The Old Governor's Mansion is projected to welcome 10,000 visitors hailing from all 50 states and at least 30 countries in fiscal year 2025.
- Downtown Baton Rouge has fewer museums and historical sites compared to similar downtowns in peer cities. This, coupled with the role these institutions play in boosting regional quality of life, means the Old Governor's Mansion plays a key role in creating a vibrant culture in Baton Rouge.

## ECONOMIC IMPACT SUMMARY

In 2024, the Old Governor’s Mansion supported \$1.1 million in annual economic activity across Louisiana, about \$473,000 of which was supported by visitors to the Old Governor’s Mansion and \$606,000 of which was driven by the Old Governor’s Mansion’s organizational spending. Considering the average visitor to the Old Governor’s Mansion spends approximately \$38 across Greater Baton Rouge during their visit, every \$1 in state funding is linked to \$3.55 in total economic activity when indirect impacts and the organization’s spending are considered.

## SUPPORTED ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

The Old Governor’s Mansion supports economic activity in two key ways. First, the Old Governor’s Mansion spends money like any other organization on staff salaries, other compensation, supplies, property upkeep, and other operating expenses. These represent the Old Governor’s Mansion’s direct impacts.

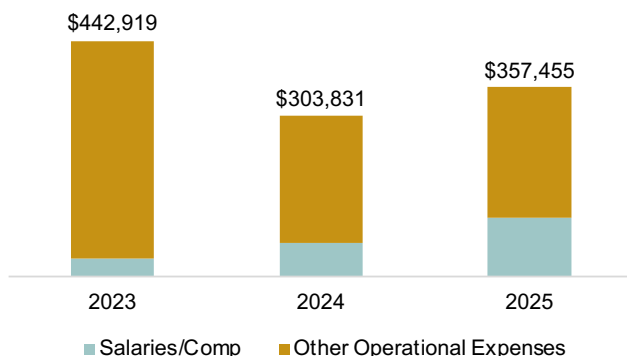
Indirect impacts are a result of the purchases made by the Old Governor’s Mansion’s suppliers. Induced impacts come from the spending done by households receiving labor income on everything from mortgage/rent payments to groceries to movie tickets.

If the Old Governor’s Mansion were to hire a landscape services company, then the payments from the Old Governor’s Mansion to the landscaping company would be direct economic impacts. The landscaping company may need to purchase gas for its equipment, mulch, plants, and other supplies to complete its work; these purchases represent indirect impacts. Employees of the Old Governor’s

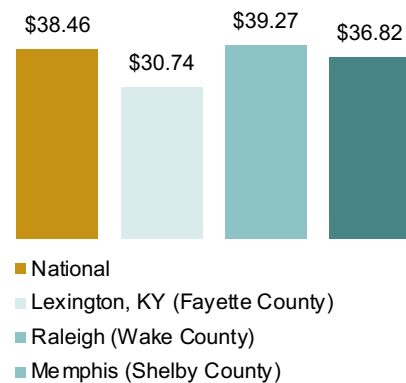
Mansion and the landscaping company spend their income throughout the economy. These household purchases are examples of induced impacts.

The Old Governor’s Mansion’s spending supported about \$606,000 of economic activity in 2024, double the organization’s expenses for that year.<sup>2,3</sup> This represents the aggregate direct, indirect, and induced impacts associated with the Old Governor’s Mansion’s spending.

**The Old Governor's Mansion's \$304,000 in organizational spending in 2024 fueled \$606,000 in total economic activity**



**Spend per visitor, national average and Baton Rouge's peer communities**



The second key way in which the Old Governor’s Mansion supports economic activity is through the spending done by visitors to the venue.

Visitors to an event or museum often spend money before or after their visit. This spending is catalyzed by the visit itself – that is, these dollars would not have been spent in the local economy had the visit not occurred. This spending is done at restaurants, bars, retailers, hotels, and other establishments.

National estimates suggest the average visitor to the Old Governor’s Mansion spends \$38.46 in the local economy before or after their visit.<sup>4</sup> While local estimates for Baton Rouge are unavailable, visitor spending estimates in peer communities are similar to the national average. For example, visitors to events in Raleigh spend \$39.27 on average per visit; in Memphis, they spend \$36.82 per visit. This provides strong evidence that the national average metric is a reliable estimate for visitor spending behaviors in Baton Rouge.

