



**SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER**  
**DESTINATION MASTER PLAN 2023**

Shreveport  
Bossier



# Welcome

## FROM VISIT SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER

**S**hreveport-Bossier is a place with enough flavor, style and soul for two cities. We're not the same, but we're not all that different, either. All of us want to share what's special about our home. We all want to see our area grow and show off what we've already grown together. And even though we have a lot to be proud of, we also know we have many more opportunities in our shared future to be the communities we want to be.

People who live, work and play here are diverse, creative, resilient and community-minded. We love to have fun. We're real. We don't put on airs. And we make no apologies for that. We encourage residents to look around with open hearts and minds to see everything we have to offer. Lean in and get involved! We know you'll find a community that welcomes you with open arms.

We are Visit Shreveport-Bossier (VSB), previously known as the Shreveport-Bossier Convention & Tourist Bureau. Our name is new, but our mission is still to show visitors how our communities are alive with music, art, food, festivals, history and adventure. We all win when people travel to our cities and parishes, stay in our hotels, eat somewhere amazing, listen to our incredible music, and experience our many dynamic events and attractions.

In addition to showcasing what is, Visit Shreveport-Bossier is invested in what could be. The year-long process to develop the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan clearly highlighted the authentic pride and optimism in our communities. That is no exaggeration. We felt it in every community engagement session we hosted. The future is bright for our area, and with community commitment, government support and other partnerships, this document is the blueprint for our future growth together.

We may be two places, but we have one heart that connects us all when it comes to making our communities more vibrant places to live. As we like to say, "**Find Your Place. Find Your People.**" We have a vast and diverse range of both. When people visit us, they see we're not like anywhere else. They explore a little bit of this, a little bit of that, and they find a whole lot of US.

This is an open invitation to the people of Shreveport-Bossier to work with your neighbors to help make our cities and parishes even stronger. Communities aren't something we have. They're something we do. This plan was developed so that none of us are alone as we build our neighborhoods together for ourselves and our future generations.



**STACY BROWN**  
PRESIDENT & CEO  
VISIT SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER



ENOUGH  
*Flavor,*  
STYLE  
AND SOUL  
FOR TWO CITIES.

VISITSHREVEPORTBOSSIER.ORG

Shreveport  
Bossier



# PURPOSE STATEMENT

**T**he purpose of the 10-year Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan is to optimize the regional visitor economy to benefit more people in the community. That encompasses many different visitor segments including leisure, gaming, sports, business, convention, religious, educational, military and social (“friends & family”) travel.

The visitor economy is vital to Shreveport-Bossier’s shared success. In 2019, more than nine million day and overnight visitors spent \$681 million in Shreveport-Bossier. In 2021, that economic impact jumped to \$819 million. All of that is money coming from outside the region that stays here locally in a wide range of Shreveport-Bossier communities.

Visitor revenues help ensure the success of many local businesses and community organizations. In effect, visitors are helping pay our employees. Those dollars also contribute to the local tax base to help fund many public infrastructure upgrades, services and amenities that residents rely on. Therefore, the reason for developing this plan is to continue growing those revenues in the next decade to increasingly benefit the people who live and work in Caddo and Bossier parishes.

## INTENDED OUTCOMES OF THIS PLAN

**INCREASE THE AMOUNT OF VISITOR DOLLARS COMING INTO THE REGION YEAR-ROUND**

**ALIGN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AROUND A SHARED VISION FOR INCREASING VISITOR-DRIVEN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

**ENHANCE AND DIVERSIFY THE OVERALL DESTINATION EXPERIENCE FOR ALL VISITOR SEGMENTS**

**ENSURE A MORE DIVERSE RANGE OF LOCAL BUSINESSES AND RESIDENTS BENEFIT FROM OUR VISITOR ECONOMY**

**ENHANCE COMMUNITY UNITY AND PRIDE**



**BRITTNEY DUNN**

**CHAIRMAN, SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER, AFRICAN AMERICAN CHAMBER  
CO-CHAIR, DESTINATION MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

**I am extremely humbled and honored to work with so many great leaders, business owners and experts to develop the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan. It gave me the opportunity to engage with major stakeholders and citizens who love our community and want to see it grow and thrive. We want to share the love we have for small businesses, delicious restaurants, our beautiful nature, and our greatest asset, our wonderful people, with the rest of the world.**

Working with this initiative taught our collective so much. One of the biggest needs for us to grow and be successful is pride. You must have a certain pride in where you live in order for you to be able to convince stakeholders, local investors, business owners and citizens to get on board with a unified vision for our cities. When spotlighting the opportunities for growth in our area, it is important that we appeal to all, and that starts with diversity. We need people from all walks of life to invest both their time and money in the betterment of our cities. Working together for positive change yields unprecedented results.

In order for tourism to be successful in the Shreveport and Bossier City area, we must differentiate ourselves from other areas in our region. This means leaning into our culture of cuisine, art, music and festivals; our robust healthcare system; and our athletics and family-friendly attractions. We must provide unique and diverse activities and events that will entice all types of visitors to return to our cities. That includes utilizing our convention centers, downtowns, casinos and water assets further, so we can attract more national conventions, national brands, new festivals, art exhibits and minor league sports events. More investments in these areas will create density and increase the walkability of our streets, resulting in an increase of business patrons.

To sum it all up, we want visitors to feel welcomed, safe and have a fun experience that can't be duplicated anywhere else in our region, which keeps them coming back. To accomplish that, we must preserve locality, ensure diversity, support investments, and promote positivity and pride to enhance our tourism industry and our community.



**LISA JOHNSON**

**PRESIDENT, BOSSIER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
CO-CHAIR, DESTINATION MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE**

**Our community is one that I love. Northwest Louisiana is full of real people who are also full of diversity and creativity. Most of all, we have a community mindset. This is an amazing place to call home that looks different for every person, but we are united in our shared purpose to make Bossier City a place where everyone can thrive.**

The Bossier Chamber of Commerce strives to be that connection agency for all who choose to create their place here. Our focus is mainly on community sustainability and economic prosperity. As businesses look to move and relocate, they may look at things like tax credits, available land and workforce, proximity to infrastructure needs, etc. But they also look at quality of life and the types of people who live here.

In our Northwest Louisiana community, you won't find just one type of person, you will find a community filled with people of diverse backgrounds and interests. From generational families and businesses to transitional families who move in and out of our community, we all come together to grow things, innovate, create, and above all, be unapologetic for who we are.

The Bossier Chamber of Commerce encourages you to join in the community initiatives put forth in this Destination Master Plan to help more people and more businesses find their place in our home. We welcome EVERYONE on this journey. We have immeasurable homegrown pride, and we can all be change agents to influence more positivity in our communities where we live, work, play and learn together.



**TIM MAGNER**

**PRESIDENT, GREATER SHREVEPORT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
DESTINATION MASTER PLAN STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBER**

**S**hreveport-Bossier is a place with enough creativity, innovation and flavors for two cities. We are a community of interwoven communities, large and small. We hold our beliefs close and our families even closer.

Since Captain Shreve cleared the “Great Raft” and founded the town that bears his name, Shreveport has been a location for innovators, inventors and hard workers who also know how to have a good time. Here you’ll find our unique combination of “cowboy gumbo” blending the best of Texas, Arkansas and Louisiana in our food, fashion and festivals.

Things grow here. We’re makers and creators who grow ideas and industries. Together, we’re the people who make our communities, neighborhoods and parishes distinctively unique, which creates the rich fabric that makes us uniquely who we are.

Our economy is equally diverse, including manufacturing, construction, health care, information technology, tourism, retail, oil and gas development, casino gaming, and warehousing and distribution, just to name a few. We are also home to world-class colleges and universities, as well as the many innovative men and women at Barksdale Air Force Base.

The Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce is proud to have participated in developing the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan to help further grow those industries by welcoming more people here. We look forward to working with everyone to accomplish the goals in this plan that our community formulated. Together, we can propel our special way of mixing things and making them our own to create a place you won’t find anywhere else.



# STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee for the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan provided critical guidance and support throughout the entire project. Visit Shreveport-Bossier wishes to thank the following community members for their thoughtful leadership, inclusive perspective, collaborative spirit, and invaluable contributions to develop the final framework of strategic goals and actionable initiatives.

**Brittney Dunn (Co-chair)**

Chairman, Shreveport-Bossier African American Chamber

**Lisa Johnson (Co-chair)**

President, Bossier Chamber of Commerce

**Doyle Adams**

Pastor, Elizabeth Baptist Church of Benton

**Pam Atchison**

Executive Director, Shreveport Regional Arts Council

**Gabriel Balderas**

Chef & Owner, El Cabo Verde

**Tommy Boggs**

Executive Vice President, Citizens National Bank

**Mike Busada**

Development Attorney, Butler Snow

**Eric England**

Executive Port Director, Port of Caddo-Bossier

**Butch Ford**

Administrator, Bossier Parish Police Jury

**Beau Hays**

Co-Owner, BeauxJax Craffthouse

**Tim Magner**

President, Greater Shreveport Chamber of Commerce

**Amanda Nottingham**

Chief Administrative Officer, City of Bossier City

**Jason Roberts**

Director of Hotel Operations, Bally's Shreveport

**Liz Swaine**

Executive Director, Downtown Development Authority

**Bob Thames**

Former Regional Brand Ambassador, Great Raft Brewing

**Henry Whitehorn**

Former Chief Administrative Officer, City of Shreveport

**Dr. Woody Wilson**

Administrator, Caddo Parish Commission

**Stacy Brown**

President & CEO, Visit Shreveport-Bossier

## MMGY NEXTFACTOR PROJECT TEAM

**Greg Oates**

SVP, Innovation

**Jé-Vonna Sampson**

Director, Destination Planning

**Paul Ouimet**

Partner, President

**Cheryll Girard**

Operations Manager





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# OBJECTIVES FOR THIS DESTINATION MASTER PLAN

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**T**he development of the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan goes back to January 2019. Visit Shreveport-Bossier and the MMGY NextFactor consultancy conducted a “DestinationNEXT Assessment Survey” to identify how local community and industry stakeholders perceived the performance of the region’s visitor industry. More than 330 other cities have participated in the same assessment survey.

