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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

June 23, 2020

Physical Security Assessment

**Public Document**

**Prepared for: Christian Pendleton, Chair, of the French Quarter Management District (“FQMD”)**

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## I. Assignment and Overview

Interfor was retained by the board of the French Quarter Management District (“FQMD”) to conduct a discreet, confidential physical security and vulnerability assessment of New Orleans French Quarter (“FQ”). The purpose of the physical security and vulnerability assessment is: to provide a review and evaluation of the French Quarter’s existing security stakeholders, protocols, and procedures; evaluate their effectiveness; and make specific recommendations on measures needed to achieve the desired level of security.

The FQMD’s goal is to obtain information from and/or through Interfor which identifies and assesses: (i) the District’s vulnerabilities regarding public safety and terrorist threats, and (ii) an appropriate set of responses to those vulnerabilities, to better enable the FQMD, the City of New Orleans, and/or law enforcement agencies to develop and implement improved public safety plans that reduce the potential for the identified risks and/or threats from occurring within the District.

The primary objective of the physical security and vulnerability assessment is to identify and evaluate security-related risks and to increase the sense of safety within the French Quarter from a host of threats to the extent realistic and practical. A secondary objective is the review of various policies and practices as they relate to and impact the security of the designated area.

### A. Introduction to Interfor’s Process and Findings

Interfor was granted wide and unfettered access to all sectors of the French Quarter (“FQ”), including visits to the 8<sup>th</sup> District police headquarters and the Real Time Crime Center (“RTCC”).

The assessment was conducted via a series of site visits<sup>1</sup>, face-to-face interviews<sup>2</sup>, focus groups, and phone conversations. Interfor will not reiterate every anecdote and utterance recounted during these interviews. Rather, this report will focus on broad recommendations based on the aggregated conclusions drawn from Interfor’s conversations with FQ stakeholders and members of the community.

This report is designed to address immediate vulnerabilities and to build on the existing foundation of security practices currently in place, and to discuss long-term concerns and their affiliated solutions.

Interfor remains available to discuss and clarify each concept raised in the report.

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<sup>1</sup> These consist of two multi-day visits to the French Quarter.

<sup>2</sup> Interfor notes that it has not directly validated or confirmed all statements and/or claims made by the respondents of each interview. The list of interviewees was mostly curated by members of the FQMD.

Interfor recommends that the improvements and corrections listed in this report be followed to ensure that threats and challenges to the security and safety of the French Quarter are mitigated in a realistic and practical manner and that vulnerabilities are not created, facilitated, or perpetuated accidentally.

## **B. How to Use Interfor's Report and Findings**

Interfor's reporting approach focuses on simple, non-technical and direct language. Each identified issue is accompanied by a solution (when readily available<sup>3</sup>). This report will not include lengthy descriptions of the various security-related bodies or the geographic area that constitutes the French Quarter, as it is assumed readers will have intimate knowledge of these spaces and security resources. Should this not be the case, Interfor can supplement this report with additional background information.

This executive summary distills an initial report containing fifty pages of findings and analyses. This executive summary focuses on information that can be disseminated to external groups. During the course of this assessment, Interfor interviewed approximately eighty individuals and reviewed or consulted fifteen documents and online resources provided by the client.

Disclaimer: Interfor spoke with a variety of respondents, some one-on-one, but primarily in group settings. Aside from typical cross-talk, political and social considerations likely affected how respondents expressed themselves, along with the potential for withholding information and opinions depending on who was in the room. At times, Interfor received contradictory explanations on a variety of matters, possibly due to perception or differing personal or political agendas. Interfor did its best to parse and assess the information received and to understand the facts related to procedural and operational realities. Nevertheless, it is possible that some of the explanations in this report do not properly represent every technical reality or that some details were miscommunicated and subsequently reiterated. Interfor hopes that any minor inaccuracies do not undermine the broader systemic recommendations and big-picture goals laid out in this report.

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<sup>3</sup> Some issues may require additional dialogue and follow-up assessments prior to issuance of a recommendation. Additionally, many issues may have multiple potential solutions.

