

City of Rockport, Texas

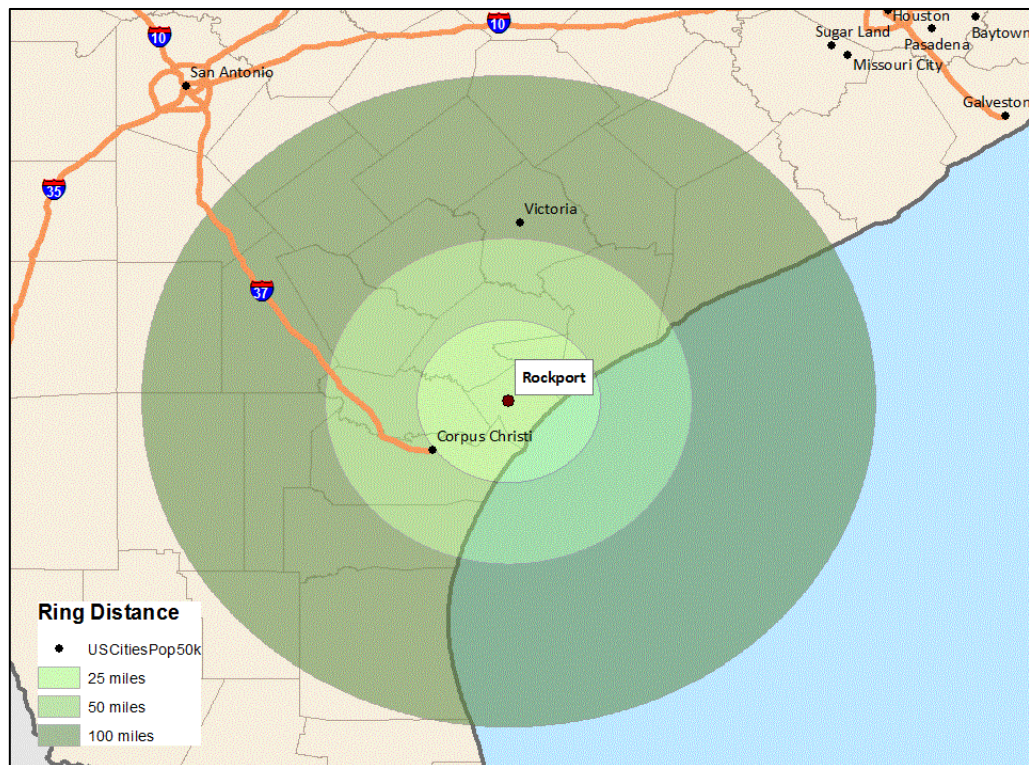
Located along the Texas Gulf Coast, Rockport is a sanctuary for people who enjoy the beach, fishing, nature, and the arts. Its close proximity to Austin, Houston, and San Antonio make Rockport a favorite destination for coastal tourism. The natural beauty of Rockport's wildlife and landscape has attracted artists interested in depicting these coastal scenes. Over the past few decades, the supportive climate has attracted a critical mass of artists necessary to sustain an art colony, high quality art center, and festivals.¹⁴ In 2009, Rockport was home to 9,846 residents.

Key Findings & Lessons Learned from Rockport

- By promoting a broad range of art and culture attractions, the Rockport-Fulton area offers a unique mix of tourism assets not found in other small towns. Instead of focusing its tourism marketing efforts exclusively on outdoor recreation, Rockport has become an attractive location for families with small children, active retirees, and winter Texans. The result is that Rockport's economy has more activity in the fall and winter months when outdoor recreation is less prevalent.
- Given the community's size, the economic importance of Rockport's cultural arts sector is substantial when compared to major metro regions in Texas. For example, other art festivals might attract more total attendees, but the relative impact of the Rockport Art Festival is much larger. In 2009, nonlocal Rockport Art Festival attendee spending on tickets, food, lodging, and shopping generated almost \$2.5 million in economic activity, more than \$0.6 million in earnings, and roughly 28 full-time jobs.
- Rockport has successfully leveraged its cultural arts impact by clustering facilities in close proximity to each other and the waterfront. Local cultural arts groups embrace outdoor recreation and the natural environment as a complimentary tourism magnet. Instead of trying to compete with outdoor tourism, the cultural arts sector focuses on enticing these visitors to participate in the local art scene.

