New Orleans
Sustainable Tourism Task Force

Abstract:
A Pivotal Moment for
New Orleans Tourism
April 2019

The New Orleans Sustainable Tourism Task Force
is an independent collective of concerned New Orleans citizens
launched in 2018 to work alongside city and tourism leaders to redirect
the flow of New Orleans tourism toward a sustainable course, abate the destructive
effects of unmanaged mass tourism and advocate for systemic changes to maintain a
growth path in which success is measured in terms of community uplift.

This abstract summarizes the findings of research and development
efforts since the spring of 2018, crystallizing a large amount of information
about an enormously complex situation so that its many facets can be perceived
with clarity as elements of a unified whole. (As hyperlinks are included to more
in-depth resources, it is best viewed on a device with an internet connection.)
An abbreviated chronology of Task Force R&D efforts can be viewed here.

The document focuses solely on the issues identified within the New Orleans
tourism sector and possible solutions to those issues. Scant attention is paid to
tourism's many benefits. Thus the information herein should not be interpreted as a
wholesale indictment of the tourism industry, but as a clarion call to forge a sustainable
course for this important sector, a path forward that will bring New Orleans tourism
into better balance with the community's needs and concerns and position the
city on the leading edge of sustainable destination efforts worldwide.

The aim, therefore, is to encourage and inform a community-wide discourse
about the issues facing the New Orleans tourism industry and the community at large
by framing those issues in a global context, identifying correlations with challenges
faced by destinations worldwide, reporting on research and initiatives being
undertaken in other destinations and suggesting possible solutions
to the specific imbalances faced here.

'Tourism is like fire:
it can warm your house and cook your food;
it can also burn down your village.'
Costas Christ, Beyond Green Travel

Preface

Overtourism: An Emerging Global Crisis

Since 2017, when anti-tourism protests erupted in numerous European cities, sustainable destination management has become the focus of increasingly urgent study.

An analysis commissioned by the European Parliament released in October 2018 examined "the social unrest, protest and resistance against tourism in most European cities … as a direct result of the growing evolution of unsustainable mass tourism practices." Of 209 destinations studied, they found 105 in a current state of overtourism.

Beyond Europe, the current course of tourism is clearly unsustainable in many destinations around the world, and specifically here in New Orleans.

In March 2019, a landmark report was released by The Travel Foundation, Cornell University and Epler Wood International, *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism.* Some conclusions:

> "The rapid growth of tourism in the 21st century is leading to damage in destinations across the world … Simply put, we have failed to properly account for the full risks and costs of tourism growth."

> "An invisible burden is undermining the success of the tourism economy, which is causing frequent disturbances both in Europe and around the world in the form of local protests, islands closing, and failing infrastructure."

> "While destination facilities are crumbling under the weight of overtourism, marketing continues apace using substantial tax dollars generated by each tourism visit."

> "Tourism companies and government have much to gain if they maximize community benefits and avoid severe, long-term, irreversible societal impacts … The risks of destroying the product are not small."

- ◦ 2-minute Travel Foundation video - *Tourism's Invisible Burden*
- ◦ 22-minute documentary video by Responsible Travel - *Crowded Out, The Story of Overtourism*
- ◦ The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
- ◦ National Geographic - *Overtourism Plagues Dreat Destinations; Here's Why*
- ◦ European Parliament study - *Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses*

Outline - Issues & Possible Solutions

New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- **Carrying capacity may already have been exceeded**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Measures of success are unsustainable**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Living wages & healthcare are out of reach for a significant percentage of hospitality workers**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Uncompensated burden on infrastructure, including historical, socio-cultural and environmental assets**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **"24/7 Party Town" branding is bringing burdensome tourism, degrading the visitor experience and decreasing the average spend**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Degradation of the Bourbon Street Entertainment Zone is generating increasingly negative visitor impressions, public nuisance and crime**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Whole-Unit Short Term Rentals are inflating housing prices, generating neighborhood nuisance, displacing residents and dissolving communities**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Degradation of residential quality of life: an existential threat to tourism**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **The city's historic center has been rendered unappealing & inaccessible to local citizens: an existential threat to a healthy community**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Insufficient eco-sustainability practices throughout the tourism infrastructure**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Cruise Ship carrying capacity may already have been exceeded**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **New Orleans music is a pillar of its tourism industry yet local musicians struggle**
  - Articulation & Resources

