

Letter to the Editor of Hood County News
April 28, 2018

What is Visit Granbury?

Current Visitors Fund Future Visitors

We want to ensure the community understands why Visit Granbury Inc. was created, and how we are funded.

Visit Granbury Inc. is the official destination marketing organization for Granbury. We encourage visitors, groups, and special events to enjoy Granbury and our surrounding areas, and stay in accommodations within Granbury.

The City of Granbury collects a Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT) from every visitor staying in hotels, B&Bs, or cabins inside Granbury city limits. This tax is collected from visitors at the lodging source and remitted to the City of Granbury – similar to how the state sales tax is collected at the purchasing source and remitted to the State of Texas.

This is a visitor tax. Not a resident tax.

The state of Texas legislates exactly how hotel occupancy taxes can be used.

Visit Granbury receives 90% of the Hotel Occupancy Tax (HOT). The City of Granbury receives 10% of the tax.

The 90% HOT transferred to Visit Granbury is used to promote Granbury as a premier visitor destination, and the funds must be spent outside of Granbury city limits as dictated by State law.

The remaining 10% of the Hotel Occupancy Tax is collected by the city and is used by the City of Granbury in whatever capacity they see fit within the legislated guidelines.

A small portion of Visit Granbury Inc.'s funding is from the City of Granbury's General Fund, earmarked specifically to promote local events and sponsorships. By State law, local events and sponsorships cannot be funded by HOT dollars. However, the 10% HOT tax the city receives more than makes up for this general fund contribution to Visit Granbury Inc. With general fund moneys, Visit Granbury Inc. makes a significant donation to the Granbury Chamber of Commerce, for the Old-Fashioned Fourth of July Celebration fireworks. In June, they will invest funds in the multi-day Lone Star Street

Rod Association event. Last year, they used funds to promote visitation during the square sidewalk renovation project.

Tourism is essential to the community of Granbury. We all enjoy the vibrant square, quality citywide attractions, and excellent restaurants located throughout the community. Those businesses cannot be sustained without tourists.

Visit Granbury Inc. has been incredibly successful since its inception in the fall of 2015. At that time, the city council voted to move the tourism department from within the city to form this independent entity.

It was originally understood the organization would need up to three years to be self-supported by the Hotel Occupancy Tax. We were self-supported by year one. The city council initially considered the City of Granbury would need to make a significant investment from the General Fund on the startup. That was never the case. Alternatively, at the end of the first fiscal year, Visit Granbury Inc. reduced their budget request.

Hotel Occupancy Taxes (HOT) have increased each year, because more visitors are staying overnight in Granbury. Downtown square sales taxes have increased each year – even during the challenging time of the sidewalk renovation project.

The public relations program alone has generated more than \$2 million in advertising value equivalent since Visit Granbury Inc. was formed. This specifically refers to news coverage that was earned and not paid for. This has generated news coverage in publications such as DMagazine, Southern Living, Parade Magazine, and Texas Highways, not to mention repeated broadcast coverage on WFAA Good Morning Texas and FOX Good Day. In fact, Granbury was highlighted on both of those broadcast programs this week.

Visit Granbury operates a visitor's center 7 days a week where we are a one-stop shop for visitors interested in what to do, where to stay, and where to eat. We will soon relocate from City Hall to a new property at Granbury City Plaza. This is located at the entrance corridor to the downtown Square.

We practice and encourage future collaboration with our community. I personally welcome any questions you may have.

Hayes Stripling
Board Chair
Visit Granbury Inc.