

THE FLORIDA KEYS & KEY WEST  
MONROE COUNTY TOURIST DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL  
*Come as You are.®*

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**POSITION PAPER**  
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**Tourism impacts/ Quality of life issues Outline**

**I. Cruiseships (Key West only)**

- TDC marketing efforts – The TDC spends approximately \$6,000 each year on sponsoring a trade show booth at “Seatrade” in Miami. This sponsorship is for the Key West Chamber of Commerce and the City of Key West to promote to the most upscale cruiseships and desirable targeted tourists to the Key West destination. **No other marketing efforts are made to promote cruiseship visitation.**
- There are positive aspects to the cruiseship industry that include daily business to attractions, retail, food establishments and transportation services. It also provides alternative travel transportation to the destination. It gives the opportunity for these travelers to see the destination either by introduction or by return trip, so to give word-of-mouth promotion.
- The negatives include too many passengers disembarking on one day, or over the year, gives the perception of overcrowding of the destination. This will affect the appeal of our main market customers which are the “over-night stay” visitor. Too much day tripper business will change the look of retail tourism businesses to accommodate a less targeted consumer.
- The TDC position should be that there needs to be a balance between the beneficial factors of day tripper business to the destination and that of the appearance of over crowding and loss of unique destination appeal.

- The responsibility in the regulation of cruiseship passengers to the destination is with the City of Key West. The City of Key West can control the amount of cruiseship business. This could be done by limiting the number of cruiseships allowed to visit per day and/or per year. Also by increasing passenger embankment fees the City of Key West may maintain revenues while fostering fewer visitors.

## II. **College Spring Break Business**

- TDC marketing efforts – The TDC **does not** promote to college spring break business. No marketing funding is directed to the spring break market.
- The positive aspects include a younger market that may produce return visits for years. Bars and fast food tourism business benefits.
- The negatives include “running away” upscale main stream visitors. Spring breakers don’t normally patron our main industry resources such as fishing, diving, cultural aspects, major retail, nor high end restaurants. This market also adds costs of city government to control crowds.
- The TDC position should be to continue not to market nor encourage promotion to college spring break market.
- Some responsibility in the regulation of spring break business falls with the lodging industry. You **cannot ‘mix and match’** spring break and upscale mainstream guests. Some controls by lodging would be to: not advertise to market; place age requirements on registration year long; and require only two (2) persons per room.

### III. Motorcycle Market

- TDC marketing efforts – The TDC **does not** market directly to the so called group motorcycle market. We do not advertise to nor sponsor “poker runs” or “bike week” travel. We do realize that the road trip down the Keys is a scenic ride ideal for motorcycle enthusiasts. We also realize that the some events (September Poker Run) bring a lot of much needed visitors during historically slow time periods for tourism.
- The positive aspects are that most motorcyclists now are affluent travelers. Many will bring their equipment and stay in lodging establishments throughout the Keys.
- The negatives include noise. Florida Keys streets and housing locations are not accommodating to the cruising of motorcycles and the islands are impacted by large gatherings and road congestion.
- The TDC position should remain not to promote large group travel by motorcycles. We do not target the motorcycle market, however, we will continue to promote the destination as a great scenic drive or ride, including motorcycle enthusiasts. We may be able to assist districts and cities by having policies on our website to assist potential visitors to better understand noise ordinances, etc.
- Regulation of motorcycle noise should lie with law enforcement of the county and cities.

### IV. Loss of Unique Character

- TDC marketing efforts – The TDC spends all of its promotional funding marketing the unique aspects of the destination. We are selective in identifying those qualities which make the Keys a desirable destination. Market factors beyond the control of the TDC may erode this character.
- There are no positive aspects to losing our quaint, unique, charming, cultural elements that make the Florida Keys an experience to visit.
- The negatives *are that* we should avoid developing a product that becomes so mainstream (generic) that the potential visitor has no reason or motivation to travel to the destination. The loss of unique local character of a destination is being termed “Generica” within the tourism industry, and we do not want to become just like other tourist destinations.

- The TDC position should be to not encourage the development of franchise establishments or corporate chains of businesses other than lodging properties. All districts should be encouraged to preserve its heritage of architecture, culture and local businesses. Although most of our lodging properties are not franchise operations, franchise properties serve a positive need to the industry, in that some travelers feel very comfortable with certain corporate property names for their stay.
- The responsibility in the regulation of development lies within the county and incorporated cities mainly zoning ordinances.

