

## **THLA's New Association Website: A Transformative Change for our Membership**

1. **Goals and Objective of Project:** The objective of this project was to enhance one of THLA's most important communication channels, our association website, texaslodging.com. Key to this project was making strategic changes that would improve the user experience, increase the level and ease of access to key member benefits, and make it incredibly easy for members and prospective members to tap into our association staff, resources, association events, industry news, and other topical content online. Prior to the implementation of this project, the THLA website had not been reformatted in over 6 years and had not been completely overhauled for over 15 years. This project was a complete overhaul. Over the course of the last 15 years, THLA had outgrown the capacity and functionality of our existing website. The existing site had the following challenges:
  - a. It had a very old-fashioned look that did not impress users or lead to long stays or the level of return visitors to the site.
  - b. The site layout and format was not intuitive or easy to navigate.
  - c. It lacked immediate descriptions of what each icon area provided in key resources for the user.
  - d. There was not a sufficient use of photos and graphics to stimulate interest and promote navigation of the site without even having to read the written descriptors.
  - e. The site was not mobile responsive or accessible to those with certain disabilities.
  - f. The individual pages of the site were heavy in wording and did not use bullets, graphics, and live links to provide access to further member resources.
  - g. The site did not provide a list of staff members, with photos, and live links to contact staff.
  - h. The site only listed our major statewide events and did not include coverage of past and future local events where the THLA staff was serving as the speaker and demonstrate the depth of our engagement and resources.
  - i. The Vendor Guide contained only a list of vendors and was not categorized for easy navigation.
  - j. There was no functionality for making immediate and time-sensitive changes to the site.
  - k. The font size of the site was smaller and less user friendly.

THLA staff spent four months, from January 2015 through April 2015, rebuilding our site with the mission to not only give our website a completely new look and feel, but to make changes that were transformative in the site's benefits to users. Key to this process was making the site easy to navigate and very functional and effective for the two groups that access our site: members of the association and members of the public.

2. **Target Audience:** Our target audience was our entire THLA membership, prospective THLA members, and the traveling public. Our membership is comprised of over 3,500 member properties, vendors (Allied Members), and tourism partners such as cities and CVB's. (Affiliate Members). Our site's audience

includes consumers looking for lodging options as well as prospective and current members looking to see what resources and activities are being offered by THLA.

**3. Results of Project:** After four months of intensive work by the entire THLA team, our new website launched on May 8th, 2015. Through our new site, we now provide a visually appealing and highly functional website that is better placed to serve users and to hold the attention and interest of THLA members, prospective members, as well as consumers looking for lodging. We accomplished the following goals through this endeavor:

**Increased the accessibility of our new site.** When we analyzed the Google Analytics from our previous website, we saw that 33% of the visitors to our site were accessing texaslodging.com through a mobile device. We knew that in order to better communicate and connect with visitors to our site, we would need to incorporate a responsive design so that our site was easily accessible to users across any mobile device. We also wanted to ensure that anyone who has a disability causing them to face a barrier to online communication channels would be able to easily access and navigate through our site. Now, not only is our new site completely mobile responsive, but it is also compliant with the Title II Requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Users to our site from mobile devices can now gain access to all of our information in a format that is very easy to read and navigate.

**Increased the quality and amount of content we communicate to our members through our website.** Every step of the redesign process was done with the end users in mind. Foremost, we wanted this initiative to increase the value of membership in our association by providing high value and sought after content and resources in an easy to use and intuitive format. We successfully accomplished this goal through two main channels:

- **Creation of a Comprehensive and State of the Art “Member Resources” Section of our website for our Lodging Property and Affiliate Members.** The existing site did not have a restricted member resources section that could be accessed online. The new site includes an online collection of up-to-date resources for our members, ensuring that the key information that they need is available to them at any time as a benefit of membership with THLA. For example, the Member Resources section of our website provides members with exclusive access to specially-created documents such as articles on what hoteliers need to know about the city and county hotel tax, what cities and counties need to know to administer the local hotel occupancy tax, articles and checklists for operating an effective local hotel association, how-to guides on holding HotelPAC events, and a complete catalogue of every issue of our monthly *Industry Update* newsletter. The most accessed item in this section are the Legal Q&A’s on virtually every topic of interest to Texas hoteliers, putting into plain English the answers to typical questions hoteliers have on local laws, state laws, and federal laws that impact their operations.