¹⁴ John Villani. *The 100 Best Small Art Towns in America*. 3rd Edition. Santa Fe: John Muir Publications; 1998.

Figure 10: Rockport Region



Source: TXP, Inc.

Arts & Culture Tourism

Named a “Top Ten Coastal Art Colony” by *Coastal Living* magazine in 2009,¹⁵ Rockport and Aransas County have attracted attention from artists and tourists alike. Aransas County has been an art colony since the late 1800s. Currently, over 300 artists live in Aransas County. Al Barnes, Herb Booth, and Steve Russell are nationally recognized sporting and wildlife artists who reside in the area. One of the most recognized modern sculptors, Jesús Moroles, has his foundry and studio in Rockport. Building on this collection of talented artists and the natural environment, the community has established a vibrant cultural arts sector. Downtown Rockport has more than 15 art galleries featuring coastal and wildlife art, contemporary abstract artwork, and Texas Modernist art.

Aransas County is home to a number of cultural and educational amenities including the Aquarium at Rockport Harbor, Fulton Mansion, Rockport Center for the Arts, and Texas Maritime Museum. The Fulton Mansion, a State Historic Site, attracts over 20,000 visitors each year by offering a rare glimpse into the Victorian world of a prominent South Texas family. Many of these organizations receive local public sector support through grants from hotel occupancy tax revenue.

¹⁵ *Coastal Living*, Top Ten. <http://www.coastalliving.com/travel/top-10/top-10-artists-colonies-0040000000113/>

Based on the results of a 2010 visitor tracking survey, TXP estimates that roughly one-third of Rockport-Fulton leisure tourists participate in arts and culture activities.¹⁶ This is much higher than the statewide average in which only 10 percent of tourists participate in cultural activities such as visiting historic sites, festivals, museums, and art exhibitions. In 2009, the local arts and cultural tourism sector helped support \$24.8 million in economic activity, \$7.3 million in earnings, and about 341 jobs. In addition, cultural arts tourism created \$480,000 in local and \$1.4 million in state tax revenue.

Table 10: Annual Economic Impact of Aransas County Arts & Culture Related Tourism

Year	Spending	Earnings	Employment	Local Tax Revenue	State Tax Revenue
2005	\$19,370,690	\$5,405,172	294	\$348,569	\$1,066,086
2006	\$21,646,552	\$5,974,138	304	\$403,526	\$1,183,190
2007	\$23,689,655	\$6,491,379	318	\$449,302	\$1,286,302
2008	\$25,137,931	\$6,750,000	326	\$479,871	\$1,346,534
2009	\$24,775,862	\$7,267,241	341	\$479,897	\$1,370,741