**A total of 401 stakeholders across Caddo and Bossier parishes answered questions related to 20 variables focusing on the quality of local infrastructure and air service, attractions and special events, hotels and restaurants, convention and meeting facilities, entertainment and gaming, community alignment and government support, local workforce and small business development, and other themes.**

The DestinationNEXT survey results identified opportunities and challenges to improve Shreveport-Bossier’s visitor economy. To build on the data as effectively as possible for the benefit of the community, Visit Shreveport-Bossier subsequently contracted MMGY NextFactor to develop the organization’s 2020 Strategic Plan. That process was stewarded by Visit Shreveport-Bossier’s Board of Directors, which consists of community and industry leaders in both Shreveport and Bossier City.

Two key directives emerged from the strategic plan. The organization’s Board of Directors identified the need for a 10-year destination master plan to increase direct visitor dollar revenues for local businesses, while also supporting broader community, workforce and economic development initiatives. The second directive prioritized the need for a new regional brand that any organization or business in the region could use for their own purposes.

The process to develop the 10-year Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan began in early 2022. Ultimately, this document was created to enhance local quality of life and build unity in Caddo and Bossier parishes by optimizing the visitor economy to benefit as many local residents as possible from all socioeconomic backgrounds.

That is a critical point of understanding for all of us. Increasing visitor dollars coming into the region contributes to the local tax base to help fund infrastructure improvements, community amenities, and public services, etc. Expanding and diversifying that economic activity also provides a wide range of employment and professional development opportunities from entry level to executive positions. Furthermore, higher visitor volumes also support Shreveport-Bossier’s investment, talent and resident attraction efforts. Few people (military notwithstanding) have ever moved to a city or invested in a city without visiting it first. As such, our visitor economy is the tip of the spear for economic and community development.

**Specifically, the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan prioritizes the following five key objectives for the region to improve the local visitor economy and increase benefits for residents.**

To accomplish these primary objectives, the successful implementation of the strategies in this plan will require wide collaboration between local and regional governments, industry stakeholders, community organizations, and residents from all walks of life.

**1. Increase the amount of visitor dollars coming into the destination year-round**

People visit Shreveport-Bossier every month for leisure travel experiences, business meetings and conventions, special events and festivals, amateur sports tournaments, outdoor recreation, etc., or they come to visit friends and family. Meaning, a lot of different types of visitors are bringing money from outside the region and they're leaving it in Shreveport-Bossier. The #1 goal with this destination master plan is to expand that economic pipeline as equitably as possible to benefit more businesses, organizations and residents in more communities during more days of the week year-round.

**2. Align the public, private and civic sectors around a shared vision for the future of the visitor economy and the opportunities it provides for community and economic development**

It is critical for government, industry and community leaders to embrace how the visitor economy supports local small business development, which in turn, builds stronger and more vibrant communities. That is one theme that unites almost all residents on both sides of the river. Ultimately, this plan is about building a better Shreveport-Bossier long-term, so more residents have opportunities for personal and professional growth. As one local pastor put it, "You know, God fully supports smart economic development that makes things better for our people."

**3. Diversify the development of the destination for all segments of visitors (leisure, business, conventions, sports, gaming, social, etc.)**

Increasing the amount of visitor dollars coming into Shreveport-Bossier depends on developing new infrastructure and amenities, as well as updating what already exists. That includes a vast range of initiatives from building new sports facilities to addressing blight. Shreveport-Bossier's urban environment is an

outstanding geographical footprint surrounded by stunning outdoor beauty, so there's a lot to capitalize on to enhance quality of place and quality of life. The City of Shreveport and City of Bossier City, along with Caddo and Bossier parishes, are investing significant sums of dollars to develop their urban cores and rural communities. Visitors and visitor dollars help support those initiatives and accelerate their successes.

**4. Convene a more diverse range of local businesses, organizations and residents to contribute to, and benefit from, the local visitor economy**

The diversity of people and places in Shreveport-Bossier is one of its greatest strengths. That's the basis for all the great food, music, arts, culture and entertainment that both locals and visitors love. It's the reason why Louisiana is known almost everywhere around the world. The long-term success of Shreveport-Bossier, or any city for that matter, relies on local residents across all socioeconomic, racial and lifestyle segments believing they can attain their goals where they live. And, no other sector like travel and tourism provides as diverse a range of opportunities for people from all walks of life and skill levels. The goal then is to fully leverage the visitor economy to bring as many different people and organizations together as possible to expand local personal and professional networks, create new business development partnerships, and build stronger communities.

**5. Enhance community pride and unity**

Throughout the development of this master plan, the people who participated in the many various community engagement sessions were full of optimism and pride. They showed up and spoke their mind because they are invested in their neighborhoods and the people around them. Social media, on the other hand, is rife with negative residents venting their frustrations behind the scenes. Some of them are best described as "CAVE" people (Citizens Against Virtually Everything). They hate two things: They hate the ways things are, and they hate change. It's easy to feel like a hero on Facebook, but it takes a lot of work and personal commitment to join forces with other community members to deliver real-world solutions on the ground. This plan is meant to capitalize on the spirit of local residents who are proud to live in Shreveport-Bossier, and who believe they can make a positive impact in their communities for themselves, their families, and their neighbors.



# PROJECT PLAN

## TIMELINE

The process to develop the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan commenced in April 2022. The due diligence to validate the need for both the master plan and the new brand architecture began with the industry-standard DestinationNEXT assessment survey in 2019. That was followed by the creation of a new 3-year Shreveport-Bossier Convention & Tourist Bureau Strategic Recovery plan in the fall of 2020. During that planning process, the organization’s Board of Directors agreed that a new master plan and brand identity were critical priorities for the visitor industry, residents, and the community at large.

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>JAN-FEB 2019</b>      | DESTINATIONNEXT INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER ASSESSMENT SURVEY          |
| <b>AUG-OCT 2020</b>      | SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER CONVENTION & TOURIST BUREAU STRATEGIC RECOVERY PLAN      |
| <b>FEBRUARY 2022</b>     | MMGY NEXTFACTOR & MMGY GLOBAL SIGNED FOR MASTER PLAN/BRAND PROJECT WORK     |
| <b>APRIL 2022</b>        | DESTINATION MASTER PLAN & BRAND PROJECT INITIATION                          |
| <b>MAY-JUL 2022</b>      | RESEARCH, MARKET DATA & PUBLIC/PRIVATE PLANNING DOCUMENT ANALYSIS           |
| <b>MAY-DEC 2022</b>      | FOCUS GROUPS & INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS WITH INDUSTRY & COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS |
| <b>SEP-OCT 2022</b>      | RESIDENT SENTIMENT SURVEY   |
| <b>OCT-NOV 2022</b>      | 3 TOWN HALLS  |
| <b>NOVEMBER 2022</b>     | STAKEHOLDER VISIONING WORKSHOP  |
| <b>DEC 2022-FEB 2023</b> | DESTINATION MASTER PLAN & BRAND DEVELOPMENT                                 |
| <b>FEBRUARY 2023</b>     | NEW BRAND APPROVAL  |
| <b>MAY 2023</b>          | MASTER PLAN APPROVAL & MASTER PLAN/BRAND LAUNCH                             |

**1,000+**  
 LOCAL COMMUNITY MEMBERS  
 IN BOTH SHREVEPORT &  
 BOSSIER CITY PROVIDED  
 THEIR OPINIONS

## COMMUNITY & INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A destination master plan is only as good as the execution behind it. The ultimate success of a master plan is based on engaging the widest possible range of local industry and community members to collaboratively develop the final strategies and actionable initiatives, because they're the people who will implement them. Throughout 2022, Visit Shreveport-Bossier and MMGY NextFactor brought together more than 200 people from all walks of life to define the optimal future for Shreveport-Bossier through their personal and professional perspectives.

That variety and volume of community engagement was supplemented with an extensive resident sentiment survey. More than 1,000 community members in both Caddo and Bossier parishes provided their opinions about the opportunities and challenges for the region now and during the next 10 years.

### 15 FOCUS GROUPS WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM:

- ACCOMMODATIONS
- ADVANCED INDUSTRIES
- AFRICAN AMERICAN ENTREPRENEURS
- ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE
- ATTRACTIONS & TOURS
- CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
- COMMUNITY LEADERS
- DOWNTOWN DEVELOPMENT
- EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS
- EVENTS & FESTIVALS
- FAITH-BASED GROUPS
- FOOD & BEVERAGE
- GAMING & ENTERTAINMENT
- MILITARY
- PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION
- SPORTS TOURISM
- YOUNG ENTREPRENEURS

### 50+ INTERVIEWS WITH INDIVIDUALS FROM:

- ACADEMIA
- ACCOMMODATIONS
- ADVANCED INDUSTRIES
- ARTS, CULTURE & HERITAGE
- ATTRACTIONS & TOURS
- COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS
- CHAMBERS OF COMMERCE
- ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
- ENTERTAINMENT, FILM & MUSIC
- EVENTS & FESTIVALS
- FAITH-BASED GROUPS
- FOOD & BEVERAGE
- GOVERNMENT & LAW
- PARKS & OUTDOOR RECREATION
- SPORTS TOURISM
- TRANSPORTATION
- URBAN PLANNING

### THREE PUBLIC TOWN HALLS FOR:

1. RESIDENTS
2. COMMUNITY LEADERS
3. INDUSTRY STAKEHOLDERS

### ONE VISIONING WORKSHOP WITH COMMUNITY & INDUSTRY LEADERS

### 25+ VISIT SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER & STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

### RESIDENT SENTIMENT SURVEY:

CADDO PARISH: 645 PARTICIPANTS  
 BOSSIER PARISH: 433 PARTICIPANTS





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# RESIDENT SENTIMENT SURVEY

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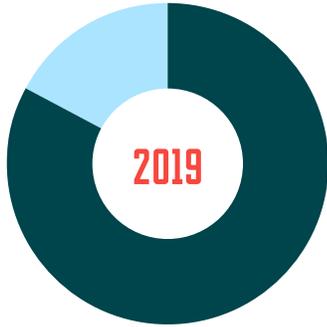
**V**isit Shreveport-Bossier conducted a comprehensive resident sentiment survey in October 2022 to empirically gauge how locals feel about living in their communities. A total of 1,068 residents participated – 645 who live in Shreveport/Caddo Parish and 423 who live in Bossier City/Bossier Parish. Generalized top-line takeaways include the following:

- Residents perceive Shreveport to be a diverse and artsy community, while those living in Bossier City perceive their community to be family-oriented
- Residents in Bossier City perceive their communities to be more safe than those in Shreveport, although residents in Shreveport were widely split in terms of their perceptions of safety
- Residents in Bossier City overall showed a higher degree of civic pride than those in Shreveport
- Residents in both cities agreed their communities are rooted in faith; they eagerly support local businesses; and they're well known for their festivals and events
- Many residents focused on the negatives of the cities. Others chose to focus on the potential for each city and what they can be if more people work together to create more unified communities

The resident sentiment survey also asked several open-ended questions, such as **“What does ‘community’ mean to you?”** One of the key takeaways from the survey showed that residents in both Caddo and Bossier parishes have similar definitions of community. A mixed sample of their answers are shown here (edited for typos/grammar):

- “Locals getting together to help and lift up one another”
- “Community means the coming together of all people, no matter what gender, race, color, ethnicity or religion one may be, in the hopes of living in a peaceful society where everyone is respected and appreciated for any service they provide for the community”
- “A group of people that collectively live in a certain area that have a mutual pride for that area”
- “Good neighbors, good schools and a clean and safe place to live”
- “Community not only is a group of people living in the same place, but it’s also a feeling of fellowship with others as a result of sharing common interests, attributes and goals for our city and lives”
- “A sense of caring for people who live near you and looking out for each other’s welfare, all sharing a similar sense of purpose in maintaining a safe, stable and thriving socioeconomic climate in a shared geographic area”
- “A community is a group of people living in the same place, but community is also a feeling of partnership and belonging”
- “Community means the people, places, traditions and culture that define the taste, smell, look and just overall experience of an area”

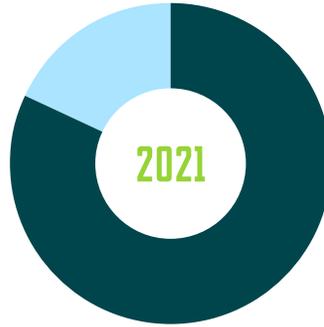
## OVERNIGHT TRAVEL & TOURISM MARKET



2019

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| ■ Adults   | 83%   \$3.3 million |
| ■ Children | 17%   \$0.7 million |

**4.0 MILLION**  
TOTAL OVERNIGHT PERSON TRIPS



2021

|            |                     |
|------------|---------------------|
| ■ Adults   | 82%   \$3.4 million |
| ■ Children | 18%   \$0.8 million |

**4.2 MILLION**  
TOTAL OVERNIGHT PERSON TRIPS

## MARKET PROFILE

High-level market data is critical to identify the health of the visitor industry and how visitor volumes and spending are trending year over year.

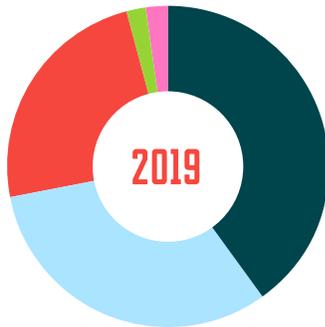
Comparing 2019 pre-Covid visitation numbers and 2021 (the latest data available) the positive news is that visitor arrivals increased slightly. Also, average visitor spending jumped significantly (20%+) from \$681 million to \$819 million annually.

This master plan was developed to accelerate the timeline toward \$1 billion in direct visitor-based economic impact flowing into Shreveport-Bossier every year.

However, the average number of visitor nights dropped below the crucial 2-night mark. Hotels rely on a second night stay, when they don't have to service rooms, to make payroll and drive profitability. The key to increasing average length-of-stay is improving and diversifying the overall destination experience, which ultimately benefits residents as well.

Source: Longwoods International

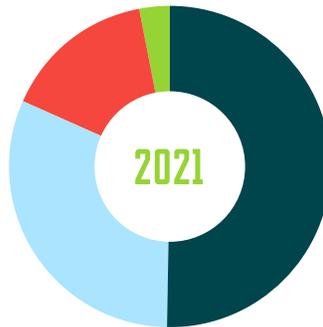
## NIGHTS SPENT IN SHREVEPORT-BOSSIER



2019

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| ■ 1 night    | 40% |
| ■ 2 nights   | 32% |
| ■ 3-4 nights | 24% |
| ■ 5-6 nights | 2%  |
| ■ 7+ nights  | 2%  |

**2.2**  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF NIGHTS

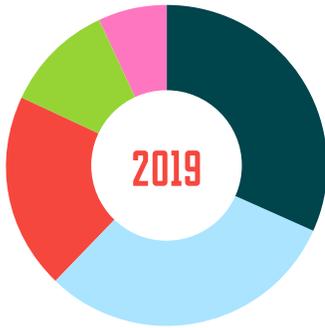


2021

|              |     |
|--------------|-----|
| ■ 1 night    | 50% |
| ■ 2 nights   | 31% |
| ■ 3-4 nights | 15% |
| ■ 5-6 nights | 3%  |
| ■ 7+ nights  | 0%  |

**1.9**  
AVERAGE NUMBER OF NIGHTS

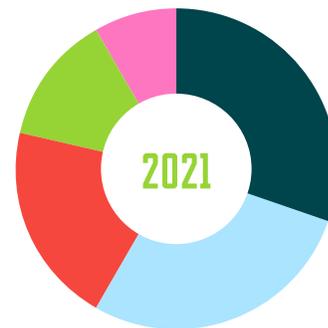
## OVERNIGHT EXPENDITURES BY SECTOR



|                               |     |               |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Lodging                       | 32% | \$215 million |
| Recreation/Entertainment      | 31% | \$212 million |
| Restaurant Food & Beverage    | 20% | \$133 million |
| Retail Purchase               | 11% | \$77 million  |
| Transportation in Destination | 7%  | \$45 million  |

**\$681 MILLION**

TOTAL SPENDING

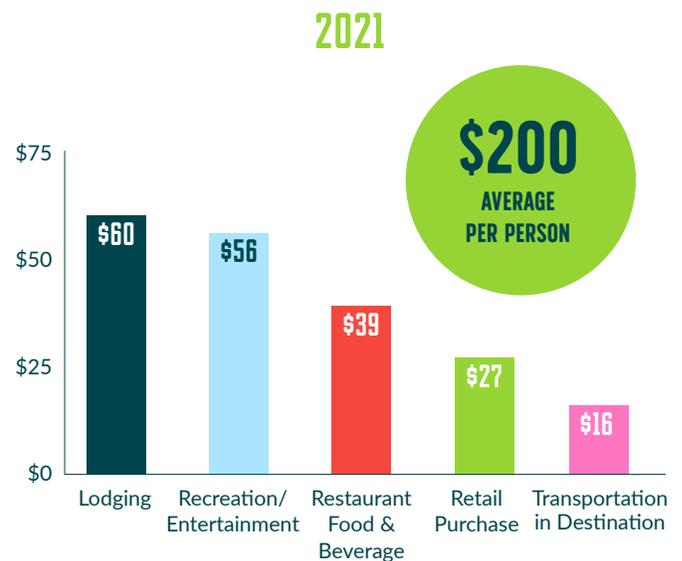
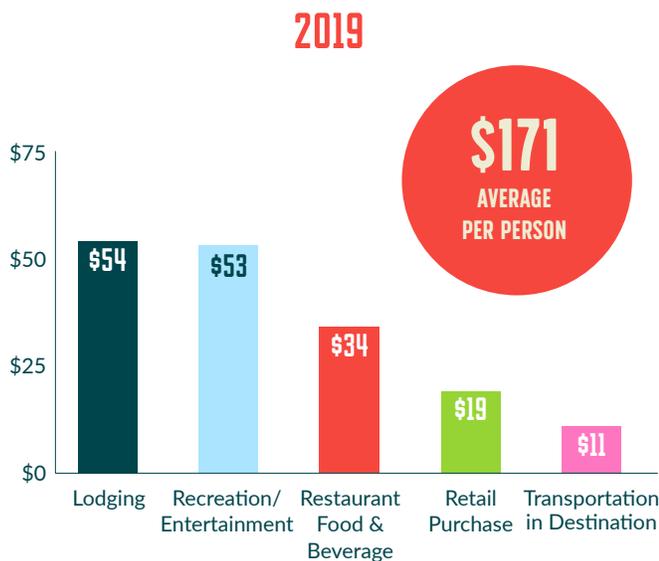


|                               |     |               |
|-------------------------------|-----|---------------|
| Lodging                       | 30% | \$249 million |
| Recreation/Entertainment      | 28% | \$231 million |
| Restaurant Food & Beverage    | 20% | \$162 million |
| Retail Purchase               | 13% | \$110 million |
| Transportation in Destination | 8%  | \$67 million  |

**\$819 MILLION**

TOTAL SPENDING

## AVERAGE PER PERSON EXPENDITURES ON OVERNIGHT TRIPS BY SECTOR





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## INTRODUCTION: A SHARED VISION FOR THE FUTURE

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**S**hreveport-Bossier is incredibly fortunate to have an urban footprint that one resident described as “big enough to get lost in and small enough to be found.” During the year-long development of this destination master plan, countless interviewees said the reason they love living in Shreveport-Bossier is because their home has the amenities of a larger city, but at the same time, the compact size of the urban area makes it convenient to go everywhere and meet anyone easily.

There are many other positives for Shreveport-Bossier residents to embrace and capitalize on. The twin-city landscape provides a diverse series of neighborhoods, communities, histories and cultures connected by the Red River and surrounded by fertile woodlands and lakes. This is not a generic one-size-fits-all kind of city. And, one could argue, there’s really no other city of the same size like Shreveport-Bossier in terms of its convergence of attitudes, energies and environments. Additionally, the agreeable year-round weather; the strong sense of community, faith and Southern hospitality; and the expansion of key industries – medical, education, military and technology – all present a proven environment for long-term growth and prosperity.

Shreveport-Bossier is also well positioned to thrive based on the cost of living. Relative to national averages, the Caddo and Bossier parishes collectively are more affordable for people to buy a home, raise a family, attend school, start a business, make an impact in their community, and create a full life for themselves and loved ones. That is increasingly a challenge in America. With real estate values out-pricing many people in so many urban markets nationwide, there is surging demand for cities like Shreveport-Bossier that provide all of the above. Many of the fastest growing cities today are midsize cities, from Reno to Durham, with similar physical, demographic and socioeconomic footprints.