## C. Executive Summary

*“The French Quarter is a fish tank of bad behavior. We create victims here and don’t have the means to protect them.”<sup>4</sup>*

After conducting a thorough high-level assessment of security conditions in the French Quarter, **Interfor has concluded that fostering and implementing a comprehensive and coordinated program in conjunction with all security stakeholders<sup>5</sup> is the only path to mitigating risks and establishing a safe atmosphere, both tangibly and perceptually.**

Interfor identified a number of clear procedural issues that negatively impact the general safety of people and property in the French Quarter. However, the stated and implied will to make changes and the availability of substantial resources are clearly present. Interfor concurs with the popularly-held local belief, often stated in interviews, that as one of the top drivers of revenue in the State of Louisiana, a thriving and safe French Quarter benefits the city of New Orleans as well as the state.<sup>6</sup> The comprehensive approach Interfor recommends presents a significant opportunity to all security stakeholders, as well as political and community leaders in New Orleans. Ultimately, the challenge remains as how to best achieve this goal.

The scope of this assessment was designed to address tangible security concerns and issues and proffer common-sense solutions consisting of enforcement, policing, procedures, and technology. It would be remiss of Interfor to proceed without acknowledging that a host of significant societal and economic factors contribute heavily to the current levels of crime and (at times) lawless atmosphere in the French Quarter. However, matters of poverty, education standards, incarceration practices, gun laws, and many other political and socio-economic trends which face society fall outside the scope of this assessment and Interfor’s expertise. Nevertheless, Interfor has attempted to incorporate measures which can work in concert with the ongoing efforts of good governance which local and state administrations appear to be earnestly working toward.

With this caveat in mind, the measures outlined herein, whether systemic or simply practical, should be applied holistically so as to increase the prospects of success. A piecemeal approach, burdened by the wider societal challenges New Orleans faces, will render individual solutions ineffective.

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<sup>4</sup> Entertainment establishment operator

<sup>5</sup> Police, security, the general public, and public/private initiatives

<sup>6</sup> Despite negative perceptions, tourism to NOLA, driven by the FQ, has seen a marked increase in recent years. Making the FQ safer and cleaner will allow the city to leverage this momentum. <https://www.neworleans.com/articles/post/new-orleans-tourism-visitation-and-visitor-spending-break-records-in-2017/>

Generally, Interfor believes that current vulnerabilities can be reduced by **strengthening and improving existing security agencies, deployments and procedures, in addition to significantly improving coordination among the various security stakeholders operating within the FQ. Improved internal consolidation, coordination, and cooperation are critical components in rectifying many of the security issues facing the Quarter.** These are the first items authorities and stakeholders should focus on as they move toward discussing and implementing solutions to the issues raised herein.

Interfor suggests that the overarching approach which will lead to the greatest improvements in both physical security and quality-of-life consists of **consolidating the current sundry security services and using the resulting savings<sup>7</sup> to address quality-of-life breakdowns and social programs which contribute to an unsafe atmosphere.**

The general and targeted improvements in this report should be implemented to create a secure environment commensurate with the needs of French Quarter denizens and the wider New Orleans public. Policies, procedures and protocols must be established and enforced at every level. Security should be perceived by all internally as a priority, and externally as formidable.

Interfor was repeatedly surprised to hear how the sense of security, as well as the perception of safety, changed from block to block within the FQ, a parcel of land measuring approximately 1.1 square miles with a multitude of security organizations and personnel operating within its borders. This dynamic, reminiscent of a fief-like atmosphere, borders on being counterproductive. Any measures to further the goal of uniform policing and security across the entirety of the Quarter, and perhaps the streets adjacent to it, should be doggedly pursued.

Interfor found all stakeholders interviewed to be highly engaged, eager to foster security improvements, and knowledgeable and passionate about the French Quarter and New Orleans as a whole. Yet unsurprisingly, a variety of glaring vulnerabilities exist due to policy-borne deficiencies and a lack of sufficient resources and coordination of those resources devoted to security. **Interfor finds that the security of the French Quarter is currently handled in a patchwork manner that has resulted in an unsatisfactory outcome from logistical, practical and reputational standpoints.**

**Numerous residents and business community members believe that law enforcement officers are not visible enough to properly deter crime and dispel the pervasive feeling of insecurity in the Quarter. This sentiment was also observed by Interfor during its time in the French Quarter. Potential**

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<sup>7</sup> In terms of both financial and manpower resources

**transgressors appear to have a general disregard for law enforcement because of a perceived lack of engagement by police, fueling unlawful behavior and the perpetration of brazen acts in public.**

Interfor was able to identify a clear vision for overall security expectations and the desired direction of the FQ. There appears to be a newly emphasized priority on security, its management, and the strengthening of existing practices. FQ stakeholders were in general agreement about the deficiencies in current security practices.