Source: TXP, Inc., Office of the Governor, Economic Development and Tourism

Rockport Center for the Arts

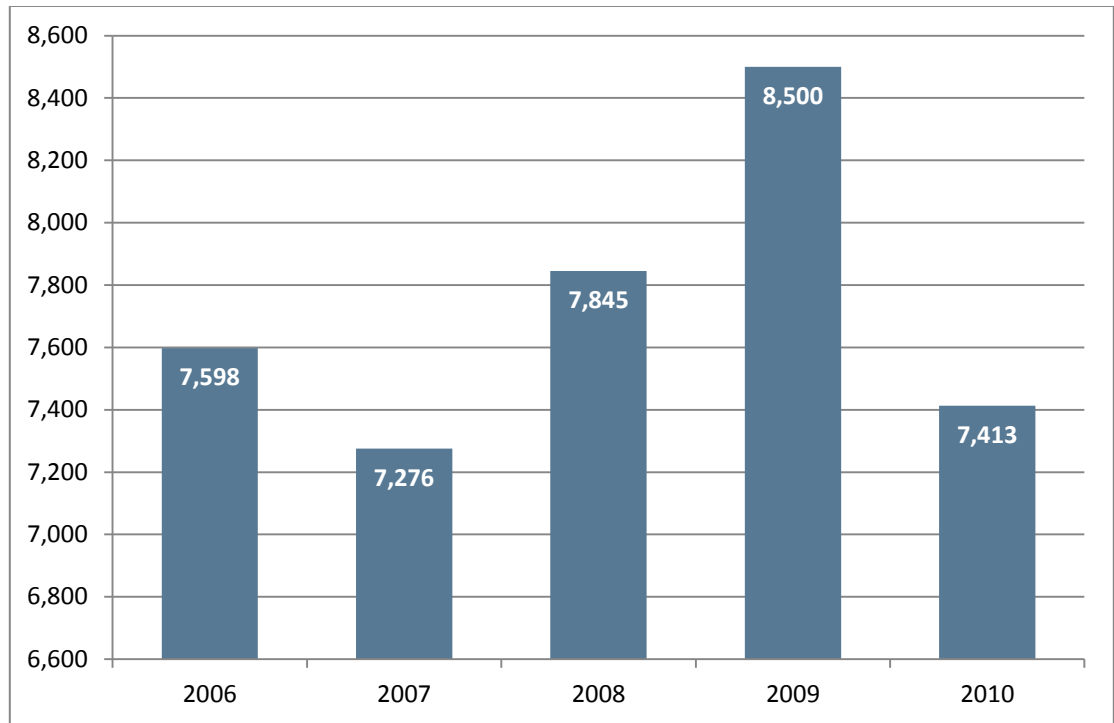
The arts scene in Rockport revolves around the Rockport Center for the Arts. Established more than forty years ago, it has expanded from a local gathering place for artists to a multidimensional space open to the community. Located in the historic Victorian-style home of Bruhl O’Connor on the waterfront, the Rockport Center for the Arts contains three galleries, workshop space, a gift shop, and a Sculpture Garden on the Aransas Bay. It offers weekly art classes for adults and children, gallery talks with artists at the beginning of each rotating exhibition, monthly *plein air* painting workshops, musical performance series, and a film festival each November. Over the past five years, the Rockport Center for the Arts has attracted over 25,000 visitors per year.

Rockport Arts Festival

Held every 4th of July holiday weekend for more than forty years, the Annual Rockport Art Festival features more than one hundred artists and master craftsmen in a two-day, outdoor juried art show. The Rockport Art Festival in 2009 attracted more than 7,400 attendees from across the state. Over 60 percent of the Festival attendees live outside of the Rockport-Fulton area. The visitor tracking data from the Festival reinforces the notion that Aransas County is able to attract a significant number of visitors who enjoy the arts as much as the beach and fishing.