## **V. Environment**

- TDC marketing efforts – The TDC promotes our environmental resources such as water quality, water activities, reefs, wildlife and plant life, and many other nature based aspects.
- There are many positive aspects to our natural environment that will motivate the specialty interest traveler to visit.
- The negatives include the possibility of visitors not being responsible or respectful to our natural resources and concerns of over use of these valuable resources. Also, concerns of cleanliness (trash or waste) of the destination.
- The TDC position should be that we promote to the most upscale, responsible traveler from whom we can profit, but who also will respect and help protect our natural resources. We must highlight eco-tourism on the principles of traveling to natural areas with the intentions of preserving the environment and the cultures associated with our destination including our residents' quality of life.
- Some responsibility lies within the TDC to promote and educate to the ideal target market for visitation. Some responsibility lies within the specific tourism industry such as water related businesses – diving, snorkeling, fishing, boating, etc. to educate visitors. Some responsibilities lie within governmental agencies that regulate environmental areas. City and County governments need to continue to address and fund projects that will remedy conditions that allow harm to the environment and to keep the destination clean of trash or waste.

## VI. Traffic

- TDC marketing efforts – The TDC, pre September 11<sup>th</sup> promoted to fly market as much as possible. After September 11<sup>th</sup> we did promote to the drive market because of the negative intangibles of fly travel. We are now promoting fly travel, however, there are several obstacles that stand in the process.
- The positive aspect to the drive market is that the Florida Keys are a great drive destination. Also that since Florida is our number one market, it makes an easy and cost effective trip for visitors.
- The negatives include that there is only one way by driving into and through the Florida Keys and that is – **US. 1**. Each destination in the Keys is a relatively small island, with many small streets. During the tourist season – January – April, there develops traffic congestion and parking problems for visitors and residents. The Keys have only one (1) commercial airline service airport and that is in Key West. The flights available into Key West are reaching capacity, limiting the percentage of visitors arriving by air at only 12%. Most tourism destinations operate at around 35% by air. A high percentage of our visitors are fly/drive travelers who fly into Fort Lauderdale or Miami and then drive rental cars into the Keys. Traffic is by nature a negative impact to all land based tourism destinations in the US and to some degree so is parking.
- The TDC position should be that we continue advertising to the fly market. We also support the development of commercial air service into the Florida Keys Marathon Airport. The Key West Airport needs to be extended to allow regional jet service. We need to continue to support alternative transportation such as fast ferry services from mainland locations. We should continue to inform potential visitors that having a car is not essential to travel around Key West.
- The major responsibility of traffic concerns lies directly on the tourism industry, including the TDC. Tourism promotion causes the need to travel to and around the destination. Some alternative responsibility should lie with the Department of Transportation for the proper roadway infrastructure and scheduling of road repairs. Also the law enforcement agencies to handle accidents on the Overseas highway in a more efficient manner. Local municipalities need to coordinate better traffic flow through changes in traffic direction and traffic congestion control policing during certain times at certain locations. TDC should seek endorsement of government in marketing and directing those in cars and RV's. The County needs to develop commercial airline travel into the Marathon Airport, and extend the airport length of the Key West Airport.

In summary, the principal points are that there are issues of concern with certain types of tourism, and some negative impacts of the industry needs agreement on a course of action. It is clear that the TDC does not do mass tourism marketing. To the contrary, we do special target marketing based on specialty markets, demographics and psychographics to reach the desired potential traveler and visitor to our destination.

Our creative marketing campaigns focuses mainly on cultural/historical and eco-tourism aspects of our destination. The cultural/historical promotions highlight the unique character, attractions and events directed towards experiencing the arts, heritage, history, foods, ethnicity, architecture and other areas that contributes to the destination. The eco-tourism promotions highlight all the nature-based elements, activities or events to the destination including fishing, diving and snorkeling.

Our marketing program is and should be a comprehensive approach on developing tourism for the Florida Keys with a need for balance of sustainable tourism. Improvements to the quality of life of our residents can be accommodated with understanding of each areas needs and objectives. TDC will continue periodic review of our target markets and our advertising campaign undertaken in public District Advisory Committee meetings with the districts endorsement of the efforts and expenses of TDC funds. The TDC needs to do a better job of informing the general public and the tourism industry of what our marketing program is comprised of, who our target markets are, and what our creative message represents.