



Abbeville Opera House Impact Study

This Study has been developed to gauge the current Economic Impact of the relatively new programming at the Opera House on the City of Abbeville's Economy. Prepared by the Abbeville City's Community Development Department, this report will use several metrics to measure the Economic impact of the Abbeville Opera House.

About the Abbeville Opera House

The Abbeville Opera House has been a staple of the Abbeville Community since its construction in 1908. Originally, the Opera House played host to travelling theatre companies which performed vaudeville style acts and Broadway productions. With the advent of film, the demand for live performances began to fade and the Opera House served as a movie theatre until it was shut down in the late 1950's. Around that same time, a group of theatre supporters led by George Settles would begin the revival and restoration of the theatre as a venue for live performances. From the early 1960's to late 1970's a host of different groups would perform at the Opera House until a professional touring theatre company led by Michael Genevie established residence in 1979. The legacy of bright and budding performers and performances continues. To this day, the Opera House remains a cultural landmark for Abbeville County with a tremendous economic impact on the local community.

City Opera House Programming

After COVID-19's disturbance to the Opera House halted shows between March 2020 and January 2021, the City decided to begin its 2021 season with a fresh diversified line up that would attract all ages, genders, races, and artistic preferences. Performances included music of difference genres, the gamut of comedians, local recitals, and ultimately the return of live community theater. All told the theater held twenty-two professional performances presented by the City, thirteen local performances presented by various community organizations, and one live play resulting in seven performances presented by the newly formed Abbeville Community Performing Arts Board (ACPA).

It is pertinent to note that due to COVID, performances from January through May were reduced from full capacity to accommodate State, Federal, and Local laws and to provide the safest possible venue until infection numbers began to wane. The theater also did not hold shows the whole month of July, as that time was used to complete installation of new carpet and seating within the theater.

Methodologies

"Estimated Number of Attendees" (7,000) is calculated by taking the number attendees from the City's ticket sales and adding approximate head counts from non-ticketed community events. The average of 2.5 people per group is based off the year's ticket sales per order, which also happens to be the figure used for other tourism events and attractions in our area when calculating Economic Impact. Expenditure numbers for food and beverage were given the low-end estimate of \$16 per person for food/beverage to account for both fast food and dine in establishments. The ticketing price is set at \$23, which is the average ticket price across all ticketed shows in 2021. This is the only expenditure that was increased from prior reports because it stems from a defensible average expenditure from all ticketed events rather than the estimated average used across other local tourism events and attractions. The miscellaneous amount accounts for purchases that don't necessarily fall under the two aforementioned categories but is spent locally and is estimated at \$4 per person. These numbers are then used to calculate estimated visitor spending impact which is the amount of money believed to be infused into the economy due to the Opera House.

Under Organizational Impact, revenues and expenditures that remained local were accounted for. This study defines local as a twenty-five-mile radius from 100 Court Square, which is the epicenter for The Abbeville Opera House.¹ It is pertinent to note that the “Historic Preservation and Upgrades” line is an expenditure that will not impact this report as heavily in future years due to the nature of the updates/upgrades which included: sound and lighting installment, heating and cooling updates, window replacement, and several structural restorations. The expense line is offset by an accompanying “Grants” line under revenue which reflects the \$225,000 received for the preservation and upgrade endeavors.

Total Economic Impact is then calculated by combining visitor spending, along with Opera House spending and collections. This total number is an estimated reflection of every dollar that was put into the local economy as a direct result of the Abbeville Opera House’s 2021 Season.

2021 Calendar Year Economic Impact

Visitor Spending Impact

Estimated Number of Attendees in 2021: **7,000**

Average People per Group: **2.5**

Number of Groups: *(6,600/2.5)* **2,800**

Average Group Expenditure: **\$107** *(This includes \$40.00 for food/beverage, \$57 for tickets and \$10.00 for miscellaneous)*

Estimated Spending Impact: *(2,800 x \$107)*

\$299,600²

¹ Zip codes included in this 25-mile radius are: 29620, 29639, 29628, 29659, 29695, 29655, 29638, 29653, 29840, 29819, 29647, 29648, 29649, 29646, 29848, 29666, 29654, 29692, 29624, 29899, 29627, 29684, 30635, 29384, 29835, 29621

² Yearly Hospitality Sales Tax Generated by Money spent at local restaurants (Estimated) (\$16x6,600x.02): \$2,112

Organizational Impact

Opera House Expenses

Personnel	\$70,500
Contract Entertainment	\$21,000
Lighting, Sound, Security, Utilities	\$30,000
Historic Preservation and Upgrades	\$324,000
Hospitality, Hotels, Etc.	\$4,800
Concessions	\$5,700
Total Expenses ³	\$456,000

Opera House Revenue

Rentals	\$7,250
Sponsors and Historic Preservation Funds	\$22,000
Concessions	\$13,000
Grants	\$225,000
Total	\$267,250

Total Economic Impact

Attendee Spending Projection	\$299,600
Opera House Expenditures (money invested into the local economy)	\$456,500
Opera House Revenue	\$267,250
Total Current Impact	\$1,023,350⁴

Conclusion

³ This does not reflect the entire Opera House Operating Budget, only funds reinvested locally.

⁴ As a more comparative reference with other years, the 2021 Total Economic Impact without the investments in upgrades and grants received for such endeavors, would have been closer to \$474,350. This is still the largest impact the venue has seen since it has been tracked.

The Abbeville Opera House has always been a staple in the community. It is shown here that the diversified line up, along with partnerships in the community have and will continue to bring locals and tourists alike to experience the arts in their varied forms. People, now more than ever since COVID started, are looking and longing for a place that makes them feel safe, at home, and allows them to escape reality if even just for a little while. With the intimate 300 seat venue and the welcoming small town that surrounds it, the Opera House allows people to feel just that.

Tourists are a large portion of the attendees the Opera House serves.⁵ While correlation is not causation, there is a direct affect in what the Opera House has cultivated this past year and the numbers seen in tax collections. In 2021, Hospitality Tax collections were at an all-time high, and Accommodations Taxes were the second highest recorded.

With hopes of no more COVID restrictions, it is estimated that there will be 20 professional, 10 local, and 28 Community Theater Performances in 2022 with a conservative projected attendance of 9,000. This means the Opera House has the potential to increase its economic impact by 25% (not factoring in historic preservation/upgrades and grants).

For the economic health of the area, it is critical that the Opera House be allowed to reach its full potential as an economic generator. As Greenwood and other surrounding areas continue to invest and differentiate themselves, it is essential that Abbeville invest in its own unique features; especially those which have the potential for continued major economic impact.



⁵ Over 80% of attendees at the Opera House during 2021 came from outside Abbeville. 57% of attendees are what we would consider a tourist, using the 25-mile radius mentioned in the “Methodologies” section of this study. More importantly, 37% of attendees who bought tickets were from outside the state. These numbers were calculated off shipping zip code information for tickets purchased; no comp tickets are included in these calculations.