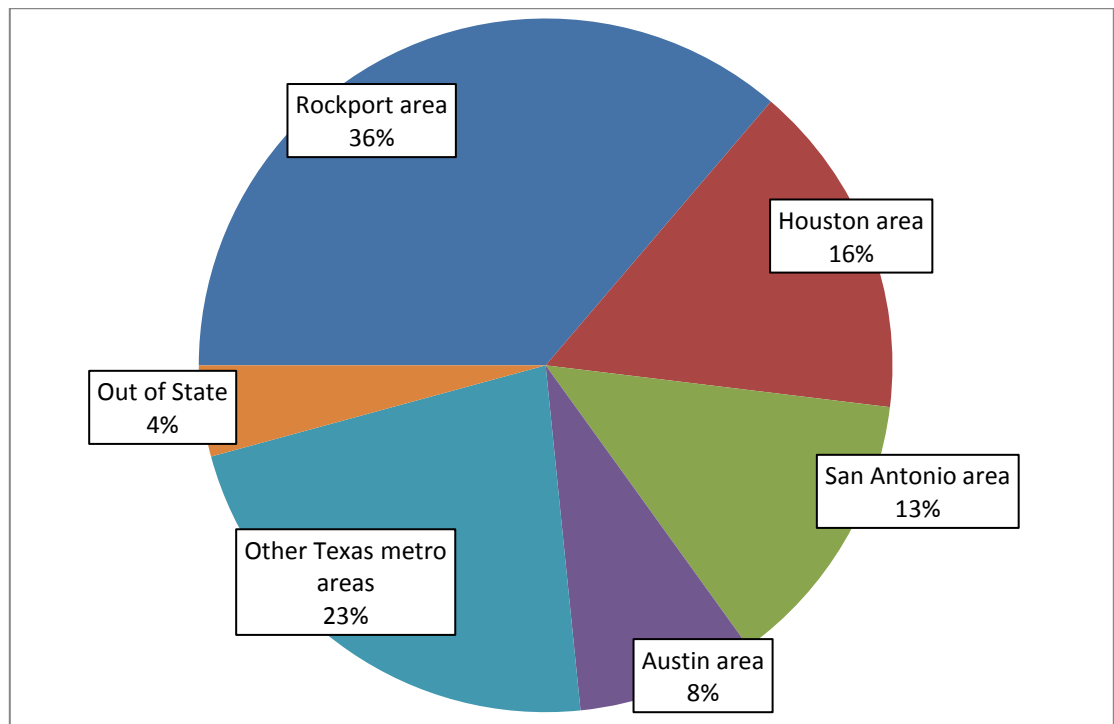
¹⁶ Prost Marketing Inc, Visitor Intercept and Tracking Study for Rockport/Fulton Area Chamber of Commerce, 2010.

Figure 11: Rockport Art Festival Annual Attendance



Source: Rockport Center for the Arts

Figure 12: Rockport Art Festival Annual Attendance



Source: Rockport Center for the Arts

In 2009, nonlocal Rockport Art Festival attendee spending on tickets, food, lodging, and shopping generated almost \$2.5 million in economic activity, more than \$0.6 million in earnings, and roughly 28 full-time jobs.

Table 11: Total Economic Impact of the Rockport Art Festival Nonlocal Attendee Spending

	Output	Value Add	Earnings	Employment
Agriculture & Forestry	\$3,306	\$1,150	\$617	0
Mining	\$17,819	\$8,995	\$3,480	0
Utilities	\$48,346	\$28,919	\$9,220	0
Construction	\$14,504	\$7,248	\$5,314	0
Manufacturing	\$86,711	\$21,770	\$13,729	0
Wholesale Trade	\$44,902	\$30,346	\$14,233	0
Retail Trade	\$155,190	\$101,612	\$53,897	2
Transportation & Warehousing	\$230,748	\$84,249	\$75,913	3
Information	\$45,438	\$23,804	\$11,644	0
Finance & Insurance	\$56,606	\$34,535	\$15,264	0
Real Estate, Rental, & Leasing	\$139,086	\$103,264	\$7,687	0
Professional, Scientific, & Technical Services	\$51,457	\$34,416	\$24,297	0
Management of Companies & Enterprises	\$4,039	\$2,491	\$1,672	0
Administrative & Waste Management Services	\$42,127	\$27,501	\$16,557	1
Educational Services	\$8,127	\$4,597	\$3,345	0
Health Care & Social Assistance	\$87,096	\$53,376	\$41,019	1
Arts, Entertainment, & Recreation	\$147,159	\$88,797	\$58,169	3
Accommodation	\$331,116	\$213,130	\$98,419	4
Food Services & Drinking Places	\$563,930	\$293,418	\$174,850	12
Other Services	\$48,740	\$24,855	\$14,973	1
Total	\$2,126,449	\$1,188,472	\$644,298	28

Source: TXP, Inc.

Summary

Coastal landscapes and wildlife are the foundation of Rockport’s arts community. The picturesque settings and scenery have attracted hundreds of artists to live in Aransas County. To support these artists and residents interested in the fine arts, the Rockport community (public and private sector) generously support numerous museums, historical sites, and galleries. Not only do these facilities attract local residents, cultural arts tourism has flourished over the past few decades. Now, the cultural arts sector is a key economic development driver and tax revenue generator for the Rockport-Fulton area.