Outline - Issues & Possible Solutions

Structural Imbalances in New Orleans Tourism Management

- **No community-driven Destination Management Organization**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Tourism organizations are funded by tax dollars with no transparency or community oversight**
  - Articulation & Resources

- **Membership-driven tourism marketing places members' profitability above community needs and concerns**
  - Articulation & Resources

Outline - Issues & Possible Solutions

Possible Solutions

- **Establish a holistic approach that places the community first**
    - [Articulation & Resources](#)

- **Engage a global Sustainable Tourism expert to help:**
    - Establish a **New Orleans Sustainable Destination Council**
    - Develop a draft **Sustainable Tourism Action Plan**
    - Convene a **Sustainable Tourism Action Planning Summit** of global experts to revise & refine that draft Action Plan
    - [Articulation & Resources](#)

- **Suggested pillars of a draft Sustainable Tourism Action Plan**
    - Transparency & community oversight in tourism organizations
    - New measures of success
    - New growth path
    - New messaging
    - New Quality of Life regulatory & enforcement framework
    - New zoning for historic center
    - New enterprise impact certification system with concrete benefits
    - Programs to incrementally achieve living wage & healthcare goals
    - Hospitality worker partnership
    - Community-based visitor experience development
    - Programs to channel greater benefits to musicians & other culture bearers
    - De-emphasize Bourbon Street—while restoring its cultural authenticity
    - [Articulation & Resources](#)

~ End of Outline ~

Articulation & Resources

New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- **Carrying capacity may already have been exceeded**
  - A comparison of major destinations reveals that the historic center of New Orleans (the French Quarter) has a ratio of annual visitors per resident more than 5 times higher than the historic center of Venice, Italy (the 6 sestieri). Sustainable Tourism Task Force - *Tourist to resident ratios in popular destinations worldwide*
  - While the work has not yet been undertaken to insert existing New Orleans tourism data into the metrics used by the 2018 European Parliament-commissioned study on overtourism, from early review of that framework it appears that New Orleans' carrying capacity may already have been exceeded on all indicators. European Parliament study - *Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses*
  - **Return to Outline**

- **Measures of success are unsustainable**
  - New Orleans, like most destinations, has heretofore measured success "based on a growth-paradigm, mainly valuing growth of visitors' numbers, without considering carrying capacity and other policy goals." European Parliament study - *Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses*
  - "One of the primary challenges for tourism decision makers is the inaccurate and misleading nature of the data they use to project and discuss success. [Visitor count is] generally the basis for policies … This approach has long been known to be superficial and without proper statistical analysis of the economic impacts per tourist." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
  - "More tourism is not necessarily better. Better tourism is better … Governments and industry should therefore abolish the practice of setting tourism goals based only on arrivals … It's more trouble and expense to collect more significant data: How long did visitors stay? What did they do? How much did they spend, on what, and who got the money? How did their presence affect local society, culture, and environment? Or the question rarely asked: How many is too many?" National Geographic - *Overtourism Plagues Dreat Destinations; Here's Why*
  - **Return to Outline**

- **Living wages & healthcare are out of reach for a significant percentage of hospitality workers**
  - Only "17 percent of total jobs in the tourism and hospitality cluster are 'good jobs' which pay a living wage or provide pathways to jobs in other occupations that pay a living wage." The Data Center - *Benchmarking New Orleans' Tourism Economy: Hotel and Full-Service Restaurant Jobs*
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New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- **Uncompensated burden on infrastructure, including historical, socio-cultural and environmental assets**
  - 2-minute Travel Foundation video - *Tourism's Invisible Burden*
  - "Historical, socio-cultural and environmental assets are the foundation of tourism economies."
  - "The invisible burden is threatening global cultural and environmental assets of enormous renown and value … placing destinations in a position of financing additional required infrastructure for energy, waste, waste water and the protection of natural and cultural resources, without recompense from the tourism economy."
  - "The degradation of world class parks, historic city centers and world heritage monuments has vast economic implications."
  - "The existing approach of industry and government has not proven to be adequate for addressing the challenges of tourism's growing invisible burdens, requiring a re-evaluation of how taxes are being allocated."
  - [recommendation] "Allocation of a portion of tourism tax dollars to infrastructure (vs. tourism marketing)."
  - [all quotes above from The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*]
  - **Return to Outline**