However, that sense of optimism for the future of the twin cities isn’t shared among all residents. There is a lack of unity, pride and hope in many communities. One resident said, “Our biggest struggle is our defeatist attitude. Civic pride is actually looked down upon.”

There are a few key factors behind that. One, the local economy took a significant hit with the exodus of oil and banking companies in the late 20th century, which emptied the streets of downtown Shreveport during various times of the week. Two, the lack of an official citywide planning strategy in past decades created a void for attracting investment. And three, Covid-19 decimated local businesses like most other cities in the nation.

Today, in the wake of all that, many local residents are preoccupied on social media with cleanliness, blight, crime, lack of employment opportunities, etc., which are not to be dismissed or diminished any more so than in other cities. The challenge is how to change public perception and generate positive sentiment based on many ongoing and planned developments addressing the interrelated factors underlying the present state of the economy.



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## #1 goal:

**EXPAND THE  
ECONOMIC PIPELINE  
DURING MORE DAYS OF THE WEEK  
YEAR-ROUND.**

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**LOCAL SMALL  
*business owners*  
HAVE A PERSONAL STAKE  
IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.**

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One truly bright spot is the local entrepreneurial class. Small business owners in Shreveport-Bossier have a personal stake in their communities. You can hear the civic pride in their voices about how they're fueling economic growth, employing local residents, and transforming their neighborhoods. The majority of them are passionate about their city, and they're optimistic about the future potential of their businesses to help transform their communities.

Local small business entrepreneurs are among the most important segments of any city because they hire the vast majority of private citizens. Locally, they are absolutely critical for Shreveport-Bossier's success in the near term. That's why Visit Shreveport-Bossier is collaborating closely with the Shreveport-Bossier African American Chamber, the Bossier Chamber of Commerce, and the Shreveport Chamber of Commerce to develop this plan.

Today, there are many examples of positive economic growth in Shreveport-Bossier. And furthermore, many of those can be accelerated by increasing the volume of visitors and incoming visitor dollars.

For example, Downtown Shreveport is rebuilding thanks to the vision of the public, private and civic sectors to support small and medium-size business development. The Downtown Development Authority and local entrepreneurs have galvanized around various neighborhood and event development strategies. Also, the new state government building on Fannin Street is just one of many exciting new developments that will bring more people and economic activity downtown. Continuing to energize and enhance Shreveport's urban core during every day of the week is critical. That attracts more visitors downtown and drives more revenue for local casinos, restaurants, shops, events, attractions and other businesses.

On the other side of the river, Bossier City's urban development vision and strong community vibe provides a lot to be excited about. The East Bank District has evolved into an impressive business anchor and catalyst for continuing investment and community building. It's easy to see how development will continue down Barksdale Boulevard and emanate outwards throughout the rest of the commercial area. The District shows what is possible when the public, private and civic sectors collaborate to provide a strong foundation and enabling environment for local business owners to thrive. Complementing that, the revitalization of the Louisiana Boardwalk and the growth of nearby casino hotels and attractions will help redefine the waterfront experience for local businesses, residents and visitors.

## OPTIMIZING THE VISITOR ECONOMY

There are significant opportunities where visitor revenues can help fuel the continued growth of both cities. The primary purpose of the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan is to increase the amount of visitor dollars coming into the region to benefit the widest range of local businesses and residents as possible. That includes many different types of visitors such as: leisure tourists, business travelers, conference attendees, people visiting for youth sports tournaments and college-level sporting events, people visiting friends and relatives, military visits, new and returning students, and more.

Collectively, those out-of-town visitors pump hundreds of millions of dollars into Shreveport-Bossier's economy annually. The sum total of that visitor-based economic activity, and who benefits from it, defines a region's visitor economy. In order to optimize that economy, and increase and diversify its benefits, the strategies in this destination master plan have been developed so more people spend more money for longer periods of time during more days of the week throughout the year in Shreveport-Bossier.

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**WHAT'S GOOD  
FOR RESIDENTS IS GENERALLY  
*good for visitors.*  
AND WHAT'S GOOD  
FOR VISITORS USUALLY  
BENEFITS RESIDENTS.**

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The majority of the strategies were designed to improve on what already exists, while a few propose new long-term initiatives to capitalize on scenarios projecting how the twin cities will evolve in coming decades. The strategies also align with local and regional government strategic planning. The municipal governments for both Shreveport and Bossier City have high-priority economic and community development initiatives, just like every other city. The same applies for Caddo Parish and Bossier Parish. At a high level, those initiatives are designed to improve infrastructure, services and amenities; increase entrepreneurial and employment opportunities; and enhance overall quality of life for all residents. This plan builds on all those initiatives.

The reason for aligning this master plan with with the goals of local government is because what's good for residents is generally good for visitors. And what's good for visitors usually benefits residents too, as long as the strategies are developed with residents in mind. Therefore, this master plan was developed to benefit local residents, either directly or indirectly, as well as visitors.

That's especially important in Shreveport-Bossier to help address some of the divisions between the two cities. One of the key goals for this plan is to unite the communities around a shared vision for the future. That doesn't mean to try to make the two cities into one homogeneous whole, or dilute the communities' unique cultural DNA in any way, or diminish what makes both cities special.

Rather, the diversity and uniqueness of neighborhoods, cultures and experiences in Shreveport and Bossier City provide the greatest opportunities for attracting visitors, residents, and companies that hire residents. Diversity is a proven strength for long-term economic vibrancy. The region's differences should be celebrated and capitalized on to give every local resident the opportunity to create the life they want in communities that cherish long-held traditions, embrace new ideas, and welcome all people. Ultimately, that's how all cities grow successfully.



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# KEY OPPORTUNITIES

## FOR LEVERAGING THE VISITOR ECONOMY TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITY & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

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**T**he following high-level opportunities define the future success of Shreveport-Bossier's visitor economy, and therefore, the acceleration of incremental successes in economic, workforce, and community development in the region. These opportunities have been culled from 15 key takeaways coming out of all the public and private sector research, industry and community stakeholder engagement, and resident outreach during the development of this master plan.

**1. More alignment and collaboration is needed at local, parish and state levels across the public, private and civic sectors**

The most significant takeaway from the hundreds of hours of community engagement was that residents and businesses will benefit appreciably from greater collaboration between local governments, industry leaders and community groups. The process begins with improving how everyone shares business intelligence and data as openly and widely as possible. Visit Shreveport-Bossier can be a critical part of that process by providing important data on visitor behavior, sentiment and spending throughout the year.

**2. There is a lack of mixed-use waterfront development and transit options in Downtown Shreveport and Bossier City**

Few cities in America have as much empty prime real estate as Shreveport-Bossier does along the Red River. The waterfronts are the key catalysts for economic growth throughout the parishes. Both cities are exploring options for mixed-use development including residential housing, commercial space and public transit, which will accelerate private-sector business investment throughout the urban cores. Visitor dollars are a key revenue source to support that development.

**3. Downtown Shreveport can be reactivated by strategically developing clusters and corridors in phases to create a greater critical mass of residents and visitors gathering throughout the week**

The process for bringing more life to Shreveport's urban core in the short- to medium term begins with developing one business at a time, and then linking them with well-lighted, safe and clean streets with modern wayfinding every step of the way. The tourism and hospitality industry can collaborate with local organizations to continue to develop and expand events that bring locals and visitors together, as well as advocate collectively for downtown development funding to implement strategic directions.



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## *job #1*

**IN THE SHORT-TERM:  
BLIGHT STOPS THE FLOW  
OF VISITOR DOLLARS INTO  
LOCAL SMALL BUSINESSES  
LIKE NOTHING ELSE.**

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#### **4. Small business entrepreneurs need greater and more equitable support**

Supporting small business owners is key to capitalizing on the major opportunities that Shreveport-Bossier and every other city need to address relating to destination, economic, workforce and community development. Most every single person in every community in Caddo and Bossier Parish agree on this, and everyone benefits from the success of local small businesses. Visit Shreveport-Bossier can collaborate with local, parish and state agencies on strategic planning to help drive visitor dollars to more small businesses.

#### **5. Faith-based groups are co-developing events to foster greater civic optimism and pride**

Some church leaders are collaborating more intentionally to create community events and encourage fellowship beyond Sunday. Because Shreveport-Bossier has such a large faith-based community, this presents an exceptional opportunity for congregations to collectively co-lead positive community-building activities. Tourism and hospitality leaders have many incentives to be part of that collaboration where they can bring their expansive networks and resources to bear.

#### **6. Blight is a local embarrassment and point of shame for many. Residents say, “We look old. We look unkempt.”**

Addressing blight is job #1 in the short-term. Dilapidated building stock creates an environment where people feel unsafe. The bad optics from that cannot be overstated in terms of the damage it does to business development and investment attraction, civic pride, resident relocation, the visitor experience, and brand reputation. For this opportunity, it’s not so much about how the visitor economy can support efforts to reduce blight, other than contribute to the local tax base to help fund the necessary work. Rather, it’s more about how blight stops the flow of visitor dollars to local small businesses like nothing else.

#### **7. Local police departments are understaffed**

Business leaders in both Shreveport and Bossier City are asking for increased police budgets and the formation of private security forces to supplement officers on the streets. Investing more in public safety and visible security measures was one of the most consistent demands heard from local residents during the development of this plan. Some local area businesses that cater to visitors, and who rely on visitors to keep their doors open, have suggested that they can raise funds collectively to pay for additional security forces.



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*The* **FASTEST  
GROWING SEGMENT  
IN THE NATIONAL VISITOR  
ECONOMY TODAY IS  
SPORTS TOURISM.**

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**8. Shreveport-Bossier is not capitalizing on the massive economic activity within the meetings and conventions sector to the degree it can**

The most attractive segment of the visitor economy for midsize cities is meetings and conventions, based on the sector's higher-than-average visitor spending and attractive midweek schedules. The Shreveport Convention Center is an exceedingly high-quality, high-capacity facility for the size of the city, with an adjacent walkable urban environment that meeting planners and attendees crave. And yet, the convention visitor mix in Shreveport-Bossier is a small fraction of what it could be based on the lack of: 1) an intentionally designed and robust convention center district; 2) transportation options for attendees; 3) committable rooms dedicated for conventions; and 4) a large convention center hotel with extensive meeting facilities and breakout rooms.

