

The Houston Zoo Contributions to the Houston-Woodlands-Sugarland Metropolitan Area Economy

2025

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April 15, 2026

Summary

The Houston Zoo contributed \$288,370,048 to output, \$95,921,793 to earnings, and 2277 jobs to the local Houston-Woodlands-Sugarland Metropolitan Area economy in 2025. Zoo impacts on the Metropolitan Area economy resulted from Zoo non-capital spending on operations, from spending on Zoo capital and construction projects, and from the local spending of Zoo visitors from outside the metropolitan area.

Looking at the years 2013 to 2025, Zoo capital spending has made significant contributions to the local economy. Zoo capital spending in the years 2013 to 2025 contributed \$760,623,247 to local output, contributed \$260,583,616 to local earnings, and created 4667 jobs between 2013 and 2025. These significant investments in new exhibits and facilities should positively impact future attendance and enhance the quality of the Zoo experience.

Two appendices to the report explain the methodology and calculations in more detail.

Background: The Role of Multipliers

The Zoo contributes to the local economy in three ways: through its expenditures to support its normal operations, through its capital project expenditures, and through the spending of visitors from outside the metropolitan area on other local goods and services while visiting the Houston-Woodlands-Sugarland Metropolitan Area.

Part of the Zoo's impact is direct Zoo purchases from local suppliers and wages paid to zoo employees to support the Zoo's normal operations. But there are also indirect impacts as Zoo expenditures trickle through the local economy. Zoo suppliers spend more on labor and other inputs purchased from their suppliers as a result of their sales to the Zoo. Thus, a complete measure of the Zoo's contribution to the local economy requires following a chain of transactions stimulated by the initial Zoo expenditures as they work their way through the local economy.

The U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, has developed a rigorous method to measure the dollar value of this chain of transactions based on the value of the Zoo's initial expenditures. The dollar value of the initial zoo purchases is multiplied by a factor that inflates the initial expenditure to account for the resulting chain of transactions. This factor is called a 'multiplier'. Multipliers are derived for various industries and for specific geographic areas. This study uses the Census Bureau defined Houston-Woodlands-Sugarland Metropolitan Statistical Area which includes nine counties that are integrated into the regional economy and are clustered around the City of Houston. Census Bureau Metropolitan Statistical Areas are determined by an analysis of commuting and transportation patterns to determine the integration or 'connectedness' of geographic areas. Multipliers also must be applied to capital expenditures. Capital projects require special treatment. Completion of a construction project may take many years, and once completed, the project's contribution to the local economy diminishes. Construction multipliers are used to measure the value of the chain of transactions stimulated by the Zoo capital expenditures during the time of the project. Since Zoo capital projects may span multiple years, the impact of capital expenditures is calculated for individual years between 2013 and 2025. The total impact over this period is large.

Finally, the Zoo impacts the local economy through the purchases of food, lodging and other goods that are required to support a visit to the Metropolitan Area. Visitors from outside the metropolitan area often require local hospitality services, which when purchased by outside visitors, initiate another chain of local expenditures. Since the Zoo attracts nearly two million general admissions visitors a year, and since 23.50% of these visitors are from outside the Metropolitan Area, the economic impact of these visitors is large.

It is also notable that the Houston Zoo follows formal policies that support purchases from local suppliers. This local sourcing supported the Zoo's successful bid for Green Restaurant certification from the Green Restaurant Association.

Zoo Contributions to the Metropolitan Area Economy for 2025

Table 1. summarizes the Zoo's various contributions to the metropolitan economy for 2025. Output is the dollar value of output stimulated by Zoo expenditures. Employment and earnings contributions are alternative measures of impact that measure job creation and payments to workers. Table 2. summarizes the Houston Zoo 2013-2025 contributions to the Metropolitan Area economy through construction projects.

**Table 1. Total 2025 Zoo Contributions
to the Metropolitan Economy**

	Output	Earnings	Employment
Non-Capital Operations	\$ 120,903,001	\$ 45,502,558	1275
Capital	\$ 61,496,399	\$ 19,914,352	338
	Output	Earnings	Employment
Non-Metropolitan Visitors	\$ 105,970,648	\$ 30,504,883	664
Total 2025 Contributions	\$ 288,370,048	\$ 95,921,793	2277

**Table 2. Total 2013-2025 Capital Spending
Contributions to the Metropolitan Economy**

	Output	Earnings	Employment
2013-2025 Capital Spending Contributions	\$ 760,623,247	\$ 260,583,616	4667