- **"24/7 Party Town" branding is bringing burdensome tourism, degrading the visitor experience and decreasing the average spend**
  - Decades of "24/7 party town" visitor marketing have resulted in a high volume of party-seeking visitors arriving in New Orleans expecting that to be true—and making it so. The consequent degradation of residential quality of life is placing severe stress on the city's historic neighborhoods and degrading the visitor experience. New Orleans Sustainable Tourism Task Force – *A Culture Misunderstood*
  - Larger visitor counts do not necessarily equate to greater revenues, but they do place added stress on the infrastructure, residential quality of life and public safety.
  - While body count in New Orleans is increasing, average spend is declining. As the number of visitors increased by 5.2% in 2017 over visitation in 2016, spending only increased by 1.3%. Expenditures per person actually dropped by 3.8% for the same period. This is the second consecutive year that spending per person dropped. Spending per person in 2016 dropped 1.5% from that of 2015 [Hospitality Research Center, University of New Orleans].
  - The negative impressions voiced by visitors are mounting. Research has found that the top four areas of negativity voiced by visitors are cleanliness, the presence of homeless, the atmosphere of Bourbon Street, and overall safety in the city. Survey respondents between the ages of 50-64 reported the highest level of dissatisfaction regarding these areas followed by visitors in the 35-49 age bracket. These two age groups have consistently been the largest visitation groups. In 2017, those in the 35-49 age bracket comprised 30.2% of all visitors and those in

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New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

the 50-64 bracket comprised 28.6% of all visitors, for a total of 58.8%. However, over the past three years, visitation for those in the 50-64 age bracket has dropped from 36.1% of all visitors in 2015 to 28.6% of all visitors in 2017 [Hospitality Research Center, University of New Orleans].
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- **Degradation of the Bourbon Street Entertainment Zone is generating increasingly negative visitor impressions, public nuisance and crime**
  - Decades of marketing, amplified by the resulting word-of-mouth and media impressions, have made Bourbon Street a primary emblem of New Orleans in the global consciousness. While the Bourbon Street Entertainment Zone serves a vital purpose by providing nighttime entertainment to a large volume of visitors, the nature and quality of that entertainment has evolved from featuring live New Orleans music and creative vintage burlesque revues to the current offerings of cover bands, karaoke and strip clubs.
  - Crime is becoming ever more prevalent, resulting in a concentration of inordinate law enforcement resources that are being drawn away from the community's pressing public safety needs.
  - Without the clear delineation of the limits of the Bourbon Street Entertainment Zone and clear messaging so that visitors understand that this Zone exists within a treasured historic residential neighborhood, the Zone is functioning as an engine driving streams of loud, heavy-drinking, often disrespectful and sometimes violent visitors into surrounding neighborhoods—and attracting criminals who prey on inebriated tourists into those neighborhoods.
  - Today's Bourbon Street Entertainment Zone is generating increasingly negative visitor impressions, public nuisance and crime—yet media impressions continue to reinforce the branding of New Orleans as the host city for the mythic phenomenon that is Bourbon Street. And the city's membership-driven tourism marketing agencies continue to promote it in its current state: "Noisy. Raucous. Nocturnal. For many New Orleans visitors, Bourbon Street embodies the life of a party town. The street is lit by neon lights, throbbing with music and decorated by beads and balconies … Many things change in New Orleans, but the color and excitement of Bourbon Street never falters." ["New Orleans & Co." (CVB) website]
  - **Return to Outline**

- **Whole-Unit Short Term Rentals are displacing residents, inflating housing prices, generating public nuisance and dissolving communities**
  - "The economic costs Airbnb imposes likely outweigh the benefits … Long-term renters face rising housing costs … Local government tax collections fall … Externalities [are] inflicted on neighbors … Job quantity and quality could suffer." Economic Policy Institute - *The economic costs and benefits of Airbnb*