**9. Sports tourism for all age groups is a huge opportunity nationally**

The fastest growing segment in the national visitor economy today is sports tourism. Most everyone agrees that Shreveport-Bossier is well positioned to capitalize on this market, especially parents who have to take their kids out of town to spend their money in other cities. The local municipal and parish governments are actively investing in sports facilities, but the benefits are not just about attracting greater share in the sports tourism marketplace. There are also significant opportunities for leveraging sports tourism and the facilities to support local youth and community development.

**10. There's strong appreciation for local culture, but there's also a lack of local identity and proud sense of place**

Residents are proud of their region's local culture and heritage related to food, music, arts, film and entertainment, etc. Local festivals and special events are also a strength for the cities. However, unlike in Southern Louisiana where culture is such a unique identifier, differentiator and point of pride, many Shreveport-Bossier City residents wrestle with defining their own unique cultural identity specific to Northern Louisiana. Visitors are specifically attracted to neighborhoods with a strong identity and sense of place, and they support the ongoing development of local placemaking initiatives with their considerable spending power.

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**THE REGION'S**  
*mild weather*  
**PROVIDES SIGNIFICANT**  
**OPPORTUNITIES TO**  
**ATTRACT VISITORS FOR**  
**OUTDOOR RECREATION**  
**EXPERIENCES.**

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**11. Outdoor recreation areas require greater public investment and private-sector business development to fully capitalize on existing assets**

The region's mild weather provides significant opportunities for Shreveport-Bossier to attract visitors for outdoor recreation experiences. However, there is a lack of wayfinding and public access to outdoor recreation areas, a lack of public amenities, and a shortage of businesses catering to locals and visitors, such as kayak/canoe outfitters, fishing/hunting guides, etc. The region is well known as a "Sportsman's Paradise," but that can be capitalized on much further by providing more small business development support. Also, improving the local outdoor recreation industry stimulates longer average stays for visitors, which increases overall economic impact for both the public and private sectors.

**12. The distressed condition of the Louisiana State Fairgrounds and nearby blighted hotels/motels create the perception of a lack of safety, a depressed economy, a loss of civic hope and pride, and general disillusion and disinvestment**

The Fairgrounds corridor is the gateway to the city but it's a very negative first impression for people flying and driving in. The collective eyesore deters visitors and locals from wanting to visit, and it significantly suppresses private investment in the area. There needs to be a new foundational strategy for the future of the Fairgrounds that provides a platform for multi-use facilities and experiences. Also, residents are asking what local government and the community can do to develop ordinances and property standards to address the ugliness of the distressed hotels/motels near the airport.

**13. There is a lack of connection between the Red River and our urban/rural communities**

Many places throughout the rural communities have blocked viewsheds and overgrown vegetation that separate and disconnect communities from the Red River — one of our region's greatest assets. Vegetation management should be a greater priority to improve sightlines across the river and access to the water, as part of the ongoing rural waterway development. There is a unique and privileged relationship between Southern cities and their natural environments, which is foundational for local quality of life and the cultural identity of our residents. Also, the bounties of nature should imbue daily life in our local communities more immediately as well to disperse visitor spending to more regions across Caddo and Bossier parishes.





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PEOPLE ARE LOOKING FOR  
*champions*  
WHO WILL HELP STEER  
A BETTER FUTURE  
FOR THEIR COMMUNITIES.

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**14. Residents are hungry for more unity and positive local stories**

Many Shreveport-Bossier residents are proud of where they live and optimistic about their future, but they're overwhelmed by the divisive and alarmist discourse in local media and social media. Residents stated they want more local stories that share and promote that pride and optimism. People are looking for champions who will help steer a better future for their communities, but many aren't sure how to engage, or that their efforts will be effective. One way to improve communication and positive messaging is with visitor tracking and satisfaction scores, because visitors oftentimes have a better opinion about a city than residents do. Frustration with local media was a common theme throughout a full year of community engagement.

**15. One iconic attraction can change the fortunes of a city and fuel civic pride**

There was considerable discussion among residents during the development of this master plan that Shreveport-Bossier "should have been Nashville" because of the local music history. The state legislature has discussed plans to help fund an iconic cultural attraction that celebrates the musical heritage in Louisiana, but talks are still early. An attraction such as an official, state-funded Louisiana Music Museum in Shreveport-Bossier would certainly be a destination driver in itself, which many cities have proven with similar transformational initiatives worldwide. Visitor dollars will be critical for the successful operation of such an important attraction in Northern Louisiana.



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# DESTINATION MASTER PLAN STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

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**The strategic framework for the Shreveport-Bossier Destination Master Plan consists of six overarching strategic goals and numerous actionable initiatives and tactics for each. The goals and initiatives have been developed based entirely on what public officials, industry leaders, and residents stated are important to them during a full year of extensive community engagement.**

Typically with a 10-year master plan, the six high-level strategic goals remain consistent, although they should be reviewed around the 5-year mark. Alternatively, the actionable initiatives and tactics under each of the goals are fluid. They should be reviewed and updated on an annual basis. Establishing that flow chart to manage execution and track successes ensures that this plan remains a living document that responds to local changes in the community and visitor industry marketplace.

The first three strategic goals are more macro themes that require region-wide collaboration across the public, private and civic sectors. They relate to: 1) how communities and community leaders come together to activate this plan; 2) strategic short- and long- term destination and urban development; and 3) equitable small business development. Those three goals impact the majority of visitors and also a high percentage of residents living in Shreveport-Bossier.

The last three strategic goals are more oriented around specific visitor segments, and they're designed to capitalize on the strength of local assets and aligned visitor demand. They are more geared specifically to the visitor economy, but they also require cross-sector support and collaborative execution to be achieved as successfully as possible. The last three goals focus on further developing three key visitor industry sectors related to: 4) large business meetings and conventions; 5) sports tourism and sporting events; and 6) outdoor recreation and special events.

Some of the actionable initiatives herein are short-term, while others will take years to accomplish. Visit Shreveport-Bossier, based on its resources, will have various levels of engagement to move this plan forward. For some of the initiatives, the organization will lead or co-lead them, or it can enable and support other organizations with different but aligned mandates. For other initiatives, Visit Shreveport-Bossier should have a seat at the table to provide input and help influence direction and outcomes.

Altogether, the successful implementation of all the initiatives in this plan depends on local community and industry champions taking on specific action items and building coalitions to execute strategies effectively.

The following goals, initiatives and tactics have been thoroughly vetted during the three public town halls and final visioning workshop with industry and community stakeholders, as well as the destination master plan's Steering Committee.

# STRATEGIC GOALS

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| <p><b>1.</b></p> | <p><b>INCREASE &amp; DIVERSIFY COMMUNITY COLLABORATION</b></p> <p>Align government, community, academic, faith-based, and travel/hospitality industry leaders around a shared vision for the future that benefits all residents</p>  |
| <p><b>2.</b></p> | <p><b>ACCELERATE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT, PLACEMAKING &amp; MOBILITY INNOVATION ALONG THE TWO URBAN WATERFRONTS</b></p> <p>Invest in mixed-use development; improve appearance and mobility; and increase visibility of security to further activate the urban economic engine for the region</p>  |
| <p><b>3.</b></p> | <p><b>INCREASE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS IN ART, CULTURE, FILM, FOOD, MUSIC, RETAIL &amp; OTHER CREATIVE BUSINESSES</b></p> <p>Enhance the region’s identity and sense of place by capitalizing on the diversity of passionate local entrepreneurs and “makers” in the creator economy</p> |
| <p><b>4.</b></p> | <p><b>CAPITALIZE ON SURGING DEMAND FOR SPORTS TOURISM</b></p> <p>Leverage the highly lucrative and fast-growing youth sports market, and invest in the future of our young people, to create stronger and more proud communities</p>   |
| <p><b>5.</b></p> | <p><b>INCREASE VISITOR VOLUMES IN THE MEETINGS &amp; CONVENTIONS SECTOR</b></p> <p>Develop a lively, integrated convention center district to drive midweek visitor volumes and support business development in advanced industries</p>  |
| <p><b>6.</b></p> | <p><b>ACCELERATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AND UPGRADE EVENT VENUES</b></p> <p>Incentivize new business growth and improve infrastructure to outdoor areas; and enhance local facilities to increase private investment and year-round revenues</p>                             |

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## STRATEGIC GOAL #1

# INCREASE & DIVERSIFY COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

**All cities perform best when government, industry and community leaders work together to align priorities, pool their resources, and engage their constituents and members around shared goals. That is also exactly what companies are looking for when they explore new cities to invest in.**

When entrepreneurs and corporate leaders visit Shreveport-Bossier to explore opportunities for growth, they don't see two cities. They are looking for one holistic region with a strong spirit of optimism and collaboration. Dysfunction and divisiveness are big red flags. That is why this strategic goal is the #1 priority in this destination master plan. Everything that follows in the plan relies on increasing and diversifying community collaboration.

Everyone in Shreveport-Bossier wants the same things at a high level: a growing economy, a wide range of job opportunities for people of all socioeconomic segments, good schools and public transit, clean and safe streets, a strong sense of community, etc. Residents share a lot more in common about what they want than what makes them different, and most residents understand the value of working together. As one local resident stated, "People know it's better to collaborate, but emotionally they're not always there."

Toward that end, Visit Shreveport-Bossier developed this master plan to prioritize initiatives that visitor dollars can support, and which everyone in the community understands and can also support. Concurrently, the organization is expanding its mandate to be more community-focused in order to support local businesses and community

organizations more effectively. That ultimately enhances the destination and visitor experience, which drives higher visitor volumes.

Coming out of this plan, Visit Shreveport-Bossier is also bringing on new personnel dedicated to community development and relations, and it's developing new data-driven messaging hubs for industry partners and residents.

Diversity, equity and inclusion is also a key priority for Visit Shreveport-Bossier. Everyone of any race, age, gender, sexual orientation and religion should have an opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, the local visitor economy. The whole world knows Louisiana because of its rich diversity, culture and heritage. Diversity is the wellspring of creativity and innovation, where people with different perspectives and histories create something new and vital. Shreveport-Bossier owns that. It's in the food, music, arts, architecture, entertainment and so much more. That is a powerful attraction for visitors when a community embraces its collective creative soul and shares it with the world, and that's exactly what most cities across the country are doing to promote their communities to visitors of all kinds.

