

Jerry Howard ([00:08](#)):

Welcome to Housing Developments. I'm Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin ([00:12](#)):

And I'm Jim Tobin. Hey, Jerry.

Jerry Howard ([00:14](#)):

Hey Jim, it's good to be back with you. Its been a while.

Jim Tobin ([00:18](#)):

It's good to be back. It's been a long while. The long hot summer hiatus for the podcast is finally over.

Jerry Howard ([00:23](#)):

Well, you know it's been a hiatus maybe for our podcast, but the politics of the country have not taken a break at all and things are really turning. What's your take on all this?

Jim Tobin ([00:34](#)):

Oh yeah, boy. It's been a pretty consequential month for Congress, for the administration certainly with trouble domestically, trouble overseas. You know, congress is jamming through a bipartisan infrastructure bill, probably one of the biggest bipartisan pieces of legislation in a decade, we expect Congress to be really active over the next couple of months with I think some pretty big consequences for the industry and members.

Jerry Howard ([01:30](#)):

Well there's consequences for the industry and for the members, there's a huge consequence politically as I understand it too. I read an article in yesterday's Washington Post that many members of the democratic caucus are already conceding that they're going to lose control of the House of Representatives and that the likelihood of the Republicans retaking the Senate is growing every day. What's your take on that?

Jim Tobin ([01:56](#)):

Yeah, I think you're right. I think it's fairly likely that the House flips. As you know Jerry, as an observer of the American electorate and politics, the midterm elections, traditionally, since World War II, have always gone to the favor of the party out of power from the White House. So in this case, in the 2022 midterms, that means the Republicans. On average, every midterm election turns over about 21 or 22 seats. Sometimes you have big swings like we saw in 1994, but sometimes you have smaller ones. There's only been a couple where the party in power actually gained seats. That was the post 9/11, Bush's first midterm, and obviously the country was in a different spot then. But I fully expect probably the trend to hold and we see the Republicans. They only have to pick up six seats by the time they kind of sort out some of the open seats, it's probably only going to be five or six seats they've got to pick up, so history is on their side and as the Biden administration faces more headwinds, that's going to probably only help the Republicans.

Jerry Howard ([03:06](#)):

Yeah, I think you're right. I especially would be concerned if I'm a Democrat and the recent developments overseas cause a shakeup in the Cabinet so early in this administration, which again, the Washington Post is speculating about. And if the Post is speculating about it, that's pretty interesting because they generally don't find much to criticize the administration about. But anyway, we're here today, I think we're going to talk about something a little more lighthearted and that's the International Builders Show. We're proud to have our guest. Jim, why don't you welcome him in?

Jim Tobin ([03:44](#)):

Yeah. Thanks Jerry. I'd like to welcome in Mike Waterman of Visit Orlando. He's basically the big cheese down there getting ready for our trade show. Mike, welcome to the podcast. It's great to have you. As Jerry said, it's kind of the stretch run here for the team getting ready for IVS 2022 and very much love to tell you. How are things on the ground down there in Orlando?

Mike Waterman ([04:10](#)):

Hey look, I'll tell you what, it has been a remarkable 18 months for us, obviously working through this crazy pandemic. But we've hosted well over 100 live in-person face-to-face events since July last year. Really Orlando is never closed and we continue to get better. I'm super proud to tell you more than a dozen of our hotels have taken the opportunity to enhance their product. The Hilton did a whole new lobby. The Roseman Center's brand new and the Ritz Carlton is new. So, I think your attendees will really be excited to see how Orlando has enhanced itself since you were last here a couple of years ago.

Jerry Howard ([04:47](#)):

The theme parks, are they all open?

Mike Waterman ([04:49](#)):

Yeah, all the theme parks, we've been open for over a year now, and they've been running at full capacity and doing an unbelievable job. Also, really kind of neat for us is virtually all of the theme parks, Universal, Sea World, Disney, have new attractions, so your folks can also enjoy what they've always enjoyed in the past, but Sea World's got a brand new roller coaster opening this February. Disney had a couple of new things. They had a new attraction at Epcot, a new attraction at the Disney Enchantment Nighttime Spectacular, Epcot's got the new Harmonious deal and Remy Ratatouille is going to open October first. So new stuff going on we're excited about.

Jerry Howard ([05:38](#)):

That is pretty exciting.

Jim Tobin ([05:39](#)):

Hey Mike, what about... obviously you ran through a lot of the theme parks, but what else can our... all of our members, it's late January, early February when we'll be down there, a great time to get away for families, especially those of us who live in the northern parts of the country where a little warmer weather always feels good. You just talked about the theme parks, but restaurants, other attractions, Universal obviously is right down the road from the convention center, but what else can families plan to do while their husband or wives, or mom and dads are walking the show floor or attending NHBs meetings? What else is there to do?

Mike Waterman ([06:19](#)):

Yeah, so we have almost 1100 members and obviously Sea World, Universal, Disney, big three, sort of are a big part of that and that's why a lot of people come down, but there's a lot of amazing things. We have some great small towns. Winter Park, which is where I live. Winter Garden, they have farmer's markets on Saturdays and Sundays. You got Dr. Phillips Center of Performing Arts, which is an unbelievable facility. They have Wicked and some of the new shows are playing there. Amway has got concerts playing. That's where the Magic play also. You can also catch a major league soccer or basketball game while you're in town. So there's a lot of really neat things going on. There's also some great nature. People don't realize that. We have the Winter Park boat tour, which is a great boat tour up in Winter Park that takes about an hour. And there's also kayaking and amazing springs and places where folks can park and hike.