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New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- ◦ "Dwellers struggle to find long-term rentals or affordable housing solutions, and in addition they clash with a significant increase of the services cost, due to the growing presence of tourists that push business owners to raise prices" The Urban Media Lab - *The impact of AirBnB on our cities: Gentrification and 'disneyfication' 2.0*
- ◦ "Airbnb has removed between 7,000 and 13,500 units of housing from New York City's long-term rental market … increased the median long-term rent in New York City by 1.4% over the last three years. In some Manhattan neighborhoods the increase is more than $700." School of Urban Planning, McGill university - *The High Cost of Short Term Rentals in New York City*
- ◦ It should be emphasized that a review of international reports makes clear that historic centers are at exponentially greater risk of residential housing displacement and "museumification" by short term rentals. "One in five of all properties in the historic heart of [Florence] is thought to be rented out on Airbnb, according to researchers at the University of Siena. Its Laboratory of Socio-Geographical Research (Ladest) calculates that, in 2017, nearly 8,000 properties – 21.4 percent of all housing in the historic centre – were advertised on the holiday rental service for the exclusive use of tourists." The Local Italy - *In just nine months, nearly 500 Florence residents were turfed out to make way for tourist rentals*
- ◦ **Return to Outline**

- • **Degradation of residential quality of life: an existential threat to tourism**
  - ◦ " '[Venice usually] performs with brutally high occupancies year round,' he says. 'But now we're feeling the pinch. It's the kind of stuff we see after a big financial crisis, or the Iraq war.' … Occupancy is down 6.9 percent compared to the same time last year, and the rates for the full year are down 9.2 percent. Taken together, this translates into a staggering 15.5 percent drop in RevPAR (or revenue per available room) … The softening hasn't come in off-months, either, but during Venice's high season from April-July." Conde-Nast Traveler – *The Other Side of Venice's Overtourism Problem*
  - ◦ " 'Locals were literally pushed out, and when the locals left, so did the life and culture of Venice,' she says. 'It has been hollowed out. So who wants to stay in a luxury hotel in a city that's extremely crowded with other tourists and locals who resent you?' " Conde-Nast Traveler – *The Other Side of Venice's Overtourism Problem*
  - ◦ "Underpopulated and overtouristed, Venice is not only close to losing its hallowed status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site but of entering the "In-Danger" list - a category normally reserved for war-ravaged ruins and dilapidated historical sites in Third World countries … Already the World Monument Fund placed Venice on its watch list due to the fact that its 'large-scale cruising is pushing the city to an environmental tipping point and undermining quality of life for its citizens.' " Forbes - *Blacklisting Venice To Save It From Too Many Tourists And Too Few Venetians*

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New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- The historic center of New Orleans (French Quarter) receives more than 5 times the visitors per resident as the historic center of Venice. Sustainable Tourism Task Force - *Tourist to resident ratios in popular destinations worldwide*
- Overtourism in New Orleans is not only ravaging streets and residential quality of life—it's degrading the visitor experience and announcing the city's inevitable entry into the dubious ranks of the most overtouristed destinations of the world. The coverage has already begun.
    - "Overtourism is putting immense pressure on destinations around the world. From Bali to Phuket and from Venice to **New Orleans** and Ibiza, popular places are creaking under the weight of millions of visitors." Branding in Asia - Overtourism is Coming to a Destination Near You
    - "At its core, overtourism can change the character of a destination and make visitors feel as though it has lost its authenticity." Travindy - How are **New Orleans** and Las Vegas coping with overtourism?
- "Without a consistent system to manage the invisible burden on local economies, tourism growth will continue to degrade more destinations in ways that increase frustration and produce more protests, as local citizens see their most beloved historical centers, monuments, and vital resources degrading without adequate explanation or informed action … Acknowledging and measuring this invisible burden can enable decision makers to determine how such costs can be paid for in order to ensure that local ecosystems and socio-cultural values are not degraded beyond the point of no return for local people and the tourism industry." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
- **Return to Outline**

- **The city's historic center has been rendered unappealing & inaccessible to local citizens: an existential threat to a healthy community**
    - Decades of unmanaged mass tourism inundating the historic center (French Quarter) has manifested in overcrowding, disrespect for locals, exorbitant parking rates, noise and crime. As a result, the relationship between all area residents and their own historic center has been fractured. In recent years, a decline has been observed in the numbers of locals patronizing French Quarter restaurants and shops, resulting in a shift in the retail balance, with tourists becoming the dominant revenue stream for many businesses. This exacerbates the "museumification" of this historic neighborhood, which degrades its value to both locals and visitors.
    - "Social capital includes historical, cultural, and community capital that provides a long-term connection to place. Natural capital is the source of ecosystem services ... There is little doubt that the loss of these important assets is being perceived by tourists and residents alike, raising concerns that, in time, destinations will no longer hold the same value for locals or visitors." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
    - **Return to Outline**

