

Celebrating Community and Boosting Business: How the Fourth Avenue Street Fair Impacts Hospitality and Tourism

» by Chelsea Szymanski • August 2025

“Beyond its six days each year, the Street Fair sparks repeat tourism, business visibility, and national attention, further raising Tucson’s cultural and economic profile.”



Twice a year, something exciting happens in our city—the Fourth Avenue Street Fair. It turns our regular streets into a vibrant hub filled with music, food, art, and people. This premiere community celebration is more than just a fun weekend; it’s a significant contribution to our local economy, especially in tourism and hospitality.

One of the most visible impacts of the Street Fair is the influx of visitors it attracts. As the attendance grows each year, not only are we seeing locals from nearby neighborhoods, but we are welcoming visitors from neighboring cities and other states. The fair’s reputation as a family-friendly, cultural celebration of the Southwest has positioned it as a top 100 event both nationally and internationally.

This spike in visitation drives occupancy rates at local hotels, Airbnb/VRBOs, campgrounds, and RV parks. 95% of participating Street Fair vendors utilize these lodging options. This hospitality boom not only boosts revenue for lodging providers but also generates valuable tax income for the city.

Food and beverage establishments obtain substantial benefits during the fair. With thousands of hungry visitors roaming Fourth Avenue, nearby cafes, restaurants, and bars experience a dramatic increase in foot traffic. Participating food vendors of the Street Fair also gain significant exposure and are provided with a chance to showcase their eclectic mix of good things to eat.

The Fourth Avenue Street Fair is more than just food and fun; it’s a cultural celebration that showcases the artistic talents and creative spirit of our community. Local artisans, performers, musicians, nonprofit organizations, and Fourth Avenue merchants all take part, offering visitors a rich, immersive experience. The event features live entertainment, hand-made art, buskers, beer and more, reflecting the diversity and energy of our city.

Many of the small businesses and local shops that line Fourth Avenue will often extend their hours and offer promotions to capitalize on the increased foot traffic. While some jump on the opportunity to pop up a tent and partake with the other participating vendors, the fair provides all entrepreneurs with a chance to reach new and old customers while showcasing their unique products.

The street fair’s cultural vibrancy is a strong attraction for tourists seeking authentic, local experiences. Travelers increasingly value events that allow them to connect with a city’s people and traditions, and the Fourth Avenue Street Fair delivers just that. By highlighting our city’s creative community, the fair helps shape our identity as a destination for arts, food, and culture.

The Fourth Avenue Street Fair encourages collaboration between local organizations, business owners, and the city. Planning and executing the fair requires coordination across various divisions—from the city manager’s office and police/fire



departments to the liquor board and numerous other contractors—fostering a spirit of community and shared investment in the city’s success.

Naturally, such a large-scale event also comes with logistical challenges. Managing traffic, ensuring safety, and minimizing disruptions for residents require thoughtful planning. However, the economic and cultural benefits of the fair far outweigh these short-term inconveniences.

The Fourth Avenue Street Fair is more than just a cultural tradition—it is a major economic powerhouse, generating an IMPLAN-based economic impact estimated at \$55 million annually for Tucson. The fair fuels local businesses, job creation, and tourism, driving millions in spending across multiple sectors:

Revenue, Jobs & Tax Generation: The fair supports hundreds of jobs and delivers millions in tax revenue to Tucson, Pima County, and the State of Arizona.

Cultural & Tourism Impact: Beyond dollars, the fair cements Tucson’s identity as an arts and small business hub, attracting hundreds of thousands of attendees annually, including a substantial portion from outside the region.

Spending Ripple Effects:

- **Attendee Parking Expenditures:** At \$15 per car, parking alone injects up to \$2 million into the local economy.

- **Off-Site Visitor Spending:** Attendees shop, dine, and stay in Tucson, generating millions in lodging, dining, and entertainment revenue beyond the fair itself.
- **Vendor Sales Impact:** With vendors generating anywhere from \$5,000 to \$60,000 in sales, the fair serves as a major commerce hub for artists and food vendors.
- **Fourth Avenue Merchant Boost:** Many brick-and-mortar businesses see 10–20% of their annual revenue during the fair weekends.
- **Economic Leakage & Informal Market Activity:** Unauthorized vendors in “side lots” divert an estimated \$200,000 from FAMA—funds that instead benefit adjacent merchants and property owners, creating untracked economic passthroughs.

The economic impact of the Fourth Avenue Street Fair goes beyond just the six days it is held each year. Many visitors find themselves returning to explore even more of what this incredible city has to offer. This delayed impact means continued revenue for local businesses and sustained interest in a city that has rich history, stunning desert landscapes, and vibrant art scenes.

Additionally, the event generates significant media attention and social media buzz, raising the city’s profile and encouraging tourism year-round.

The city of Tucson is a destination that leaves a lasting impression. The Fourth Avenue Street Fair is more than just a bi-annual celebration—it’s a powerful engine for hospitality, tourism, and local pride. It strengthens our economy, promotes our culture, and invites the world to experience the best of what our city has to offer.

As we look ahead to future editions, the fair stands as a shining example of how community events can have a lasting, positive impact on urban life.

by Chelsea Szymanski

My name is Chelsea Szymanski, and I proudly serve as the Director of Events for the Fourth Avenue Merchants Association. With eight years of experience in the event industry, I’ve found true fulfillment in creating memorable experiences that bring people together and strengthen our community.

I hold a bachelor’s degree in Communications from Boise State University, where I developed a passion for blending creativity with purpose. That passion led me to a career where I can both innovate and give back—designing events that make a meaningful impact on the people and places I care about most.

I’m driven by the excitement of learning, the joy of collaboration, and the reward of seeing a vision come to life. I look forward to welcoming you to the Avenue and sharing in the energy that makes our events so special. I can be reached at events@fourthavenue.org.