[Click here to view the Member Resources section of our website.](#)

*Your login will be 24998 and your password will be 0590.*

- **Redesign of our online Vendor Guide for our Allied Members and Endorsed Vendors.** We invested a great deal of time to redesign and reorganize our Vendor Guide so that we could enhance these listings for our Allied Members and Endorsed Vendors, as well make it easier for our lodging property members to find the perfect THLA member company to partner with. The products and services that our Allied Members and Endorsed Vendors offer through our Vendor Guide are now listed under logical categories with easy to understand graphics and descriptions. We have a special section and listing of our Endorsed Vendors that provides special mention and exposure. With the redesign, the traffic and usage of our vendors has increased and continues to increase. *Please see Figures 2.1 and 2.2 in the Additional Information portion of this application.*

[Click here to view the new Vendor Guide.](#)

**Making news, events, and information easier for members and nonmembers to find.** The new site allows THLA members, prospective members, and the general public to find the information and resources they need many times faster and easier than ever before. The homepage now features six icons across the center of page that provide access to information about the six functions that are most relevant to users of the site: 1) **Home** icon; 2) **Why Join THLA**; 3) **Member Resources**; 4) **Events**; 5) **Search for Lodging**; and 6) **Vendor Guide**. We placed these items in the center after learning that visitors to the site are most likely to be drawn to the middle of the page, as opposed to the top of the page where these items typically are housed.

Immediately below these six function icons are live links to the four most valued THLA member service areas, with colorful photos and descriptions of how THLA can be of key assistance to members in each of these key areas. These areas include: 1) **Advocacy**; 2) **Legal Support**; 3) **Marketing**; and 4) **Education**. Every page of our site also offers a header with a search function allowing visitors to search for any subject, word or term across our entire site. The header also has a place where members can log in to the member only portion of our site from any page they are on.

The site also now includes the capacity for placing an “alert” bar within seconds to note of immediate time sensitive news from the Governmental or other sectors that impact lodging operators.

*Please see Figures 1.1 and 1.2 in the Additional Information portion of this application.*

[Click here to see the homepage for texaslodging.com.](#)

**4. Evaluation Measures:** We have been able to measure the effectiveness of this project through two main channels: Google Analytics and the feedback we receive from our members.

**Google Analytics.** With Google Analytics, we are able to track the quantity, frequency and behavior of visitors to our site. These metrics show us that we are not only reaching more people than ever before, but users are engaging with our site and are returning to our site at higher rates than prior to the site's redesign. Prior to our redesign, the average amount traffic our site was 2,807 hits a month. The first month after launching our new site (as measured from May 9th 2015 through June 9th, 2015), that

number was 3,900 hits (a 39% increase in traffic in the first month of its introduction). Also, we compared the post-launch behavior of visitors to our site, and measured the way users are engaging with our site, the amount of pages they visit per session, how much time they spend interacting with its content (average session duration), and the rate at which they navigate away from our site (bounce rate) We have seen tremendous impact in each of these key measurement areas. A comparison of the four month period post launch (May 11th- September 11th 2015) versus the same four month period prior to this project (May 11th 2014 - September 11th, 2014) yields the following results:

- The average number of pages a user visits has increased 23% from 2.58 pages prior to this project, to 3.17 pages since the launch of the new website.
- The average amount of time spent on texaslodging.com has increased a remarkable 49.96% from an average of 1 minute and 55 seconds prior to this project, to 2 minutes and 53 seconds since the launch of the new website.
- The bounce rate, or percentage of visitors that enter texaslodging.com and then leave rather than continuing on to view other pages, has decreased 15.57% since the launch of the new website.



Users are also coming back to our site more than ever before. When we compare the amount of traffic our site received for the same four-month period, we see that 35.1% of our site's traffic came from returning visitors as opposed to 17.9% prior to this project.



**Member Feedback.** Since every component of our new website was designed with our members in mind, perhaps the most significant measure of success for us is the overwhelmingly positive feedback we received and continue to receive from our members, particularly in reference to our Member Resources section. Not only do our analytics show that this is the most-visited page of our website outside of the homepage, but THLA members have expressed in great numbers to us what a valuable resource and communication platform this is for them to use and to share within their organizations.

