

# Cruise Ship Task Force – Final Report (Draft)

## City of Charleston

December 2003

### INTRODUCTION

Charleston has a longstanding reputation as a leader in tourism management, and has traditionally been ahead of the curve in managing the tourism industry. The passenger cruise ship industry is one segment of this industry, currently representing 1% of all visitors to Charleston and slightly more than 1% of overall tourism expenditures. Though it is a relatively small segment, it is one that has grown steadily over the past several years. Therefore, the cruise industry warrants additional scrutiny in terms of its potential costs and benefits to the community. The purpose of the Cruise Ship Task Force was to address both the existing and potential impact of the cruise ship industry and present its findings and recommendations to the Mayor and City Council.

Generally, the findings of this committee are that there are substantial benefits resulting from the cruise industry, and that it is already being managed fairly well. However, the committee found that there are certain areas for improvement, and that there should be a structure in place to continue to address these issues and others that may arise in the future. It is to the advantage of the City to be proactive and begin to manage these issues before they become problems. This will make certain that Charleston avoids experiencing the negative experiences of cities like Key West and Juneau, Alaska.

The committee agreed that the cruise industry should be managed and recognized three major approaches to improve the existing framework:

1. Improve the management of both origination and port-of-call cruise ship activities and lessen any undesired impacts of this industry on the city and the environment.
2. Enhance the experiences of cruise ship passengers visiting the City.
3. Establish an advisory subcommittee of the Tourism Oversight Committee known as the Cruise Ship Advisory Council, which will continuously monitor the cruise industry in Charleston.

The Cruise Ship Task Force, in pursuing its goals, formed five subcommittees: Research and the Environment, Commerce, Quality of Life, Homeland Security, and Automobile and Pedestrian Traffic. The major findings and recommendations of these subcommittees were presented to the full Steering Committee on August 25, 2003; these recommendations were then discussed and agreed upon at a subsequent meeting on September 26. The consensus derived from this final meeting is outlined in this document.