



## The Economic Impact of WaterFire Providence

**Background:** The importance and impact of WaterFire in successfully transforming Providence into a destination city has been broadly recognized by the public, government officials, economists and the hospitality industry. Over twenty years of success, there have been three independent, professional evaluations of WaterFire's economic impact. The most recent is a 2012 study completed by the US Army Corps of Engineers using the IMPLAN modeling system.

**Attendance and Reputation:** WaterFire attracts about 1.1 million people to Providence each season. An intercept survey of 4,248 attendees in 2004 revealed that 57% of the audience was traveling to Providence from out of state to see the event, and of this group 79% said the reason for their trip was WaterFire. This is an astonishing draw for an arts event, and this percentage of out of state visitors has likely grown since 2004. WaterFire has 47,000 Facebook fans and its websites were visited by 1.62 million people in 2013 (535,738 unique visitors). WaterFire has received many awards and been included on many must see destination lists.

**Economic Impact from Visitor Spending:** The 2012 Army Corps of Engineers study established an annual impact of **\$114.3 million from visitor spending** and concluded it **creates 1,294 jobs**.

**Sales Tax Revenue:** Using the estimated visitor spending from the 2012 Army Corps study, the study supports an estimate that WaterFire generates **\$9.3 million in state and city sales taxes each year** - \$8.9 million to RI and \$415,000 to Providence. This does not include taxes from indirect or induced spending **and does not include local income tax** paid by WaterFire or the 1,294 jobs created by WaterFire visitors.

**Additional Economic Impact and Value Not Included in Study:** In addition to direct visitor spending of \$114.3 million annually, there are additional impacts of great value:

1. Attracting convention business to Providence, including those requesting a WaterFire.
2. Generating many positive print, electronic and social media stories featuring the city.
3. Rebranding the city as a safe, exciting, cultural and arts destination.
4. Inclusion on many Must See, Best Event lists ( #5 Best Event in the World After Dark).
5. Building city-wide community engagement improving safety, and inspiring hope.