"I love the new THLA website! It looks great and is the easiest way for me to learn about all of the latest industry news and THLA events. Also, the Member Resources section is outstanding and I love the quick access it provides to all of the great THLA resources." -THLA Member Rebecca Thompson of the Bay Area Houston CVB

**5. How the project presented to the target audience:** We presented our newly-redesigned website to our members through several channels to optimize member engagement. First, we sent an [email notification](#) to all of our members which included some highlights of the redesign as well as their personal login information for our new members-only resources section. We followed that initial email up with [an announcement in our Industry Update monthly newsletter](#). We further publicized the launch of our new site to our members and to the public through social media posts. The THLA staff was extensively trained on how to operate and navigate the new site so that any THLA staff member would be able to easily guide visitors through the site and assist them with any questions they may have. We also gave an in-depth presentation to our Board of Directors about our new site's capabilities.

**6. Additional Information:**

We invite and encourage this review committee to visit and explore [texaslodging.com](http://texaslodging.com). Below are some images that were referenced throughout the information above. If you have any questions about this project or need additional information about the impact this project had on THLA communications, please contact Erika Hibler, Director of Communications, at 512-474-2996 or by email at [ehibler@texaslodging.com](mailto:ehibler@texaslodging.com). Thank you for your consideration.

Figure 1.1- The THLA Homepage Prior to The Website Redesign Project



**TEXAS HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION**

*Representing hotels, motels, resorts, bed & breakfasts, guest ranches and tourism-related businesses since 1903.*

Vendor Guide | Allied Advertising | Join THLA | About Us | Wage Survey | Events | Visit Texas | Home | Member Resources

Calendar of Events



2 of 15 | Jazz Festival - Denton, Texas

**Welcome to TexasLodging.com!**

The Texas Hotel & Lodging Association (THLA) is a nonprofit trade association representing every aspect of the lodging and tourism industry.

Our membership includes all of the facets of lodging options in Texas, from the largest convention center hotel to the smallest Bed &

Login / Register

Find us on Facebook

follow us on twitter

**Featured City**

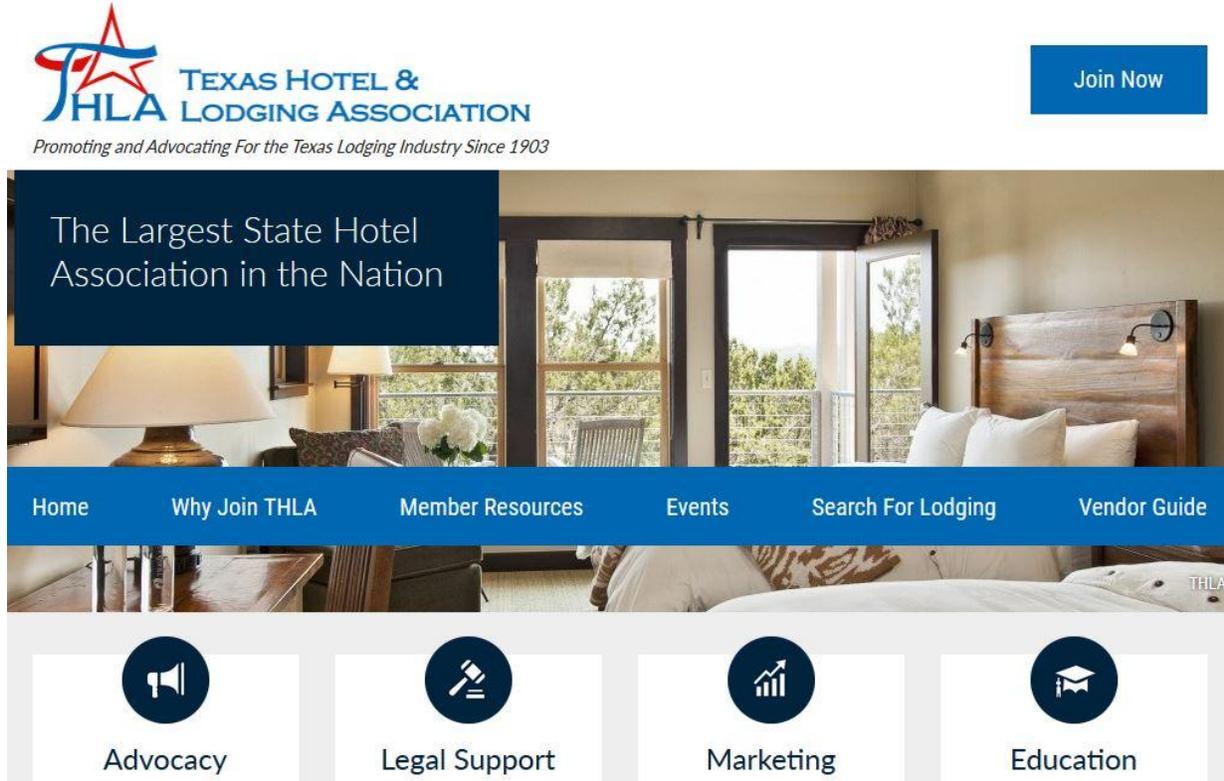
Visit Arlington, TX!