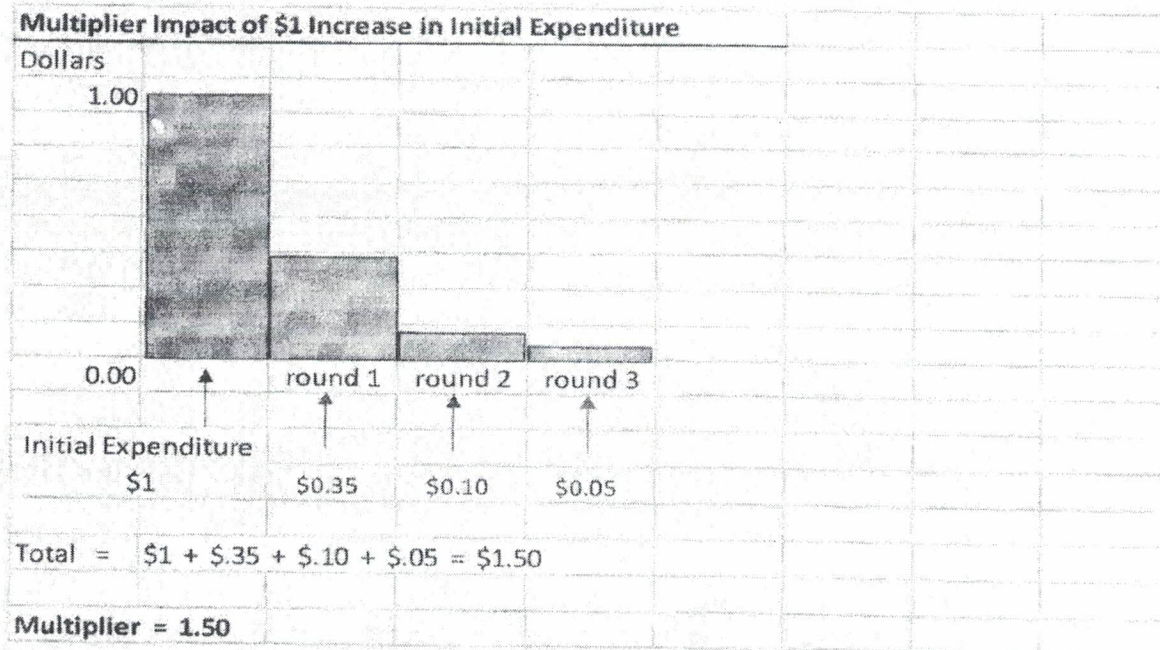
Appendices

- A. Discussion of multipliers
- B. Calculations and Detailed Tables

Appendix A: How Local Multipliers Work

The Houston Zoo contributes to the Metropolitan Area Economy through its direct expenditures on non-capital operational expenses and capital projects. The Zoo also impacts the local economy by attracting visitors from outside the local area that pay for accommodations, food, and other goods. These are first round expenditures that then stimulate further rounds of expenditure from Zoo suppliers and local business catering to visitors. The total contribution of the Zoo to the local economy is the complete chain of transactions that starts with the initial Zoo or visitor expenditures.

The illustration below is taken from the Bureau of Economic Analysis, Regional Input-Output manual. The Bureau, an agency in the Department of Commerce, periodically analyzes the interrelationships between industries to measure how expenditures by one industry can stimulate further expenditures by the first industry's suppliers. The total impact of an initial expenditure by a firm in one industry plus the subsequent expenditures by suppliers is determined by a multiplier that inflates the original expenditure to account for the subsequent expenditures of suppliers to that first firm.



Initial expenditure is the height of left bar (\$1.00). Expenditures by suppliers in response to this initial expenditure are represented by the round 1 (\$0.35), round 2 (\$0.10), and round 3 (\$0.05) bars on the right. The total response is the sum of the initial expenditure and the subsequent rounds that reflect local supplier's response to the initial expenditure. The bars decline as we go from left to right reflects each industry's specific production process and also derive from 'leakages' from the local economy. 'Leakages' occur when local suppliers purchase from suppliers outside the local economy.

The multiplier summarizes the total impact on the local economy using the initial expenditure as a base. In this sense the multiplier inflates the initial expenditure to account for the further expenditures of suppliers. This reflects the complete 'chain of transactions' following the initial spending.

There are multipliers for output, earnings, employment, and value-added that reflect a similar process of inflating or multiplying an initial expenditure to determine the total 'chain of transactions' effect. Multipliers also differ by detailed industry.

The multipliers applied here are the most recent available from the Bureau of Economic Analysis and were calculated with the most recent 2012-2022 data. (See: RIMSII: An Essential Tool for Regional Developers and Planners, Bureau of Economic Analysis, U.S. Department of Commerce.)