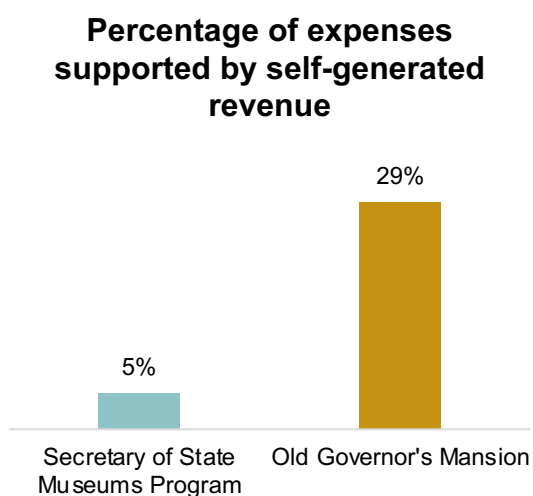
**Every \$1 in state funding supports \$3.55 in total economic activity across Louisiana**

This means the Old Governor’s Mansion’s nearly 9,000 visitors in 2024<sup>5</sup> spent about \$346,000 at the region’s restaurants, bars, hotels, and other establishments. This represents the direct economic activity supported by visitors – when indirect and induced impacts are included, visitors to the Old Governor’s Mansion supported about \$473,000 in total economic activity.

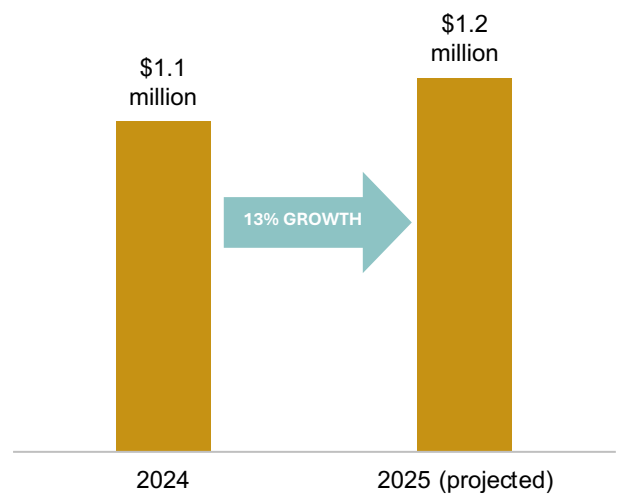
Based on this economic activity, the Old Governor’s Mansion supports about \$125,000 in annual tax revenue and almost 9 full-time jobs.<sup>6</sup> The Old Governor’s Mansion’s value add, which represents the organization’s contribution to the state’s GDP, is about \$524,000 per year. About \$340,000 in annual Louisiana household income is supported by the Old Governor’s Mansion.

## PROJECTIONS

Based on visitor totals through early June 2025, the Old Governor’s Mansion is projected to welcome at least 10,000 visitors during fiscal year 2025. This would represent an 11% increase over 2023 and 2024 visitor counts and would also signal the Old Governor’s Mansion is driving more economic activity.



### Old Governor's Mansion Supported Economic Activity



Because of the increased attendance and larger budget, the economic activity supported by the Old Governor’s Mansion is expected to increase 13% in 2025.

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

The Old Governor’s Mansion, like other state-run museums, relies on state general funding to operate. However, the Old Governor’s Mansion is more self-sufficient than other state museums. In 2024, 29% of the Old Governor’s Mansion’s expenses were supported by self-generated revenue which includes the fees paid to reserve the facility for meetings and after-hours events.<sup>7</sup> In contrast, the Secretary of State’s Museums Program supports 5% of its annual expenses with self-generated revenues.<sup>8</sup> This means the Old Governor’s Mansion is nearly 6 times as self-reliant as the Secretary of State’s Museums Program overall.

With nearly 9,000 visitors and \$304,000 in annual expenses, the Old Governor’s Mansion’s cost per visitor was \$33.82 in 2024. Not only was this a 45% improvement<sup>9</sup> over the prior year, but it also means the average visitor spends between \$4 and \$5 more throughout the local economy than it costs the state to serve them at the Old Governor’s Mansion. While the Old Governor’s Mansion’s cost-per-attendee is expected to rise slightly in 2025, the average visitor will still spend more throughout the local economy than it costs to serve them at the museum.<sup>10</sup>

With nearly \$1.1 million in annual economic activity linked to the Old Governor’s Mansion and about \$304,000 in expenses in 2024, every \$1 of state funding supports \$3.55 in total economic activity across Louisiana, a return-on-investment for the state of about \$2.55 per \$1 spent.