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New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- **Insufficient eco-sustainability practices throughout the tourism infrastructure**
  - There is a very large body of literature on this subject still being reviewed to excerpt the references most pertinent to New Orleans as an eco-sustainable destination.
  - **Return to Outline**

- **Cruise Ship carrying capacity may already have been exceeded**
  - "Cruise ship tourism is the fastest growing segment of the tourism industry, and it is an issue that many coastal heritage destinations will soon face. Uncontrolled tourism from cruise ships is unsustainable, and strong government intervention is needed to maintain heritage cities." Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development, The effects of cruise ship tourism in coastal heritage cities: A case study of Charleston, South Carolina
  - "Cruises cause a great impact in cities ... pollution, noise, smoke, alteration of heritage and the environment, endangerment of citizenship, architectural and cultural heritage and the environment. And at what cost? With recent changes in mind, and given the extreme situation which has come to pass, it is hoped that public awareness will lead to heavier tourism regulation—in particular for cruises— which would be a key step towards achieving inhabitable, tourist-friendly cities." Journal of Regional Research - *Venice: the problem of overtourism and the impact of cruises*
  - "Accurate and detailed studies on the local impacts of cruise tourism are rare. Most information has come from non-transparent and incomplete industry self-reporting, single-method studies implemented after tourism has begun, or macro-level aggregates of capital inflows … The main finding is that local benefits fail to materialize when cruise tourism is undertaken without investment in, and involvement of, destination communities … Although theory and industry multiplier estimates predict gains in employment, income, and related measures, we find little evidence of improvement. The ability of the local population to provide for necessities and obtain sufficient food worsened, corruption increased, and there were substantial negative environmental impacts … Our results show that in low taxation and regulation environments with an absence of community development and involvement initiatives, large cruise tourism projects can fail to provide benefits for local populations. Tourism Management, The economic, social, and environmental impacts of cruise tourism
  - **Return to Outline**

- **New Orleans music is a pillar of its tourism industry yet local musicians struggle**
  - "Live musical performance is critical to [New Orleans'] overall economic infrastructure … These jobs do not provide a reliable way out of poverty, because their earning power is equivalent to others in the service industry. While cultural policy has changed to accommodate the shift to a tourism economy based in local culture, patterns of marginalization have remained intact." Oxford Handbooks Online - *Playing for Work: Music as a Form of Labor in New Orleans*

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New Orleans Tourism: Overarching Issues

- "Frenchmen street today represents a destination worth millions in tourism revenue, while many of its musicians face stagnant wages and mounting costs." River Beats New Orleans - *Frenchmen Musicians Discuss Stagnant Pay, Difficult Economy*
- "Music is a way of life in New Orleans. It structures community events, provides thousands of jobs, and supports a thriving hospitality industry. It is embedded in the culture here. Musicians of days past are venerated as legends, their work canonized and their spirits honored and revered. Yet while these stories often ignore players' painful histories—struggles with brutal racism, lack of business training, mental illness, violence, gender-based discrimination—the cultural story told in pamphlets, guided tours, bike taxis, and even casual conversation with locals ignores the present-day local musician's reality: a livelihood threatened by stagnant pay and rising costs, endangering the next chapter of New Orleans musical heritage." Interim Magazine - *The State of Frenchmen Street: Organizing the discussion surrounding musician pay*
- **Return to Outline**

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Structural Imbalances in New Orleans Tourism Management

- **No community-driven Destination Management Organization**
  - "Tourism management seems to be entirely focused on promoting business. It is so tied to commercial and tax interest that the focus is less on how to manage the destination and more on how to develop destinations for commercial interests." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
  - Tourism marketing is not destination management. New Orleans, like so many destinations around the globe, has never had an entity in place to guide tourism marketing and inform tourism policy decisions on behalf of the community. "Around the world, a diverse set of destinations have come to the understanding that [there is a] need to pivot from destination marketing to destination management to prepare for the future and prevent the negative effects of overtourism." Skift - *Destinations Say Public-Private Partnerships Help With Overtourism*
  - "The decision to reinvent tourism management is an economic, social and environmental imperative, and it is therefore urgent to establish new protocols for training destination managers. Destinations that lack the human resources to manage assets of national importance to the economy will experience growing economic risk over time." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
  - **Return to Outline**