Appendix B: Detailed Tables, Calculations, and Notes

Table Bl. Zoo Annual Non-Capital and Capital Expenditures Contribution to the Metropolitan Economy - 2025

Part A. 2025 Non-Capital Expenditures					
2025 Zoo Non-Capital Direct Expenditures		\$57,773,690			
BEA Multipliers for Museums, Historical Sites, Zoos, and Parks		Output 2.0927	earnings 0.7876	employment 22.0721	value added 1.3285
2025 Non-Capital Expenditures Contribution to the Metropolitan Economy		\$120,903,001	\$45,502,558	1,275	\$76,752,347
Part B. 2025 Capital Expenditures					
2025 Zoo Capital Expenditures		\$28,143,517			
BEA Multipliers for Construction		Output 2.1851	earnings 0.7076	employment 12.0118	value added 1.2159
2025 Capital Expenditures Contribution to the Metropolitan Economy		\$61,496,399	\$19,914,353	338	\$34,219,702
2025 Non-Capital and Capital Contributions to the Houston Economy		\$182,399,400	\$65,416,911	1,613	\$110,972,049

Table B2. Annual Contribution of Non-Metropolitan Visitor Expenditures to the Metropolitan Economy - 2025

2025 General Admission Attendance Estimate		772475	
2025 Percentage General Admission from Outside Metro Area		0.235	
2025 Estimated General Admission Attendance from Outside Metro Area		181532	
2025 Estimated Visitor Expenditure per Person per Day	\$	272.49	
2025 General Admission Expenditure from Outside Metro Area	\$	49,465,660	
2025 Zoo Lights Attendance Estimate		168128	
2025 Percentage Zoo Lights from Outside Metro Area		0.111	
2025 Estimated Zoo Lights Attendance from Outside Metro Area		18662	
2025 Estimated Visitor Expenditure per Person per Day	\$	272.49	
2025 Zoo Lights Expenditure from Outside Metro Area	\$	5,085,276	
Total Spending of Non-Metropolitan Visitors 2025	\$	54,550,936	
BEA Multipliers for Accommodations		Output	
		1.9426	
Total 2025 Non-Metropolitan Visitor Contribution to the Metropolitan Area Economy		\$105,970,648	\$30,504,883
		664	\$64,430,111
		12.1739	1.1811
		Earnings	
		0.5592	
		Employment	
		12.1739	
		Value Added	
		1.1811	

Table B3. Zoo Annual Capital Expenditures - Contributions to the Metropolitan Economy 2013-2025

Year	Expenditures	CPI-U (2023 Base Year)	Contributions to the Local Economy					Value Added (2023 dollars)
			Expenditures (2023 dollars)	Output (2023 dollars)	Earnings (2023 dollars)	Employment	Value Added (2023 dollars)	
2013	\$ 991,772	0.7575	\$ 1,309,336	\$ 2,954,779	\$ 1,021,020	18	\$ 1,588,094	
2014	\$ 23,636,624	0.7632	\$ 30,970,750	\$ 69,891,691	\$ 24,150,991	436	\$ 37,564,423	
2015	\$ 6,561,435	0.7688	\$ 8,535,095	\$ 19,261,148	\$ 6,655,667	120	\$ 10,352,216	
2016	\$ 14,332,421	0.7847	\$ 18,264,647	\$ 41,217,829	\$ 14,242,772	257	\$ 22,153,191	
2017	\$ 12,956,228	0.8017	\$ 16,160,736	\$ 36,469,933	\$ 12,602,142	227	\$ 19,601,357	
2018	\$ 18,892,595	0.8162	\$ 23,148,314	\$ 52,238,799	\$ 18,051,055	326	\$ 28,076,590	
2019	\$ 29,793,176	0.8352	\$ 35,670,909	\$ 80,498,541	\$ 27,816,175	502	\$ 43,265,246	
2020	\$ 38,892,478	0.8466	\$ 45,939,662	\$ 103,672,036	\$ 35,823,749	647	\$ 55,720,216	
2021	\$ 30,063,144	0.9062	\$ 33,176,080	\$ 74,868,461	\$ 25,870,708	467	\$ 40,239,268	
2022	\$ 35,376,989	0.9647	\$ 36,673,125	\$ 82,760,242	\$ 28,597,703	516	\$ 44,480,834	
2023	\$ 41,320,610	1.0000	\$ 41,320,610	\$ 93,248,221	\$ 32,221,812	582	\$ 50,117,768	
2024	\$ 21,179,521	1.0270	\$ 20,622,708	\$ 45,062,679	\$ 14,592,628	248	\$ 25,058,652	
2025	\$ 28,143,517	1.0516	\$ 26,762,568	\$ 58,478,888	\$ 18,937,193	321	\$ 32,519,197	
Total 2013-2025	\$ 302,140,510		\$ 338,554,540	\$ 760,623,247	\$ 260,583,616	4667	\$ 410,737,052	

Output in Current Dollars	
2024	\$ 46,279,371
2025	\$ 61,496,399