**Cost to reserve Downtown Baton Rouge venues, Old Governor's Mansion and venues with similar offerings**



## OLD GOVERNOR’S MANSION’S ROLE AS AN AFFORDABLE EVENT VENUE

The Old Governor’s Mansion is a more affordable option for receptions and other events than similar venues in Downtown Baton Rouge. Assuming the site is reserved for a maximum-capacity after-hours event, it would cost \$11.67 per attendee to rent the Old Governor’s Mansion. In comparison, other Downtown venues with similar offerings can cost as much as \$27.80 per head, making the Old Governor’s Mansion a more affordable option for weddings, receptions, and other events.<sup>12</sup>

### Downtown Baton Rouge has fewer museums and historical sites than downtowns in peer cities

	Number of Museums & Historical Sites	Downtown Area	2024 MSA Population <sup>11</sup>	Downtown Museums & Historical Sites per 100k residents
Little Rock	33	2.62 sq. miles	769,258	4.3
Columbia, SC	27	2.95 sq. miles	870,193	3.1
<b>Baton Rouge</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>2.55 sq. miles</b>	<b>882,652</b>	<b>2.5</b>

## THE OLD GOVERNOR’S MANSION’S ROLE IN BOOSTING BATON ROUGE’S QUALITY OF LIFE AND TOURISM OFFERINGS

The Old Governor’s Mansion also plays an important role in Downtown Baton Rouge’s cultural scene. When compared to downtown areas in peer cities, Downtown Baton Rouge has fewer museums and other historical sites. Downtown Baton Rouge only offers 2.5 museums and historical sites per 100,000 metro residents, lower than the concentration of museums and historical sites per capita in Downtown Little Rock and Downtown Columbia.<sup>13,14</sup>

The Old Governor’s Mansion also plays an important role in Downtown’s offerings for tourists. About 10% of visitors to Louisiana say they participate in “touring/ sightseeing” activities on their trip, including 5% of visitors who visit a historic site and 4% who visit a museum.<sup>16</sup> With nine million visitors to Baton Rouge in 2024 alone,<sup>17</sup> there are hundreds of thousands of potential Old Governor’s Mansion visitors in the Capital Region each year.

### Family is the most common reason people give for never leaving their community, or for coming back

*% saying each is a main reason why they still live in or near the community where they grew up or why they moved back [OPEN-END]*

	Have always lived in/near community	Moved away but came back
To be near family	35	42
Quality of life	17	22
Jobs/work/business	13	10
Comfortable/familiar/inertia	12	11
Can't afford to move	7	–
To be near friends	5	5
Like it there	4	1

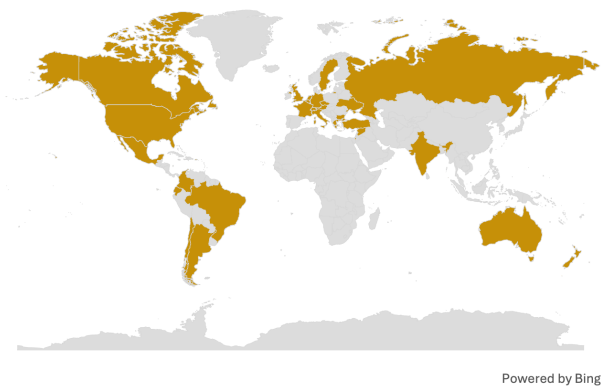
Note: Respondents were allowed to mention up to three main reasons for each question. Quality of life category includes a variety of related individual responses.

Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted Feb. 26-March 11, 2018. “What Unites and Divides Urban, Suburban and Rural Communities”

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It’s well-understood that quality of life is an important factor in determining where people choose to live. A 2018 Pew Research analysis, for example, found quality of life to be the second most prominent reason people give for never leaving their community or for coming back.<sup>15</sup> Considering both the importance of museums and historical sites in developing a strong regional quality of life and Baton Rouge’s general lack thereof, the Old Governor’s Mansion plays a key role in strengthening Baton Rouge’s quality of life.