It should be noted that corrections of some of our critical findings may have occurred as soon as issues were discovered and solutions identified. Interfor found FQ personnel and security stakeholders highly responsive to its suggestions and eager to improve security wherever possible.

Regardless, **it is imperative that these recommendations be evaluated and discussed at the highest levels so a plan focusing on the identified vulnerabilities can be created.** It is our belief that these findings represent basic solutions to various ongoing problems and should be viewed as a starting point for comprehensive improvements and reform.

**Awareness of current and long-term security threats should be reevaluated by the FQMD on a continuing basis to gauge the necessity of increasing or relaxing security precautions periodically.**

More conceptually, in agreement with the vast majority of the assessment's respondents, Interfor believes the FQ would be best served by a concerted effort to change what was described as the increasingly raucous and chaotic brand of Bourbon Street.<sup>8</sup> There are several compelling reasons for this endeavor, but in keeping with the security-centric scope of this report, the pervasive "anything-goes binge-encouraging bacchanal" image of Bourbon Street contributes substantially to the feeling of lawlessness and attracts predatory and anti-social behavior.

When it comes to the sense of security in and around the French Quarter, **perception is tantamount to reality**, regardless of what statistics reflect from one month to the next. As one respondent candidly shared, *"nothing kills tourism like dead tourists."*

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<sup>8</sup> This characterization of Bourbon Street was painted by respondents across all categories, exemplified by the factors like the evolving and seemingly unstoppable street hustles, unlicensed shot vendors, impromptu street clubs, lack of noise restrictions, arrival of the Travelers, and degradation in the quality of tourists. It should be noted that Interfor personnel harbored this perception of Bourbon Street prior to their visit as well.

The following conversation with a local business owner encapsulates the common sentiment conveyed during most interviews throughout the course of this assessment:

*“Most of the business owners would state that they feel abandoned by law enforcement. It is prohibited by NOPD’s internal rules for a bar to hire off-duty police officers, and anecdotally, I’m aware of one owner who is spending \$10,000 a month on off-duty Sheriff’s Deputies to keep drug dealers out of his business.*

*The owners complain of unchecked panhandling, shoe-shine scams, “know where you got dem [sic] shoes” scams, aggressive solicitors, ever-present drug dealers and late night prostitutes. Additionally, illegal sellers of “shots” accompanied by coolers of beer appear late night on the street.*

*LSP was brought in to provide an LSP officer on every one of the eight blocks of Bourbon Street. That has not happened.*

*Additionally, an increasing number of officers are mounted patrols. While useful for crowd control, most nights mounted officers form a mobile petting zoo and are of limited use in controlling bad behavior, because intervening in the typical bad behavior means dismounting.*

*Most of the problems on the street would be resolved if we could get a constant, boots on the ground police presence on each block from the hours of 6pm to 5am.*

*According to the 2019 New Orleans budget, the Superintendent states that (as of 2018) there has been a 35% reduction in shootings and shooting victims, as well as a 17% reduction in armed robberies.*

*Have these accomplishments been mirrored in the French Quarter?”<sup>9</sup>*

Interfor’s review of available crime data for the 8<sup>th</sup> District reveals that over the past few years most major crime categories appear to be statistically volatile with no discernable trends. While there appears to be a slight general decrease in most crime categories (with the notable exceptions of rape and homicide), the sense of security and safety remain unchanged if not conversely reflected. If there is a district-wide or city-wide decrease in crime, it is clearly not sensed by residents, the business community, and tourists within the French Quarter.

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<sup>9</sup> Interfor has reviewed available crime statistics for the 8<sup>th</sup> District as maintained by NOPD and available through NOLA.gov. Interfor further notes that these statistics are not specifically broken down for the French Quarter.



