



A non-profit helping New Orleans special event planners and participants reduce waste and lower their impact on our planet.

## MARDI GRAS WASTE REDUCTION

### OVERVIEW:

Mardi Gras in New Orleans is often recognized as the “greatest free show on Earth,” each year drawing out millions of residents and visitors to the city to contribute almost half a billion dollars to the local economy. It showcases our city’s incredibly unique culture & beauty through various forms of craft, tradition, spectacle, and performance. Yet, over the last half century it has evolved into a mammoth generator of unwanted, toxic, disposable, plastic “throw” waste imported from factories overseas. The waste threatens the health of our children and our environment and puts a strain on our fragile city infrastructure, taxpayer funds and city image – with little to no accountability for who owns it, why it’s really there and how to fix a system that relies on it as a byproduct of parade operating costs. Raising public awareness, enacting sensible measures through city and Krewe leadership and promoting a local, quality driven, sustainable throw economy that invests millions of dollars in our community annually are all critical to reducing the waste. It’s time for our city to protect itself, lead by example and remind everyone that *“it’s the show, not the throw”* that makes Mardi Gras so special.

### Why This Matters:

- It will save the city money and protect our fragile stormwater infrastructure. Potential to lower rising sanitation, landfill, catch basin cleaning costs.
- One the largest/most important celebrations in the world. Like all art forms, it will constantly evolve. Must adapt to novel paradigms or will suffer.
- Our city is at the forefront of climate change and we are at a turning point. We either lead by example on this issue or become example of decline.
- Moving away from bleak factory labor/disposable plastic/imports and toward a local, eco-friendly throw economy will be a worldwide success story.

### Public Audiences:

- Residents concerned about taxpayer burden associated with waste and stress on storm drain infrastructure
- Residents concerned about single use, low grade plastics impact on climate change, local waterways and environments
- Families concerned about health and safety of imported throws made from cheap materials
- Parade riders & businesses who want millions spent here annually on throws rather than sent to factories overseas
- Media who are always looking to find positive stories and examples to cover about Mardi Gras
- Visitors to the city who are unaccustomed to local waste culture and may be put off by it when considering a return

### Partners:

- City of New Orleans Budget Office, Sanitation Department, and NOLA Sewerage & Water Board
- Organizations, institutions, businesses and residents along parade routes
- Lake Pontchartrain Conservancy, JOB1, New Orleans Business Alliance
- Local throw crafters & businesses who sell to riders looking for alternative, high value throw options

### Opposition:

- “Fewer throws will hurt revenue generated by Mardi Gras” = “Mardi Gras thrived for decades before the era of excess plastic throws.”
- “Krewes need throws to fund their parade” = “Throw quality, not quantity, creates value/demand and improves parade experience for all.”
- “There are no affordable, sustainable, local throw alternatives” = “They are starting to exist and we need to promote and scale them.”
- “Riders care about quantity more than quality” = “They can throw paper confetti on the ground instead and save our storm drains and \$.”
- “People come to parades to catch lots of stuff” = “Mardi Gras is an art form, not a transaction. See Chewbacchus & compare its waste to others.”

### Calls to action:

- Identify who benefits from and “owns” Mardi Gras waste. If it’s the Krewes, they need to pay for it. If it’s the city, they should set limits on it.
- Rework parade permit fees to be commensurate with Krewe policies, offsets and actions towards a waste management plan.
- Krewe of 3,000 riders spends \$10 less (out of \$1,200 avg.) on imported throws to instead put toward \$30,000 throw recycling initiative.
- Appoint a sustainability & resiliency voice to the The Mayor’s Advisory Mardi Gras Council who currently only treats Mardi Gras as a business.
- Set a % goal in reducing or diverting the tonnage of waste each year over the next 5 years regardless of unique circumstances.

### WHO OWNS THIS?



THIS IS NO LONGER JUST ABOUT EXCESSIVE, UNWANTED, UNHEALTHY DISPOSABLE CHINESE PLASTIC

IT'S ABOUT PROTECTING OUR FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST FLOODING & SAVING OUR CITY \$



JANUARY 28TH, 2018



FEBRUARY 16TH, 2020