### The Old Governor’s Mansion welcomed tourists from at least 30 countries between August ‘24 and May ‘25



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The Old Governor’s Mansion is a popular tourist attraction for both out-of-state and international visitors. Between August 2024 and May 2025, the Old Governor’s Mansion welcomed visitors from all 50 states and at least 30 countries. This is based on an analysis of the Old Governor’s Mansion’s daily sign-in sheets; because attendees of large events like weddings do not sign-in individually, it’s likely the number of countries represented is higher.

As of early June 2025, the Old Governor’s Mansion was the fourth-rated attraction in Downtown Baton Rouge and in the top 6% among all attractions parish-wide,<sup>18</sup> meaning it plays an important role in both providing activities for tourists and shaping visitors’ perceptions of Downtown and Greater Baton Rouge.

# About

## RIVERBEND RESEARCH

Riverbend Research is a full-service market, economic, and demographic research firm specializing in economic development research and strategy, impact assessments, market feasibility studies, and program evaluation. Riverbend engages in fee-for-service work for organizations across the Gulf South with projects spanning the private, public, and nonprofit sectors. An arm of the Baton Rouge Area Chamber, Riverbend Research has access to the industry’s leading economic development research tools. The team has presented its findings to government entities, elected officials, business leaders, and both current and prospective donors for nonprofit organizations.

# References

- 1 Louisiana Old Governor's Mansion website, <https://www.laogm.org/complete-history>
- 2 Annual expenses provided by the Louisiana Old Governor's Mansion
- 3 IMPLAN software was used for impact modeling. IMPLAN is an input-output economic model that looks at backward linkages in an economy. By measuring the relationship between different industries, IMPLAN is able to estimate the degree to which spending remains within an economy before "leaking out"
- 4 Americans for the Arts / Arts & Economic Prosperity 6 report
- 5 Visitor counts provided by the Old Governor's Mansion; 8,997 visitors in 2023, 8,984 visitors in 2024
- 6 Tax revenues, employment, labor income, and value added figures also come from IMPLAN
- 7 Annual revenues provided by the Louisiana Old Governor's Mansion; 2024 revenue was \$87,320
- 8 Museum and Other Operations Program Budget Summary, located in the Department of State's 2024 – 2025 Executive Budget Supporting Document, available at <https://www.doa.la.gov/media/hcclaspf/departmentofstate.pdf>
- 9 According to the Executive Budget Supporting Document, the Old Governor's Mansion's cost per visitor in the prior year was \$61.98
- 10 Assuming 10,000 visitors in FY 2025, the Old Governor's Mansion's cost-per-attendee would be \$35.75, a slight increase over the prior year
- 11 MSA Populations come from the US Census Bureau's Population Estimates Program
- 12 Price per attendee was determined by dividing the maximum capacity for five venues in Downtown Baton Rouge by the cost to rent the space. Only spaces used for banquets or receptions with a capacity of at least 75 guests were included. Prices reflects the cost to reserve the venue and do not include food or beverage minimums. Slight variations in offerings between venues are present, such as the inclusion of tables/chairs in the rental fee or the amount of time provided for event set up/tear down.
- 13 Downtown Baton Rouge defined by the Downtown Development District's boundaries. Boundaries for Downtown Little Rock and Downtown Columbia defined respectively by the Downtown Little Rock Partnership's Master Plan and the City of Columbia Planning & Development Department's Downtown Columbia Strategic Plan
- 14 The number of museums and historic sites were analyzed with ESRI Business Analyst's SafeGraph dataset. SafeGraph's points of interest (POI) data is extracted from a comprehensive list of almost 15 million U.S. points of interest.
- 15 Pew Research, available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/social-trends/2018/05/22/americans-satisfaction-with-and-attachment-to-their-communities/>
- 16 From Explore Louisiana, the official travel authority for the state of Louisiana. Explore Louisiana's 2023 Louisiana Visitor Profile available at <https://www.explorelouisiana.com/sites/default/files/2024-07/2023%20Louisiana%20Visitor%20Profile%20Report.pdf>
- 17 Visit Baton Rouge 2024 Impact Report, available at <https://www.visitbatonrouge.com/about-us/why-tourism-matters/>
- 18 Riverbend Research analysis of TripAdvisor data