- **Tourism organizations are funded by tax dollars with no transparency or community oversight**
  - "Orleans Parish's hotel tax structure lacks accountability and transparency in certain areas. The permanent or indefinite duration of virtually all hotel taxes deprives citizens and policymakers of the opportunity to periodically reassess the need for taxes through a renewal process. Also, a complex web of laws and revenue-sharing agreements that are not readily accessible make it difficult for the public to understand where hotel tax dollars are going and for what purposes." Bureau for Governmental Research, The Lost Penny, An Analysis of the Orleans Parish Hotel Tax Structure
  - **Return to Outline**

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Structural Imbalances in New Orleans Tourism Management

- **Membership-driven tourism marketing places members' profitability above community needs and concerns**
  - ◦ The current system of tourism marketing in New Orleans channels tens of millions of dollars in tax money to organizations that, while operated by highly effective and well-intentioned individuals, by their nature focus on increasing the profitability of tourism businesses. The New Orleans CVB (rebranded in 2018 as "New Orleans & Company") is a membership-based organization. It appears fundamentally disinclined to take positions that could potentially decrease the profitability of specific members, even if those positions would redound to the benefit of the community.
  - ◦ Partner-based tourism marketing offers ad hoc opportunities to enterprises wishing to participate in specific promotional initiatives, freeing the organization to carry out the directives of municipal authorities (including Sustainable Destination Organizations), directives that are designed to enhance the health of the community but may have some negative impacts on specific tourism businesses.
  - ◦ **Return to Outline**

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Possible Solutions

- **Establish a holistic approach that places the community first**
    - ◦ "For decades, destination managers were able to ignore the negative effects of tourism. Now, the age of overtourism calls for a more robust approach to plan for the future." Skift - *Combating Overtourism Requires a More Holistic Approach*
    - ◦ Placing the needs and concerns of the community above the entertainment of visitors is the only way to ensure the future of tourism in any destination. As stated officially by the executive board of the City of Amsterdam: "Tourism is part of the international character of Amsterdam, but the negative consequences sometimes overshadow the positive sides of it. A new balance is therefore needed in which residents are the first priority and visitors remain welcome." City of Amsterdam Department of Economic Affairs - *Amsterdam: a strategy to keep a growing city in balance*
    - ◦ " 'Only governments can handle runaway tourism,' Becker wrote. 'Few major industries fall so squarely into their hands. ... Governments decide who is eligible for visas; how many cruise ships, airlines and trains can bring in visitors; how many hotels receive building permits; how many beaches are open to development; how many museums and concert halls are open.' " Travel Weekly - *Experts talk threat of overtourism and possible solutions*
    - ◦ "In order for governments to do their job, they will need holistic accounting measures, a better system for managing demand, a different tax allocation plan, public-private partnerships, and a new method of valuation of operational requirements to preserve tourism assets." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood International - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
    - ◦ "Destinations must take an interdisciplinary, holistic and integrative approach which includes four main objectives: to (i) demonstrate sustainable destination management; (ii) maximize social and economic benefits for the host community and minimize negative impacts; (iii) maximize benefits to communities, visitors and cultural heritage and minimize impacts; and (iv) maximize benefits to the environment and minimize negative impacts." Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria
    - ◦ **Return to Outline**

- **Engage a global Sustainable Tourism expert to help:**
    - ◦ **Establish a New Orleans Sustainable Destination Council**
        - ▪ "*[criterion A2]* Destination management organization. The destination [must have] an effective organization, department, group, or committee responsible for a coordinated approach to sustainable tourism, with involvement by the private sector and public sector. This group [must be] suited to the size and scale of the destination, and has defined responsibilities, oversight, and implementation capability for the management of environmental, economic, social, and cultural issues. This group's activities [must be] appropriately funded." Global Sustainable Tourism Council Destination Criteria

