



June 6, 2011

City Council Members:

The New Orleans Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB), the tourism industry's accredited destination marketing organization, enthusiastically supports the renovation and repair of the French Quarter sidewalks and urges the Council to help address attention to this critical economic issue.

One of the main attractions of New Orleans is our unique and authentic French Quarter. Tourists from all over the world visit our city to get a taste of this historic part of New Orleans' downtown sector and experience nightlife, restaurants, and shopping different from anywhere in the world.

One of the many factors we have all fought over the years is the condition of the French Quarter infrastructure. When tourists come to experience the French Quarter, they have a high expectation of how the city maintains this unique historical area. This perception is negatively affected by the poorly maintained sidewalks throughout. In a very clear example of the "broken window syndrome", the impact of the poor maintenance and refurbishment has many ripples and is an incredibly visible black eye for the city as a top tier urban environment.

The Convention and Visitors Bureau has received complaints from visiting journalists, leisure visitors, and convention goers constantly over the years. One particular situation that occurred was the use of a wheelchair by a family visiting the city. The elderly man could not enjoy the French Quarter due to the missing bricks, sidewalk cracks and unevenness of the sidewalks. Losing this one visitor's positive perception has the possibility of distorting many other outsiders' view and is simply one of many complaints.

In an effort to dramatically boost visitor numbers and tax revenues by 2018 as outlined in the goals of our Boston Consulting Group report, increase visitation for the numerous sporting events in the future, and to consistently maintain a healthy visitor number year to year, we urge that efforts from both the city and property owners begin to repair these sidewalks. This will not only increase the safety of our visitors, but our residents and employees as well. Our hospitality industry employs 70,000 workers, a majority of whom work in the French Quarter. These sidewalks are just as much of a danger to employees returning home late at night as they are to our visitors exploring the French Quarter during the day.

The French Quarter should have our finest maintenance program or renewal and replacement funding and plan as the symbol of the city and the core of our largest job and revenue generation.

Very best,

Stephen Perry
President and CEO