Also, faith leaders are actively working together across their congregations to co-host events to help change the rhetoric that oftentimes divides Shreveport-Bossier at a grassroots level. One pastor who's doing this said, "The key to relationships is deferring to the needs of others for the greater good of the whole." That is what this strategic goal is all about: Shreveport-Bossier succeeds as one unified destination with a shared purpose where everyone can find their place, and everyone can find their people.



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## STRATEGIC GOAL #1 | ACTIONABLE INITIATIVES & TACTICS

### INCREASE & DIVERSIFY COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

- 1. Expand Visit Shreveport-Bossier's role in the region to support community development**
  - a. Create a Community/Destination Development department at Visit Shreveport-Bossier to engage with the public, private and civic sectors on a regular basis
  - b. Create a hospitality industry workforce development program, including engagement with local high-school students; increase efforts to attract foreign students and workers
  - c. Advocate for the visitor industry to better educate industry partners and residents about the impacts of visitor dollars in the community and related opportunities across various visitor segments
- 2. Create a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion advisory committee to increase support and opportunities for all visitor industry partners and employees**
  - a. Partner with Destinations International to create a DEI strategic plan for Visit Shreveport-Bossier and the community
  - b. Create a DEI advisory committee with members from Visit Shreveport-Bossier, the Shreveport-Bossier African American Chamber, and other public and private sector organizations
- 3. Develop guidelines to educate local businesses and organizations about the complex range of accessibility needs for visitors**
- 4. Provide a more enabling environment for investments in small business development**
  - a. Expand and further develop grants for local visitor industry small businesses
  - b. Collaborate with business development agencies to expand their grants and services
  - c. Connect and convene grant providers throughout Louisiana
- 5. Expand collaboration among faith-based groups to co-lead events and share news about positive community gatherings, initiatives and developments**
  - a. Host roundtable discussions with key members from faith-based groups for the purpose of strategizing how best to inform, engage and deploy those organizations in support of community-building activities and events.
  - b. Develop a plan for utilizing faith-based groups as a catalyst for promoting unity among area citizens through direct focus on, and promotion of, agreed-upon common goals and objectives.
- 6. Create a community-facing online content portal for information about new trends and developments in the region's visitor industry**
  - a. Collect and share marketing/PR, media, research, and development updates from Visit Shreveport-Bossier, Chambers, government, academic institutions, media, visitor industry, etc.
  - b. Enhance data management tools to support investment decisions in the visitor industry
  - c. Share destination and community development updates with residents and provide opportunities for their input
- 7. Increase collaboration between all public and private sector agencies to:**
  - a. Explore regulatory mechanisms to incentivize upgrades at distressed airport motels and other businesses along the corridor between the Shreveport Regional Airport and Shreveport-Bossier
  - b. Invest in EV charging stations in urban and rural communities

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## STRATEGIC GOAL #2

# ACCELERATE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT, PLACEMAKING AND MOBILITY INNOVATION ALONG THE TWO URBAN WATERFRONTS

**P**retty much every city in North America with a river running through it prioritizes the real estate in close proximity to the water for mixed-use development that brings people together from all walks of life. Both Shreveport and Bossier City are actively subsidizing and supporting the continuing development of their riverfronts, but more can be done to steer visitor dollars to those locations to help accelerate the various placemaking efforts.

Safety, security and cleanliness were major discussion points during the community engagement to develop this plan. The initiatives in this strategic goal begin with addressing blight. This is critical in terms of optics and creating a greater sense of safety for both residents and visitors, first and foremost. Upgrading derelict buildings also goes a long way toward attracting investment to the area. Furthermore, investing in blight removal enhances civic pride and optimism, and it attracts more locals and visitors to patronize small businesses.

Simplified, urban development strategy and transformational placemaking is about providing an enabling and incentivized environment for investors and entrepreneurs to build businesses and commercial/residential spaces in clusters and corridors to drive economic activity.

In Bossier City, the Louisiana Boardwalk, the East Bank District and the anchor casino hotels are a prime example of that. The ongoing growth and planned future development

in those clusters and corridors prove the success of the City of Bossier's long-term vision. The initiatives under this goal are designed to further enhance the visitor experience and increase business revenues.

Likewise, in Downtown Shreveport, the growth along Texas Street and other pockets is helping establish clusters of new business activity there. More needs to be done to connect those with upgraded pedestrian and alternative mobility corridors in both cities. This will be a marathon and not a sprint, so it's important to publicly celebrate iterative, short-term wins to build and sustain momentum.

Visitor spending is key for ensuring the long-term success of businesses in those key clusters, which then provide enduring catalysts for development throughout an ever-widening circle of adjacent neighborhoods. Therefore, this plan recommends closer integration between city municipal governments, public/private urban planning professionals, and Visit Shreveport-Bossier, which can provide supporting data and insight on visitor behavior and spending.

In terms of mobility, helping people get out of their cars and onto streets and sidewalks is proven to drive incremental sales in restaurants, shops and attractions. Business leaders in both Shreveport and Bossier City are asking for improved transportation options and enhanced public and/or private security along those mobility corridors to support increasing investment in their commercial districts and business clusters.



## STRATEGIC GOAL #2 | ACTIONABLE INITIATIVES & TACTICS

# ACCELERATE MIXED-USE DEVELOPMENT, PLACEMAKING AND MOBILITY INNOVATION ALONG THE TWO URBAN WATERFRONTS

### 1. Develop and/or redevelop riverfront land and prioritize strategic placemaking

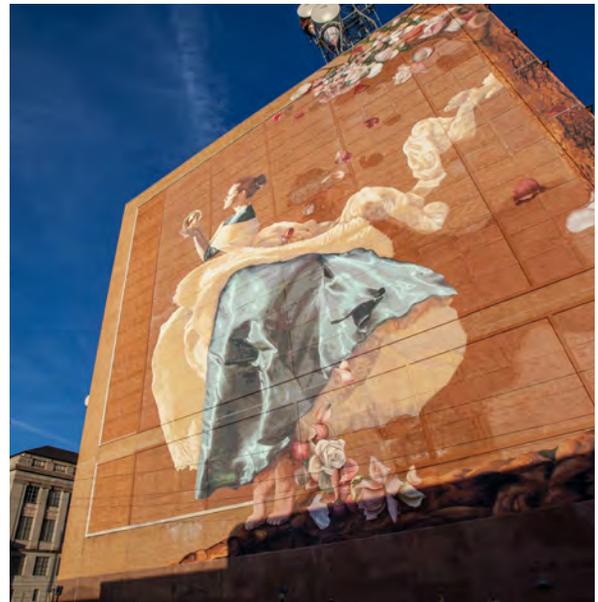
- a. Address blight in downtown Shreveport and other key visitor corridors **(CRITICAL)**
- b. Create a Vacant Property Registry Ordinance and assessment fee to fund blight clean up, as well as incentivize owners to upgrade their buildings or sell their properties
- c. Develop mixed-used housing/commercial buildings, walking/biking paths, and public parks/squares on available riverfront land
- d. Bring all community and industry stakeholders together to help modernize/reinvigorate the Louisiana Boardwalk
- e. Develop a master plan with public officials and private industry leaders to clean up and reimagine the Red River District
- f. Develop more non-casino hotel product along both riverfronts
- g. Continue investments in public art to celebrate the creative soul of Northern Louisiana
- h. Clear viewsheds of overgrown vegetation along the Red River

### 2. Increase the visibility of security and sense of safety (including patrols, lighting, cleanliness, etc.) and increase beautification efforts (plants, landscaping, etc.)

- a. Expand collaboration between visitor industry partners and municipal police forces to better respond to business and resident needs
- b. Establish funding sources with local visitor industry for private security personnel for specific locations and events

### 3. Get people out of their cars: Enhance multi-mobility, public transit and walkability options to connect the two waterfront districts (and surrounding areas) to drive incremental sales for local small businesses

- a. Apply for competitive grants to encourage private investment in new mobility options
- b. Develop trolley systems to connect assets along the Bossier City waterfront, Louisiana Boardwalk and the East Bank District
- c. Develop trolley systems to circulate through Downtown Shreveport and connect both cities
- d. Enhance connectivity between the Amtrak facility and urban core
- e. Develop infrastructure for bikesharing and ebikes
- f. Create water taxis



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## STRATEGIC GOAL #3

# INCREASE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS IN ART, CULTURE, FILM, FOOD, MUSIC, RETAIL & OTHER CREATIVE BUSINESSES

**S**mall business owners hire the majority of employees in any city, so their success is critical for the region's growth and prosperity. Also, when visitors travel to a city, they're primarily visiting small businesses throughout the day and night. Visitor dollars help pay local salaries and wages, and ultimately, they support destination, community, economic, workforce and urban development both directly and indirectly.

Therefore, this plan prioritizes small businesses and what they mean for a community's identity and sense of place. They define how and where locals go about their day and where visitors go to spend money. In effect, locally-owned and operated small businesses represent the face of the city for locals and the front door to the community for visitors.

A wide variety of local entrepreneurs, representing the full spectrum of resident diversity in Shreveport-Bossier, provided extensive input to inform the development of this plan. These are people investing their own money to create part of the fabric of their neighborhoods. They are proud and optimistic about owning and operating something that's part of Shreveport-Bossier's future. But, across the board, small business owners said they're seeking clearer access to business support from local and regional agencies.

Visit Shreveport-Bossier is a strong advocate for small business development, and the organization is working more closely with local chambers of commerce and regional community, planning and economic development agencies. The initiatives under this goal are designed to supplement existing collaboration and business intelligence sharing.

## OFFICIAL LOUISIANA MUSIC MUSEUM

There are many examples around the world where an iconic cultural attraction provided a transformational catalyst for economic and community development, while also elevating the destination's brand and reputation on a national or global scale.

Throughout the development of this plan, a surprisingly large number of people commented about how the region isn't nearly capitalizing on its rich musical legacy, dating back to Elvis and the Louisiana Hayride. There's also robust resident support for live music and local musicians today. Therefore, the idea of developing an official Louisiana Music Museum in Shreveport-Bossier was met with unanimous support whenever it was discussed with local government leaders, business leaders, community organizers and residents.