It would be remiss of us to omit acknowledgement of a significant hindrance to the good efforts by stakeholders to address not only security, but the overall renaissance of the French Quarter: internecine politics and bickering. Throughout Interfor's time with the various players in the FQ, we were privy to palace intrigue and accusations of agendas, and we were repeatedly reminded of each group's "red-lines" lurking around the corner to immediately render any proposal or initiative dead in the water, no matter how insignificant in reality. This assertion will come as no surprise to any reader of this report and, admittedly, it is outside the scope of a security professional's traditional assessment. However, as this politicking has a bearing on the ultimate application of security solutions, Interfor feels a responsibility to shine a light on this dynamic. Perhaps in facing this charge from an outside party, the stakeholders involved will be inspired to soften their stances and work towards a common goal, which, in truth, is shared by all.

The perception of security and safety of the French Quarter varies block-by-block and constituency-to-constituency. Generally, Interfor found the policing and security infrastructure to be well-funded and well-staffed. However, issues stemming from improper or insufficient coordination, cohesion and proper deployment combine to hinder effective policing in the FQ. These issues do not appear to be insurmountable. However, strong local leadership across the police infrastructure and elected officials is required before any improvements can be made.

The concept of "more comprehensive security" is clearly desired. While a unified and regimented approach to improving security at all levels is necessary, limited concrete steps to do so are already in motion. **A unified and comprehensive plan should be developed to tackle security upgrades from technical and procedural aspects. These should be the first items discussed by the FQMD.**

*"I'm 100% for any additional taxes and resources, if it will actually help..."<sup>10</sup>*

The solutions set forth in this report are not easily achieved and in some cases have been obvious to stakeholders prior to Interfor's involvement. One prominent long-time New Orleans businessman exclaimed that getting all of the various security forces to merge is "a pipe dream" and that "they all hate each other." This sentiment may indeed be the case; however, this attitude must be overcome for the French Quarter to extricate itself from the current morass.

Ultimately, the findings and recommendations in this report are not a panacea for the ailments of the French Quarter. Thus, merely implementing the security measures recommended herein or addressing the low-hanging fruit is not the solution. This report will be best used to inform the security component of a wider comprehensive and holistic plan to rehabilitate the French Quarter, comprised of

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<sup>10</sup> Prominent business owner

concerted efforts in the areas of investment, social programming, branding, urban planning, and community building.

Interfor is available to work with FQMD to continue to develop practical security solutions that further the goal of a safe and prosperous French Quarter, which also means the same for New Orleans. With an improved security initiative, French Quarter citizens, workers, and tourists will feel protected and empowered, and the community will prosper, as will NOLA.

**Interfor recommends a follow-up evaluation after all the recommendations have been put into place to ensure that the implementation of systems and procedures was made optimally.** In addition, Interfor remains available for further consultation and support should the need arise.

## II. Summary of Recommendations<sup>11</sup>

The following section presents the array of Interfor's recommendations offered throughout the complete report in one concise list. When reviewing a specific recommendation kindly return to the body of the report for the full context in which that recommendation was arrived at.

### General Recommendations

- Interfor has concluded that fostering and implementing a comprehensive and coordinated program in conjunction with all security stakeholders<sup>12</sup> is the only path to mitigating risks and establishing a safe atmosphere, both tangibly and perceptually.
- Generally, Interfor believes that current vulnerabilities can be reduced by strengthening and improving existing security agencies, deployments and procedures, in addition to significantly improving coordination among the various security stakeholders operating within the FQ. Improved internal consolidation, coordination, and cooperation are critical components in rectifying many of the security issues facing the Quarter.
- Interfor recommends consolidating the current sundry security services and using the resulting savings<sup>13</sup> to address quality-of-life breakdowns and social programs which contribute to an unsafe atmosphere.
- It is imperative that these recommendations be evaluated and discussed at the highest levels so that a plan focusing on the identified vulnerabilities can be created. It is our belief that these findings represent basic solutions to various ongoing problems and should be viewed as a starting point for comprehensive improvements and reform. Awareness of current and long-term security threats should be reevaluated by the FQMD on a continuing basis to gauge the necessity of increasing or relaxing security precautions periodically.