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Possible Solutions

- Bring in policy experts to help design the Sustainable Destination Council, its makeup, purview and interrelationship with tourism marketing organizations and municipal authorities.
- "*[recommendation]* Governmental oversight of new taxes and the use of tourism fees and taxes must be insulated from the political winds." The Travel Foundation / Cornell University / Epler Wood Intl - *Destinations at Risk: The Invisible Burden of Tourism*
  - **Develop a draft Sustainable Tourism Action Plan**
    - see Suggested Pillars, below
  - **Convene a Sustainable Tourism Action Planning Summit of global experts to revise & refine that draft Action Plan**
    - Sustainable tourism experts, leaders in the global travel supply chain, leaders of cities implementing successful sustainable tourism plans.
  - **Return to Outline**

- **Suggested pillars of a draft Sustainable Tourism Action Plan**
  - **Transparency & community oversight in tourism organizations**
    - Self-evident need
  - **New measures of success**
    - "*[official World Travel & Tourism Council recommendation]* Destinations thus far defining success as arrival number growth need to rethink their position. Focus will in the future have to be on value and benefit, not just volume. Central to this is for destinations to begin gathering data on their tourism systems to develop analytical tools, which can inspire tourism strategies not necessarily built on volume growth." European Parliament study - *Overtourism: impact and possible policy responses*
    - The Task Force has convened a team that includes UNO College of Business Dean John Williams, Life City CEO Liz Shephard and Data Center Chief Demographer Allison Plyer—experts in hospitality, impact and community data collection and analysis. This team is meeting to conceive new metrics to track tourism revenue flows, within the city as well as outflows, and tourist impacts, positive and negative, so we understand where revenues are actually going and which impacts are being driven by which visitors. The Task Force is also in communication with other academics and experts currently working urgently toward the development of new tourism impacts metrics internationally.
    - These new metrics are essential to the development of policies and tourism marketing initiatives that will bring more of the positive and less of the negative. New Orleans' success as a destination must ultimately be measured in terms of the community's economic, cultural and environmental health and well being.

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Possible Solutions

- **Quantify the Infrastructure Costs of Tourism**
  - Conduct a study to quantify tourism impacts on destination infrastructure based on the new metrics recently developed by Harvard International Sustainable Tourism Initiative (ISTI) researchers, and use the results to inform policy decisions. (These new metrics were the basis of the *Invisible Burden of Tourism* research and report.)
  - In a recent video conference, the leaders of the Harvard ISTI program expressed a potential interest in partnering with the appropriate entities to focus on New Orleans as the next research destination.
- **New growth path**
  - Limit or curtail new hotel construction.
  - Incentivize the upscaling of New Orleans' hospitality assets. This would likely manifest in a gradual redevelopment of 2- and 3-star properties into 3- and 4-star properties and the development of a small number of new 5-star properties.
- **New messaging**
  - **To Visitors ~ Globally & In-Destination**
    - Re-brand New Orleans as the nuanced, richly intriguing, artistically celebratory cultural feast that it is, and target messaging to those visitors we want to welcome into our city and our neighborhoods.
    - Pivot decisively away from the "Party Town 24/7" image.
    - Emphasize the residential nature of the historic neighborhoods.
    - Invite visitors to "Embrace New Orleans and Be Embraced," fostering respectful behavior and inviting them to join with us in our bold new programs to channel uplift throughout the community.
    - Preferentially feature enterprises that achieve higher impact ratings and encourage visitors to support them.
    - Provide front-line hospitality worker training and resources to reinforce the above.
    - Use the results of the new tourism impacts metrics to target marketing to the segments that are bringing more positive impacts and to de-emphasize those segments whose negative impacts outweigh the positive.
    - Develop messaging to preferentially engage more upscale visitors, while inviting culture-seeking budget travelers to experience the true culture.
  - **To Local Tourism Industry Stakeholders**
    - Provide comprehensive information and ongoing updates on the new messaging.
    - Provide resources and proactive support to help bring individual tourism enterprises' own marketing programs into the coordinated messaging effort.
  - **To the Community**
    - Truthfully communicate results of the new measurements of tourism impacts.
    - Engage the community in efforts to revitalize their relationship with their own historic center.