Furthermore, an official cultural institution like a Louisiana Music Museum has already been floated at the state legislature, where there is support and available funding for such a project, although no specific destination has been selected. This is clearly a long-term project, but it could be a game changer for Caddo and Bossier parishes, and it would help further delineate Shreveport-Bossier and Northern Louisiana's unique identity for all visitors and residents. One local homeowner stated, "People say that New Orleans is the sound of Louisiana but that's not true. We have an incredible music legacy that's unique to Northern Louisiana, and we should be celebrating that with the world."



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## STRATEGIC GOAL #3 | ACTIONABLE INITIATIVES & TACTICS

# INCREASE SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ENTREPRENEURS IN ART, CULTURE, FILM, FOOD, MUSIC, RETAIL & OTHER CREATIVE BUSINESSES

### 1. Align and enhance public/private sector support for small business development

- a. Collect, organize and distribute all small business support resources (both public and private) for local entrepreneurs in the creative sector to optimize small business development
- b. Streamline business development and permitting processes to reduce red tape for small business entrepreneurs
- c. Increase collaborations between visitor industry and local/regional governments with local art councils, schools, military base, etc., to support small business development
- d. Expand visitor industry collaboration with local filmmaking talent to develop a regional film production industry
- e. Establish cultural collaborations and exchanges with the creative sector in other parts of the state and region
- f. Expand coworking spaces, business accelerators, live/work spaces, co-ops and other types of community hubs in both Shreveport and Bossier City to provide a place where entrepreneurs, investors, and people working from home can collaborate to drive new business development

### 2. Create a Public Art Ordinance

- a. Establish municipal legislation to formalize processes for decision making and funding related to public art
- b. Use local artists to help address blight (i.e. murals)

### 3. Develop and enhance local cultural and culinary attractions

- a. Develop an official Louisiana Music Museum (or similar) in collaboration with the Government of Louisiana, Caddo/Bossier parishes, and local municipal governments
- b. Expand investments in existing cultural attractions and programming with state grant funding
- c. Develop a food and music hall near the convention center as an incubator for local chef/owners and artists/musicians to start or expand their businesses
- d. Collaborate on development of more themed street events like Glowfest, Bossier City Farmers Market, Rockets Over the Red, etc., during midweek

### 4. Develop curated experiences, events and visitor trails with local makers, artists and influencers related to:

- a. Southern food and beverage
- b. Music, theater and entertainment
- c. Art, culture and heritage (including public art and Civil Rights trails)

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## STRATEGIC GOAL #4

# CAPITALIZE ON SURGING DEMAND FOR SPORTS TOURISM

**The Shreveport-Bossier Sports Commission is a division of Visit Shreveport-Bossier, which works in partnership with the City of Shreveport, City of Bossier City, Caddo Parish Commission, Bossier Parish Police Jury, the Louisiana Office of Tourism, and the Red River Waterway Commission. The Sports Commission brings government, business and hospitality partners together to provide the resources necessary for attracting and hosting successful amateur and professional sporting events.**

The growth potential and revenue opportunities for sports tourism cannot be overemphasized, and Shreveport-Bossier is well positioned to capitalize on the fastest growing segment in the visitor economy.

In addition to the region's warm weather, the expanding airport and hotel capacity in Shreveport-Bossier, the increasing variety of sports venues, and the clear political will to invest in the sports tourism sector provide a good foundation for the future. That said, this is a highly competitive market nationwide. It is critical to have a long-term game plan to capitalize on demand sufficiently, because other cities across the country are investing millions of dollars in new and upgraded facilities to attract more teams and tournaments.

Sports tourism also provides a halo effect for greater community and economic development. Visitors often experience a city for the first time because they're visiting for a tournament or other sporting event. That expands awareness and word-of-mouth about what Shreveport-

Bossier has to offer, and it enhances the destination brand if the experience is positive.

Also, sports tourism facilities provide excellent opportunities for youth programming, education and development, so this strategic goal is very much designed for local kids, teens and young adults, as well as visitors.

"Youth sports is great for bringing communities and families together," stated one resident. "Investing in sports tourism is investing in our children."

Some of the bigger projects that have either opened or are in development include the new Stageworks indoor sports facility in Downtown Shreveport, expansions and upgrades at Cargill Park and Tinsley Athletic Complex, new ball fields at South Bossier Park, and the new baseball field complex and outdoor recreation facilities behind the YMCA of Northwest Louisiana, among others.

Longer-term, there are discussions to develop the Cross Bayou region with new sports facilities, along with other brownfield sites along the Red River. With those assets coming online, there should also be greater investments in sports tourism sales and marketing to increase exposure, drive continued demand, and service those assets effectively.

Shreveport-Bossier has the potential to be a major sports tourism capital city in the South within the next 10-15 years, but that requires intentional long-term strategic planning today.



## STRATEGIC GOAL #4 | ACTIONABLE INITIATIVES & TACTICS

### CAPITALIZE ON SURGING DEMAND FOR SPORTS TOURISM

- 1. Develop, expand, and continue to invest in sports tourism facilities with investments from both the public and private sectors**
  - a. Upgrade Independence Stadium and decide the future of the State Fairgrounds and neighboring area
  - b. Develop new sports facilities along Cross Bayou
  - c. Develop more indoor sports facilities to capitalize on demand for high-value volleyball and basketball tournaments
  - d. Develop esports/e-gaming facilities and the necessary industry support networks to capitalize on growing long-term demand
  - e. Develop an equine tournament and training facility to U.S. Equestrian Federation standards
  - f. Identify long-term opportunities to develop a comprehensive sports complex with indoor/outdoor training facilities to achieve the critical mass of fields and competitive advantage required to be a national powerhouse in sports tourism
- 2. Identify opportunities and required resources to support the long-term growth of sports tourism**
  - a. Update a sport tourism needs assessment and competitive analysis at regular intervals
  - b. Develop a 10-year Sports Tourism Master Plan
  - c. Increase advocacy efforts for state grants to fund sports tourism needs locally
  - d. Provide more marketing support for the Shreveport-Bossier Sports Commission, and develop more collaborative marketing partnerships with regional sports organizations and facilities
  - e. Expand youth and community development opportunities around sports facilities for both locals and visitors
  - f. Redevelop the Red River District to meet increased food, beverage and retail demands from the opening of Stageworks indoor sports facility
  - g. Explore mixed-use opportunities with new family-friendly developments (e.g., hotel, food & beverage, retail, entertainment) around new and existing sports facilities to service demand pre/post sports events



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## STRATEGIC GOAL #5

# INCREASE VISITOR VOLUMES IN THE MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS SECTOR

**The Shreveport Convention Center is an excellent facility compared to others in similar sized cities across the country, but it's significantly underutilized. It's estimated that only a tiny fraction of visitors traveling to Shreveport-Bossier are attending a convention, which is unacceptable for a city with a facility on par with the Shreveport Convention Center. This is due to a variety of factors, including the lack of a large headquarter convention center hotel with the necessary committable rooms for larger convention groups seeking 500+ rooms.**

A lot has to happen to capitalize on the convention center, beginning with the revitalization of Downtown Shreveport and increasing the volume of people downtown during the weekday, especially after work hours. Conferences and conventions typically occur during weekdays, which is why this is such an important visitor segment because it drives spending in area businesses when they need it most. Convention attendees also spend more per day on average than leisure tourists, and like sports tourism, conventions are often why someone visits a city for the first time.

Typically, what holds many cities back in this sector is that they don't have a large modern facility to host conventions. That's not an issue here. Shreveport's challenge is, as one resident stated, "We're more of a weekend city. During the week, Downtown Shreveport has a bit of an identity crisis." Therefore, this plan recommends the development of an identifiable convention center district, which are popular in many successful convention destinations. Like a theater district, a convention center

district includes a wide variety of nearby restaurants, bars and other amenities for business lunches and dinners, entertainment, and private offsite venues for meeting planners to rent for their companies and/or clients.

This is a critically important conversation for city leaders to have based on how the meetings and conventions sector has evolved during the last two decades. Today, cities that are successfully growing their convention businesses are investing in streetscape upgrades, walkability, wayfinding, lighting, security, transportation and other strategies to create a true convention center district. The goal is to incentivize attendees to get out into the city during and after their meetings, ultimately to increase downtown foot traffic and support local businesses. Also, a vibrant convention center district humming with both locals and visitors is a key selling point for meeting planners when they're sourcing destinations to host their events.

Long-term, there is interest within the City of Shreveport to develop a new 500-room+ convention center headquarter hotel with dedicated meeting space to capture larger corporate and association conventions. Capacity induces demand. A headquarter convention hotel of that size automatically opens up the local market to a new category of conventions that the city is now unable to engage.

Also, representatives from the casino hotels have stated they wholeheartedly welcome such a property because it will host a non-competitive type of visitor, and it brings weekday visitors to Shreveport-Bossier when the casino hotels need them more than ever.