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<sup>11</sup> These recommendations were expanded upon and discussed further in the full report issued to the FQMD.

<sup>12</sup> Police, security, the general public, and public/private initiatives

<sup>13</sup> In terms of both financial and manpower resources

## Visibility of Law Enforcement

- Interfor agrees with the NOPD and most other respondents that increased patrols and community policing will be advantageous. Any effort to improve visibility and contact with the denizens of the FQ should be considered. Simply put, the highest priority must be placed on a larger NOPD presence in the French Quarter.
- Interfor recommends additional resources earmarked for the NOPD be devoted towards additional “boots on the ground” in and around the French Quarter – whether through a higher headcount or increased overtime hours.
- Interfor recommends allocating resources to increase NOPD bicycle patrols. If the weather or other factors are not conducive to bike patrols, Interfor recommends adhering to a solution compatible with the environment. If scooters were successful with the NOPD and Polarises are enjoying success with the SPPP, those vehicles would be a suitable alternative.
- All law enforcement bodies should increase foot patrols by officers in uniform to increase the sense of authoritative presence. The practice of “clumping,” whereby four officers will gather and talk to each other should be actively lessened (this applies to NOPD as well). Fewer officers concentrated in one area translate into a wider area covered by patrols and presence.
- Interfor recommends LSP take steps to better communicate its strategy, outlook, and successes with other stakeholders, including business owners and residents.
- Interfor recommends that the NOPD take a more proactive role in setting expectations for troopers in terms of what their role is and where there is overlap.
- Interfor recommends periodic briefings on FQ-specific ordinances and community policing principles for LSP troopers rotating into a FQ assignment.
- Interfor advises the FQMD to require greater transparency and clarity of day-to-day activities of the SPPP. Interfor also recommends that the SPPP hire a full-time professional to take over day-to-day operations from Bob Simms, who can remain as a volunteer consultant.
- Interfor notes that the SPPP is a critical program, already well received by stakeholders, which should be expanded and reinforced to the extent financially feasible.

- Interfor concurs with French Market Patrol (FMP) stakeholders that their guards should be rolled into the SPPP jurisdiction. A first step would allow the SPPP to respond to calls in the French Market. The next step would allow post-certified FMP guards to operate under the auspices of the SPPP.
- Interfor recommends that the FMP be rolled into the SPPP with dedicated personnel in the area, and not be relegated to existing as just another independent security force.
- Interfor believes that if the SPPP is expanded, the need for RSD will become redundant. Regardless, this is another group that should be rolled into the SPPP in order to unify resources and governance.
- Interfor recommends that DDD funds be made available to expand the SPPP. Interfor believes the mandate of the SPPP be expanded to cover the area of the French Quarter currently patrolled by the DDD.
- Until the consolidation of law enforcement resources can be achieved, Interfor recommends better communication between the SPPP and DDD so their efforts can be compounded.
- Interfor recommends prioritizing any opportunity to invest in and further the Real Time Crime Center's effectiveness.
- More support is needed from the Sheriff in transporting arrested perpetrators to jail for booking. The miscommunications as to the Sheriff's office willingness or ability to do so should be clarified.
- The possibility of a mobile "booking bus" to house arrestees in the FQ before transporting them en-masse to the parish prison should be further explored. This measure would be a worthwhile initiative for the FQMD to undertake.
- Interfor notes that additional time and effort are required to study the OPSE and its impact on security and safety within the FQ. Interfor recommends a closer study of OPSE policies and practices and their impact on the ability for the SPPP to recruit and deploy post-certified officers. These issues are likely to impact other details in the FQ as well (pending convo with OPSE coordinator).
- Interfor recommends that off-duty officers working on private details should be on the same radio channel as the police department and be required to respond to calls in their immediate vicinity. This mandate will increase coverage and ultimately benefit the commercial establishments which hire them.

- Canal Street appears to be a feeder of criminal behavior and quality-of-life violations. Interfor recommends that NOPD and LSP should make best efforts to further project their presence and visibility on Canal Street. The DDD currently patrols the Canal Street area. Should the DDD consolidate with SPPP, there will be a greater and more efficient allocation of resources available for that beat.