Jim Tobin ([07:15](#)):

That's great.

Jerry Howard ([07:16](#)):

Yeah Mike, I got to ask you this. Jim and I have been known to enjoy a good meal every now and again, as frequently now as we can actually, what's the restaurant scene looking like down there? Is everything up and running and are there any new and exciting ones?

Mike Waterman ([07:33](#)):

It's probably been 20 years since I started and in those 20 years, even 10 years, the last 10 years, the Orlando food scene has changed dramatically. We have over a dozen James Beard award chefs. Old Red just opened, Blake Shelton's new live country music place right down the street at ICON Park. Gordon Ramsey just opened Fish and Chips also at the Old Red area at ICON Park. And boy, Disney Springs has got four or five. Chef Jose Andres has Jaleo. Rick Bayless has Frontera Cocina. Morimoto who has the Morimoto Asia Wolfgang Puck's.

Mike Waterman ([08:11](#)):

So we have an unbelievable scene and even really if you go outside of I-drive or Disney Springs or City Walk and Universal. I live up, like I said, in the Winter Park area and the Mills 50 district has got one of the largest Vietnamese restaurant scene's in central Florida. So there's some really fun, local unique places. And some of my favorites are some of the locally-owned sommeliers and craft beer folks. Winter Gardens has got a great craft beer place that you can go and eat and drink and enjoy the outside.

Jerry Howard ([08:48](#)):

Well, Jim will undoubtedly want to get the name of that. He's a beer aficionado.

Jim Tobin ([08:55](#)):

I do like a beer every now and then.

Mike Waterman ([08:57](#)):

Nothing wrong with that.

Jerry Howard ([08:58](#)):

Mike, Orlando is a large area, what do you think is the best way for our members, the attendees, to get around the area while they're there?

Mike Waterman ([09:07](#)):

We have all the traditional. We have bus service. We have obviously Uber and Lyft. Also, like you mentioned, we are working with our partners to make sure we have appropriate drivers and we really work with, not only our Uber and Lyft providers, but also Mears Transportation, which is the largest provider of cabs/taxis in the area. And we actually put out a resume when a big event like yours is coming in town to make sure not only the businesses and the restaurants are prepared, but also all of our transportation companies. And we have seen some issues really around peak times, and just for your attendees, 11:00 AM in the morning and believe it or not, 10 at night are two peak times, so if there's a way you can avoid coming into the airport at those times. I flew in the other day and I think I had to wait eight minutes for an Uber, so it wasn't a problem at all, but again, sort of pack your patience, but there's plenty of opportunities to get around the area using those services or cabs/taxis.

Jim Tobin ([10:19](#)):

Mike, just talking about coming in and out of the airport, the last couple of months we've really seen America start to open back up. People are getting on planes. As Jerry said, he's back on the road pretty much full time. So, how's Orlando doing, right? I mean, are people flooding in there?

Mike Waterman ([10:39](#)):

Yeah look, like I said, we've really never closed down. We just got our July occupancy room ADR rates and there were the highest since the pandemic. We had almost 80% occupancy, so our hotels are full. We're not packed, but June, July and August are candidly our three biggest months. You know, spring is only busy more around the spring break area, which is a little later than when you guys are in, so we're open. Our hotels are open. Our parks are open. Our attractions are open. Our restaurants are open. we're following CDC guidelines, but there is no mask mandate. We are asking folks that when they're indoors, and some of the parks are asking that as well, to wear the mask, but for the most part, you could walk around, like I said, Winter Park, Park Avenue, and not wear a mask. And all of the shops and restaurants are open and happy to have customers candidly.

Jerry Howard ([11:32](#)):

Mike, thanks for being with us today. We are so excited to be coming back to Orlando and to have a live builders show again. We think we're going to have great crowds. The booth space sales are going really, really well. And we look forward to seeing you down there. Jim and I are going to buy you a beer when we're down there.

Jim Tobin ([11:50](#)):

That's right.

Mike Waterman ([11:51](#)):

I can't wait. I absolutely can't wait. And please tell your folks, we list our deals on [visitorlando.com](#), so you can kind of get updates on what's going on and what attractions are new and happening and exciting. We actually do a blog similar to this that's sort of got a what's new, talking about the new restaurants, new attractions, et cetera. We can't wait to have you. We've we've had large events. We

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just at Megacon two weeks ago, 75,000 people in town. We were able to accommodate them and they had a great experience. We really are ready to have you and we can't wait.

Jerry Howard ([12:25](#)):

Thanks so much for your time. Everybody, that's Mike Waterman from the Orlando convention and visitors bureau. Mike, we'll see you soon.

Mike Waterman ([12:32](#)):

Thanks guys, can wait.

Jim Tobin ([12:33](#)):

Thanks Mike.

Jerry Howard ([13:18](#)):

And ladies and gentlemen, we'll be back next week with another episode of Housing Developments. For now, I'm Jerry Howard.

Jim Tobin ([13:25](#)):

And I'm Jim Tobin.

Jerry Howard ([13:26](#)):

Bye-bye.