## STRATEGIC GOAL #5 | ACTIONABLE INITIATIVES & TACTICS

### INCREASE VISITOR VOLUMES IN THE MEETINGS & CONVENTIONS SECTOR

#### 1. Develop a unified Convention Center District to provide a dynamic meeting and convention attendee experience

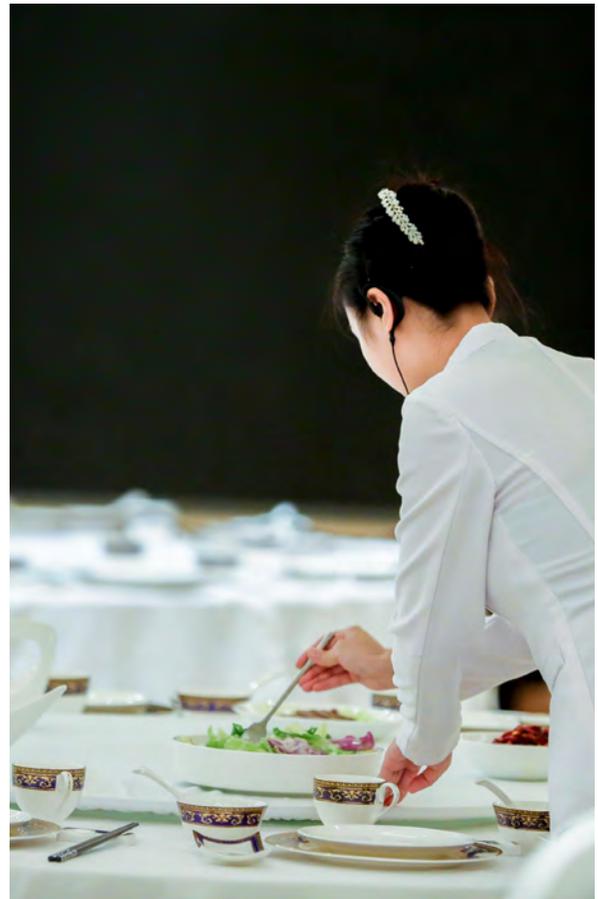
- a. Update the Shreveport Convention Center to industry standards and make it a more dynamic experience, (including experiential local programming, public art, new technology/AV, decor, etc.)
- b. Prioritize and identify funding availability and schedule for upgrades and maintenance
- c. Develop an official Convention Center District map and strategic plan to integrate downtown assets into one holistic meeting attendee user experience
- d. Develop a new attached 500-room+ convention center headquarters hotel with dedicated meeting space and extensive, flexible breakout spaces (Long-term)

#### 2. Develop Downtown Shreveport transportation and walkability ecosystem to better connect hotels and downtown Shreveport and Bossier City businesses to the convention center during need periods

- a. Explore a trolley based transportation system (people circulator) connecting the convention center and downtown Shreveport hotels
- b. Support private business investors seeking to develop cross river modes of transportation
- c. Enhance wayfinding and shade for convention attendees walking to the convention center

#### 3. Improve collaboration with the Shreveport Regional Airport, Shreveport Downtown Airport, Regional Air Service Alliance (RASA), and relevant city leaders to accelerate air service development

- a. Continue to research developing markets and how to accommodate and expand on new markets
- b. Determine and solicit high-traffic convention-based travel markets (e.g., Washington D.C., Chicago) and ways to increase route traffic to Shreveport-Bossier



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## STRATEGIC GOAL #6

# ACCELERATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AND UPGRADE EVENT VENUES

**M**any residents of Shreveport-Bossier love the great outdoors for nature-based recreation experiences and all kinds of special events and festivals. The region can further capitalize on its outdoor recreation assets and event venues to increase revenues and opportunities for local business owners. In effect, Shreveport-Bossier is incredibly blessed with natural environments, but it's too difficult for many locals and visitors to take advantage of them.

Interest in outdoor recreation is growing nationwide among all economic segments of visitors, from budget to high-end, and Shreveport-Bossier's reputation as a Sportsman's Paradise is well deserved. The increasing demand is based on many factors, ranging from the high exposure to outdoors during the Covid pandemic to younger generations seeking more healthy and active lifestyles.

There are exceptional areas in the region for fishing, hunting, biking and kayaking/canoeing in many areas around the cities. However, it's challenging for visitors and residents to access certain areas due to a lack of road infrastructure, public amenities and wayfinding. There's also a lack of professional tour operators and guides to service them.

Visit Shreveport-Bossier is committed to working with other local organizations to develop grant programs to support business development in outdoor recreation and along the Boom or Bust Byway. Grants funds will be made available to help seed or grow new businesses that cater to both visitors and locals.

Visit Shreveport-Bossier is also enhancing promotional content for both locals and visitors to inspire more people to explore a wider variety of rural regions more often and for longer periods of time.

When it comes to outdoor events, Shreveport-Bossier knows how to throw a party. The many annual festivals not only attract large visitor numbers, but according to one resident, "The only time that African American and white entrepreneurs come together in Shreveport and Bossier is at festivals."

Every single local person who participated in the development of this plan had fond things to say about local festivals, and there's widespread support for continuing to develop new events and also expand existing events. The challenge, they said, is the lack of maintenance and upgrades among many of the event venues themselves, as well as the depressed environments around them that make people feel unsafe.

The Louisiana State Fairgrounds, including Independence Stadium and Fairgrounds Field, are a key priority for the City of Shreveport, so the political will is there to improve the infrastructure. To accelerate progress, the local visitor industry should collaborate with as many other community organizations as possible to create a united front for advocacy and fund-raising to upgrade one of Shreveport-Bossier's most important assets.



## STRATEGIC GOAL #6 | ACTIONABLE INITIATIVES & TACTICS

### ACCELERATE BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT IN OUTDOOR RECREATION AND UPGRADE EVENT VENUES

#### 1. Support new business development for regional outdoor operators, including: kayaking, fishing, hunting, etc.

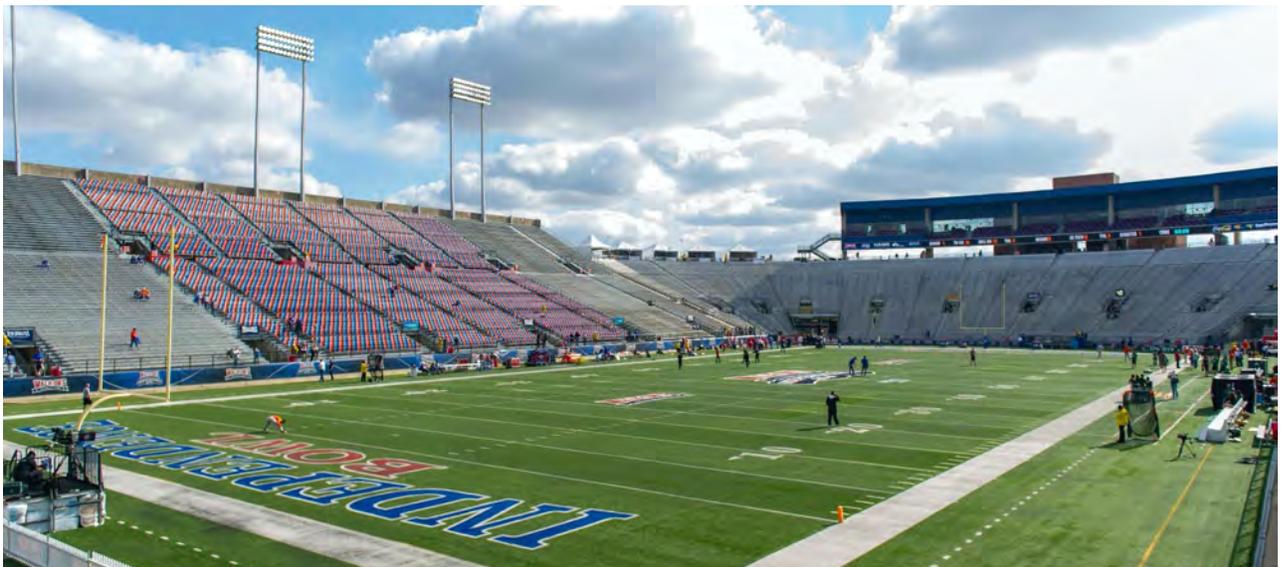
- a. Create grants to support small outdoor recreation operators
- b. Apply for federal transportation grants to help subsidize wayfinding upgrades
- c. Upgrade public roads and trails leading to popular outdoor recreation areas
- d. Increase and modernize physical/digital wayfinding and signage to popular rural and outdoor recreation areas
- e. Develop or enhance visitor infrastructure such as the new Interpretative Center at Earl Williamson on Caddo Lake in Caddo Parish
- f. Modernize and enhance nature-based promotional content to engage the next generation of visitors and drive repeat visitation

#### 2. Expand and upgrade event facilities

- a. Capitalize on investor opportunities such as those proposed by REV Entertainment to upgrade the Louisiana State Fairgrounds, including Independence Stadium and Fairgrounds Field
- b. Transform the Jimmie Davis Bridge into a linear park
- c. Continue collaboration with Camp Minden to update the ASA Archery site for other potential outdoor sporting events

#### 3. Support continued Boom or Bust Byway and rural development

- a. Increase promotion for special events and festivals along the Byway
- b. Upgrade Walter B. Jacobs Memorial Nature Park
- c. Align visitor industry strategy to support official Parks & Recreation master planning initiatives in Caddo and Bossier parishes





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## 8 | LOOKING AHEAD

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**I**t's 2040 and Shreveport-Bossier is ranked highly as a great place to live in the South based on its variety of lifestyle amenities, job growth, cost of living, great outdoors, and overall quality of life. The two waterfronts are humming with locals and visitors crisscrossing the Red River day and night to visit the casinos, shops, restaurants, bars and outdoor events. People are walking, biking, and pushing baby strollers along the river in front of new apartments, boutiques and coffee shops, and families are playing in the many landscaped parks throughout Caddo and Bossier parishes.

**There's a strong sense of community, identity, place and faith, and people are proud to call Shreveport-Bossier home in 2040. More than anything, residents from all walks of life feel a positive energy in their communities because they have good opportunities to support their families and grow their careers.**

Adults in 2040 will remember a time when things weren't quite so optimistic and vibrant, and how people disagreed about a lot of things. They'll also recount how life began to change for the better when more and more community members came together with a shared vision for capitalizing on all that Shreveport-Bossier has to offer residents, business owners, investors, students, retirees and visitors of all ages. It wasn't easy, but a diverse collection of residents with a clear vision and a strong mission inspired action among many others. They changed the vibe and vitality of their communities one neighborhood at a time.

A lot of the above is going to happen eventually anyway, because there is so much demand nationwide for affordable midsize cities to live with strong family values, diverse cultural amenities, growing industries, good schools, and fun things to do outdoors throughout the year.

How long that takes to happen is the question.

The biggest takeaway during the development of this master plan was the stark difference between the optimism and pride among residents who participated in the many community engagement sessions, versus the bitterness of rhetoric in social media and negativity in local media. It is the hope among the hundreds of people who contributed to this process that their voices are heard and their input is acted upon amid the toxic chatter on Facebook and other media platforms.

All the actionable initiatives in this master plan came from local residents who believe they can make a difference. This has been a community-led project from the start. Some of the actionable initiatives in the plan will evolve year over year. Some will be more successful than imagined possible, while others won't be fulfilled to the degree people hoped. Ultimately, the success of each initiative is based entirely on how well local people from different communities in Shreveport-Bossier come together to co-create their collective future.

# Shreveport Bossier

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