Articulation & Resources

Possible Solutions

- **New Quality of Life Regulatory & Enforcement Framework**
  - Tour Guide Licensing & Enforcement
  - Noise
  - Traffic & Parking
  - Cleanliness & Trash Collection
  - Robust Programs for the Homeless
  - Stringent STR regulation
  - Coordinated QoL enforcement unit
- **New zoning for historic center**
  - The zoning of the historic center (French Quarter) is founded on urban planning standards that apply well to modern cities and towns, but cannot provide equitable land use regulation for an historic neighborhood built on an 18th century European colonial model in which the entire old town was a residential development where non-residential enterprises were—and are—interspersed to support the lives of the residents. It is fundamentally at odds with the shape of life in the historic center of New Orleans to designate certain blocks as "residential" and others as "commercial." Research should be conducted and a new framework developed.
  - Limit or curtail tourism-only enterprises. "On 5 October 2017, a preparatory decision came into force calling a halt to new shops and facilities focused exclusively on tourists and day-trippers. Examples of these include ticket shops, bike rental companies and attractions. The municipal board has also limited the number of shops selling food for immediate consumption (for example ice cream and other sweet snacks)." _City of Amsterdam Department of Economic Affairs - Amsterdam: a strategy to keep a growing city in balance_
- **New enterprise impact certification system with concrete benefits**
  - Develop a "community uplift" impact certification system, similar to LEED certification, that will rate enterprises based on multiple positive community impact measures: living wages & healthcare; green operations; responsible neighborhood engagement; purpose-driven channeling of resources to uplift the community; etc. An international search for an organization to develop and administer this certification system was curtailed when it was discovered that Life City, an impact consulting firm based in New Orleans, has already integrated social and economic with ecological measures into their sustainability rating system. Research and development work is underway to expand and adapt the Life City impact rating system to the needs of sustainable tourism.
  - Use this rating system to drive concrete benefits to enterprises according to their rating: preferred media relations positioning; discounts and featured placements in official tourism marketing publications and initiatives; city & state tax incentives; etc.

Articulation & Resources

Possible Solutions

- **Programs to incrementally achieve living wage & healthcare goals**
  - This issue is societal and global and cannot be rectified instantaneously. Incremental goals should be set, and measures included throughout Sustainable Destination Council initiatives toward achieving those goals.
- **Hospitality worker partnership**
  - Beyond working to achieve Living Wages, Healthcare, Workplace Fairness and Healthy Work Environments, engage hospitality workers as partners in the stewardship of the city's ongoing sustainable tourism initiatives, ensuring them an active role in planning and decision making.
- **Community-based visitor experience development**
  - In a teleconference with an official of Amsterdam's official marketing entity, the need was discussed to develop experiences that can draw visitors beyond the historic center. Amsterdam's multi-year efforts to "spread the tourist footprint" have met with very limited success, leading officials to conclude that spreading visitors beyond the historic center will require a re-imagining of experiences available to tourists. Diluting and overwhelming more of their neighborhoods with tourist-driven experiences is clearly not the solution. They have concluded that it is more authentic experiences by and primarily for locals that must be developed, experiences into which a reasonable number of visitors can be welcomed, channeling visitor resources to the benefit of neighborhoods.
  - The Task Force has conducted initial meetings with culture bearers and cultural preservationists to begin conceiving a base model and variations for the development of such neighborhood-uplifting experiences.
- **Programs to channel greater benefits to musicians & other culture bearers**
  - Some concepts under consideration:
    - Minimum pay for musicians, scaled to the percentage of visitors in the venue so as not to disrupt the rich diversity of "incubator" performances for locals that are an inherent and vital part of the New Orleans music culture.
    - Differential cover charges for visitors and locals.
    - Programs to encourage more frequent hiring of local musicians for live performances in hotels and other tourist-facing venues.
- **De-emphasize Bourbon Street—while restoring its cultural authenticity**
  - Develop specific recommendations for the restoration of the cultural authenticity of the Bourbon Street Entertainment Zone to feature facilities and entertainments that will appeal to culture-seeking travelers at all budget levels, while providing a stage—and fostering respect for—authentic local performance artists, traditional and contemporary.
  - Until such a restoration is effected, direct the city's tourism marketing agencies not only to de-emphasize Bourbon Street completely, but to actively discourage media impressions.
- **Return to Outline**

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