Port Aransas & Mustang Island  
*Texas. Island style.*

Enjoy all there is to see and do in Arlington, Texas this month! Every year, Arlington plays host to several holiday-themed events for the whole family. Get into the holiday spirit with the Spirit of Arlington! Experience Port Aransas ... a fun and funky island getaway for beach, sun and family fun!

[View the texaslodging.com homepage before the website redesign project.](http://www.texaslodging.com)

Figure 1.2- The New THLA Homepage



[View the new texaslodging.com homepage.](https://www.texaslodging.com)

Figure 2.1- The previous version of the THLA Vendor Guide known then as the Buyers Guide.



**TEXAS HOTEL & LODGING ASSOCIATION**

*Representing hotels, motels, resorts, bed & breakfasts, guest ranches and tourism-related businesses since 1903.*

[Vendor Guide](#)
[Allied Advertising](#)
[Join THLA](#)
[About Us](#)
[Wage Survey](#)
[Events](#)
[Visit Texas](#)
[Home](#)
[Member Resources](#)

## Calendar of Events

Login / Register

**Search By:** Category or Company

**Category that start with** [A](#)[B](#)[C](#)[D](#)[E](#)[F](#)[G](#)[H](#)[I](#)[J](#)[K](#)[L](#)[M](#)[N](#)[O](#)[P](#)[Q](#)[R](#)[S](#)[T](#)[U](#)[V](#)[W](#)[X](#)[Y](#)[Z](#) or [Show All](#)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>24 Hour Water Extraction (2)</li> <li>Adhesives (1)</li> <li>Air Conditioning/Heating (2)</li> <li>Anti-Graffiti Film (1)</li> <li>Appraisal Service (4)</li> <li>Asphalt Repair (1)</li> <li>Auctions (1)</li> <li>Automobile Insurance (3)</li> <li>Banquet Equipment (1)</li> <li>Bath &amp; Shower Remodeling - One Day (1)</li> <li>Bathtub Restoration (1)</li> <li>Bell Staff (1)</li> <li>Business Consulting (1)</li> <li>Cable Television (2)</li> <li>Carpet Cleaning (2)</li> <li>Catering Supplies (1)</li> <li>Ceramic Tile (1)</li> <li>Chemical Cleaning Supplies (2)</li> <li>Cleaning Supplies (1)</li> <li>Color &amp; Design (1)</li> <li>Commercial Washers/Dryers/Ironers (1)</li> <li>Concrete Resurfacing (1)</li> <li>Consultants (8)</li> <li>Controls, Sensors &amp; Zoning (1)</li> <li>Credit Card Companies (1)</li> <li>Cruises (1)</li> <li>Decorative Film (1)</li> <li>DIRECTV Residential Experience (1)</li> <li>Door Service (1)</li> <li>Drapery Hardware (1)</li> <li>Dryer Lint Recovery Systems (1)</li> <li>eCommerce (1)</li> <li>Electricity (1)</li> <li>Employee Benefits (6)</li> <li>Energy (2)</li> <li>Energy Consulting (1)</li> <li>Energy Services (2)</li> <li>Environmental Services (1)</li> <li>Equipment Sales (1)</li> <li>Fans &amp; Ventilation (1)</li> <li>Financial Services (7)</li> <li>Fitness Equipment (1)</li> <li>Floor Tile (1)</li> <li>Food Distributors/Equipment (3)</li> <li>Furniture (3)</li> <li>Gift Shop Items (1)</li> <li>Green Event Service (1)</li> <li>Guest Amenities (2)</li> <li>H2B Workers (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accounting &amp; Auditing Services (1)</li> <li>Advertising/Marketing (2)</li> <li>Air Travel (1)</li> <li>Appliances (2)</li> <li>Aprons (1)</li> <li>Asset Management (1)</li> <li>Automatic Dispensing Systems (1)</li> <li>B2B Bookings Solutions (1)</li> <li>Bar Mops (1)</li> <li>Bathroom Renovation (1)</li> <li>Bedding Equipment/Frames (1)</li> <li>Brokers-Hotel/Motel (6)</li> <li>Business Lending (1)</li> <li>Carpet (1)</li> <li>Carpet Tile (1)</li> <li>Ceiling Fans (1)</li> <li>Check Guarantee Service (1)</li> <li>Cleaning Equipment/Supplies (1)</li> <li>Coin Operated Vending Machines (1)</li> <li>Commercial Pour-Over Coffee Equipment (1)</li> <li>Composting Service (1)</li> <li>Construction Waste Service (1)</li> <li>Contractor Recommendations (1)</li> <li>Cooking Equipment (1)</li> <li>Credit Card POS Sales &amp; Service (3)</li> <li>Custom Labeled Bottled Water (1)</li> <li>Direct TV (2)</li> <li>Disaster Restoration Services (1)</li> <li>Drapery Fabrics (1)</li> <li>Drum Units (1)</li> <li>Dryers - Finishing Equipment (2)</li> <li>Education/Training (1)</li> <li>Electronic Credit Card/Check Processing Equipment (1)</li> <li>Employment (1)</li> <li>Energy Brokerage (1)</li> <li>Energy Management (1)</li> <li>Entertainment (2)</li> <li>EPLI - SOI Portal (1)</li> <li>Executive Recruiter (1)</li> <li>Feasibilities (2)</li> <li>Fire/Water/Wind/Smoke Damage Restoration (3)</li> <li>Fixtures (1)</li> <li>Folding Equipment (1)</li> <li>Furnaces (1)</li> <li>General Liability (2)</li> <li>Glass Tile (1)</li> <li>Green Solutions (1)</li> <li>Guest Room Supplies (1)</li> <li>Habitational Insurance Programs (1)</li> </ul>
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Figure 2.2- The updated version of the THLA Vendor Guide.

## Vendor Guide

THLA is proud to partner with the companies in our online Vendor Guide to offer the finest products and services to the hospitality industry. Many of these companies offer special rates and discounts exclusively to THLA members. Shop here and save!

**Select the category below and find discounts from vendors**

-  [Business Services](#)  
Services to help your business thrive.  
*Marketing and Advertising, Legal Services, Insurance Providers, Property Tax Consultants & More*
-  [Furniture, Fixtures & Equipment \(FF&E\)](#)  
The best products for your lodging property.  
*Carpet, Light Fixtures, Mattresses, Paint, Stone Suppliers, HVAC Systems, Vending Machines & More*
-  [Guestroom Products](#)  
Products for guest rooms and amenities services to enhance your guests' stay.  
*Textiles, TV's, Blinds, Personal Care Products, Cable Providers, & More*
-  [Hotel Operations](#)  
Products and services to help your property perform at its best.  
*Energy Management, Human Resources, Security, Telephone Systems, Valet Services & More.*

### Search the Vendors

Search by product or by company:

#### Endorsed Vendors

See the list of selected vendors and suppliers that are recommended and endorsed by THLA. All of our Endorsed Vendors offer special discounts to THLA members.

[View Our Endorsed Vendors](#)

#### Edge Communications

Edge eliminates the complexity of owning and managing business

[View the new texaslodging.com Vendor Guide.](#)