**new orleans Creative Economy and Strategies to Increase its   
Economic Potential**



Summary of

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**I. Introduction**

Over the past ten years, there has been a growing understanding of the economic potential of a community’s creative assets—its creative legacy, creative artists and producers of all disciplines, current resources, creative enterprises, and creative institutions. Countries, states, and cities throughout the world have looked broadly at the importance of culture’s economic contribution, and have recognized that commercial and nonprofit arts and creative enterprises are of vital economic importance in terms of employment, community empowerment, equity, economic competitiveness, enhanced quality of life, and skill building. This is particularly true of New Orleans, a city that has been recognized for over a century as an important creative center for its musical, culinary, archtectural and environmental design.

The Downtown Development District and the Creative Alliance of New Orleans have focused on the creative industries as an economic driver for not only the Central Business District, but the entire city and metro area. The partnership has produced annual forums inviting key regional, national and internationa creative, business, economic development and civic leaders to explore the city’s potential to grow its creative sector and fulfil its global potential as a leading creative center.

We have realized the importance of developing a deeper understanding of the extent and character of our creative sector and the importance of broadening our collaboration to include other agencies and individuals in the leadership of an analysis and planning process that can lead to a major paradigm change in the city’s intentional strategies to grow the creative sector. It is with this realization that the partnership has determined to go forward with a program to gather partners, survey our resources and their impact, develop a strategic, action and ultimately a marketing plan to optimize the long term potential of our creative resources.

Taking this work to the next level demands a deeper knowledge base about the strength of our creative sector, its creative enterprises, resources and as well those factors that have held further development from occuring . This work will include expanding the understanding of our assets beyond the nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. This means understanding the individual artists and creative individuals who are self-employed and who make a living through their freelancing activities. It means better understanding the more nuanced patterns of cultural expression and It also means understanding the commercial businesses that are part of the creative sector. Furthermore, there are a number of companies in the city that are important contributors to the city’s and region’s creative economy and individuals producing and employed in the film, video, gaming and other internet content space; architectural, interior, landscape and industrial design firms, visual arts galleries, markets, on line distribution; and importantly for this region, culinary arts purveyors from restaurants to various media, production and or distribution ofcreative internet and print products.

The full impact of the creative sector now requires understanding the pervasive nature of creative work throughout other economic and industrial sectors. Innovation is the most critical characteristic of competitive economies during this era of increasing automation, AR, robotics, and continued globalization of production. Increasingly arts and economic planners are looking to redefine the focus on S.T.E.M. to S.T.E.A.M, thus adding the arts to the educational focus on the sciences and tech disciplines. Many universities are recognizing this linkage and have developed S.T.E.A.M. programs, including, for example Nunez Community College in St. Bernard Parish.

Our work will include exploration of the linkages between the region’s creative talent and creative enterprises and other key clusters such as environmental industries, that are critical to the city’s economic future. Further, understanding the creative “infrastructure” in the city and region requires looking at the many higher educational institutions that are producing talent, presenting cultural performances, and incubating creative thinking. An effective action plan must be based on a deep understanding of the potential connections between the city’s core clusters and its creative talent and enterprises and develop strategies that promote new networks, relationships, and resources that enhance creativity and innovation.

To the New Orleans metro area and Louisiana in general, is a powerful tie between contemporary creative developments, and the lasting impact of the region’s creative legacy. A long history of isolation driven by climate and multi-national cultural roots, including in particular the demographic impact of the nation’s most pervasive slave market, as well the extensive Native American population, and a profound immigration of Haitian emigres that in just a few years doubled the population of New Orleans, remain influences in a very vibrant and current way. New Orleans past is not past, it continues to shape contemporary art forms in all disciplines. A plan for the development of the city’s creative sector that fails to look at these influences as authentic and pervasive resources to be respected, supported and protected as our creative economy develops more intentionally, fails our city. Careful research will be required to assure the most accurate understanding of these unique cultural factors. A key will be to recognize that many of our culture bearers comprise our working poor, maintaining their cultural roots with negligible support from any public, business or civic sources.

It is also important to develop a better understanding of the impact, value and challenges of the immigration of young creatives and tech entrepreneurs to the city that followed Katrina. Many initially arrived with the intention of helping this important cultural center recover from the storm, levee breaches and lingering loss of homes, neighborhoods and industry. Many have developed long term commitments to the region, bringing new cultural influences, evolving appreciation of local cultural assets, but also gentrification and an increasing deficiency of affordable housing in many parts of the city. A balancing of these trends have to be addressed to minimize negative developments, and optimize the value of the new arrivals.