### **Distinct Leadership**

- Interfor recommends one person be placed in charge of coordinating the security efforts of the FQMD, other stakeholder organizations, and the various law enforcement entities (both on- and off-duty) operating within the French Quarter. That individual would work hand-in-hand with a law enforcement commander under whose direction all the various law enforcement entities would fall.
- This team of two would devise how to best deploy the security and legal resources at hand, guided by the directives of the Mayor, City Council, and the body which would be charged with guiding any French Quarter renaissance project (discussed further in the next section). The reasoning behind this recommendation is based on the adage to avoid having “too many cooks in the kitchen.” Without clear leadership, the various law enforcement agencies and other civic organizations will continue to lack direction and operate independently or at cross-purposes.
- The French Quarter is a 24-hour tax generating area, yet typically the Commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> is a daytime position. While this practice might make sense in that a modern police commander spends much of his or her time compiling reports and attending meetings, it would best serve the city and its night-time economy to have a night commander. That commander would develop a sense of the 8<sup>th</sup> District, its ebbs and flows, and would observe problems firsthand.
- Interfor’s assessment is that FQMD is the appropriate organization to direct a comprehensive reclamation project for the Quarter.

## The Task Force App

- Interfor recommends the further development of a neighborhood-wide quality-of-life reporting procedure within the SPPP app, an effort already underway but in need of wider support. Law enforcement, business operators, and residents should be trained (perhaps through town hall meetings and an awareness campaign) about local ordinances and what constitutes a viable code infraction and ultimately how to handle the notification process.
- The SPPP should be expanded to cover all of the adjacent areas of Canal Street and possibly other adjacent areas. With the right coordination, other security bodies such as the DDD can be folded into the SPPP, along with some of their management structure.
- LSP recommends, and Interfor concurs, that the NOPD should be monitoring the app as well, because “now they’re the missing link,” in the sense that LSP and SPPP are both using the app in concert effectively.<sup>14</sup> Ideally, should the suggestion of force consolidation be followed, NOPD oversight of SPPP would naturally be adopted as part of the restructuring.
- Interfor strongly recommends retaining a full-time civilian manager or managers, with law enforcement or other relevant backgrounds, to oversee the task force from a logistical standpoint.<sup>15</sup>

## Quality of Life and Tactical Recommendations

- Any legal means to deter “Travelers” or “Gutter Punks” from settling or transiting seasonally in the FQ must be pursued. Strict enforcement of quality of life offenses and penalties would be a strong step in this direction. While sweeps are effective, they would likely only push the problem to other neighborhoods for short periods of time. Making New Orleans an inhospitable district to be a migratory vagrant in is the goal.
- Initiatives to increase awareness and dissemination of the SafeCam Platinum program should be supported by the FQMD, NOPD and the community on whole. Such a program would entail flyers posted in business, direct visits to business owners and landlords to explain the benefits of the program, and increased messaging passed through local trade associations.

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<sup>14</sup> See previous section on SPPP (Part III, sub-section C) for more on LSP’s view of SPPP.

<sup>15</sup> As stated earlier, the NOPD 8th District should assume supervisory responsibility. During Interfor’s second visit, in October 2019, it was pointed out that there is now an active search for full time paid supervisor.

- Interfor strongly recommends bollard mobilization to be fixed/improved immediately. The NOPD is in the best position to oversee this measure.
- The sources of aggressive solicitation schemes must be restricted from both directions through consistent enforcement of laws and a better educated average tourist.
- Interfor recommends barring firearms to within 50 feet of an ABO, which would effectively create a bubble around the Bourbon Street area and thereby facilitate the avoidance of potential violent incidents, which increase with the mixture of alcohol consumption and the presence of firearms.
- Interfor believes vehicular traffic on Bourbon Street should be further restricted during certain hours, with commercial deliveries confined to mid-mornings as is done during Mardi Gras. Parking and traffic violations should play a major role in any comprehensive renaissance initiative.
- Interfor recommends increasing the number of streetlights and their wattage. Interfor also recommends that store owners who must shoo away vagrants from their vestibules every morning, or clean up the evidence of their presence, be encouraged to install bright lighting focused on their doorways, which makes those areas less welcoming in which to sleep, get high, or defecate.

END OF REPORT