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THE IMPACT OF A GROWING HOTEL SECTOR IN THE PARIS BELLEVILLE DISTRICT

Novotel Belleville enhances Paris 20ème district local community and becomes a tourist, cultural, social, and economic hub

Located between the 19th and 20th arrondissements to the north of Paris, the Belleville district is filled with natural areas, and an energetic arts and culture panorama. Originally made up of smaller villages, it has preserved its working-class culture, and its architectural gems have become a hub and inspiration for artists and Parisians. The working-class culture of the area dates back centuries, when it was an independent village populated by winemakers, farmers, and small business owners. Over the last 200 years, Belleville's elaborate heritage was influenced by immigration waves from, and not limited to, Armenia, Greece, China, Vietnam, and Morocco, continuously reshaping the area with art and traditions, that today reveal themselves in creative and fascinating ways.¹ These genuine characteristics, of the neighbourhood, position it as an authentic hub in the heart of Paris.

Tourism is one of the leading and fast-growing industries in the world, with a growth forecast of 4% each year until 2030. The hospitality sector represents over 400,000 jobs, or 12.4%, and over 40,000 businesses of the total employment in the capital city of France. Paris, already one of the leading shopping destinations in the world, a popular metropolis for business travellers, a recreational city, the capital of gastronomy, and a city filled with art and history, is becoming a green city. In this sense, Belleville is growing faster than other more developed areas of Paris. The strong connectivity and quality infrastructure of the city offers high-level services for the tourism industry, including an increase and diversification of hotel availability.²

Belleville, meaning “beautiful town” in French, is renowned for its green parks, numerous **cultural attractions**, and artistic events, which attract both locals and visitors. The Père-Lachaise Cemetery, located in Belleville, one of the most visited sites in Paris, and the most visited cemetery in the world, is a historic cemetery where the tombs of the likes of Edith Piaf, Jim Morrison, and Molière can be found.³

¹ Traub, C. “Exploring Paris’ Belleville District: A Haven for Artists, Immigrants & Revolutionaries” *Paris Unlocked*, 6 Nov. 2019,

<https://www.parisunlocked.com/history-of-paris/belleville-paris-neighborhood-profile/>

² Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau. “Un plan en 59 mesures pour le tourisme parisien” *Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau*, 20 Jul. 2021,

<https://www.paris.fr/pages/un-plan-en-59-mesures-pour-le-tourisme-parisien-4196>

³ Ezgi, P. “Visit the World’s Most Famous Cemetery, Père Lachaise in Paris” *Paris Tourist Information*, 6 Feb. 2022,

<https://www.paristouristinformation.fr/things-to-do/parks/cimetiere-du-pere-lachaise/>



The hospitality industry is fundamental to **local economies** as it fosters spending in the food and beverage sector, entertainment venues and retail areas, and helps finance infrastructure developments in local communities.⁴ **Tourism depends on local communities**, as they embody the motives that push travellers to visit a specific area; to experience the lifestyle, food, and culture, amongst others. Likewise, **local communities also depend on tourism** for employment opportunities, innovation, social development, and an increase in revenues for independent businesses.⁵

The Belleville district, today, is an upcoming, busy, vibrant, and popular area amongst Parisians, as it is surrounded by an abundance of trendy restaurants, new shops, art galleries, and an open-air market. The Novotel Paris 20 Belleville opens its doors in the heart of Belleville with 119 rooms. This property is a part of Aina Hospitality's hotel portfolio and is currently on sale after a full renovation of the building, formerly used as a tax office. Positioned at the intersection of the 11th and 20th arrondissements of Paris, the hotel finds itself with easy access to Place de la République, the Canal Saint Martin and Place de la Bastille.

Originally, the historical district was known as an area where residents could benefit from cheaper prices for rent and goods, but like most districts in a capital city, **Belleville is gentrifying at a fast pace**; with new wine bars and cafés, modern stores, and luxury goods shops currently expanding. This growing popularity offers new benefits for the local community; as the area attracts more tourists, the hospitality and F&B sectors continue to grow, bringing in more job opportunities and increased revenues.⁶

Consequently, the opening of this property is vital to the **social and economic development** of the area by bringing new jobs and a new dynamic. For instance, 50% of the staff at the hotel are locals from the primary area of Belleville, as the hotel prioritises and efforts to hire talent from the local community. Novotel Paris 20 Belleville has an increasing **local clientele** that is encouraged to experience the bar, restaurant, and terrace. Other than leisure travellers, the property welcomes business travellers and **local entrepreneurs** to use the **co-working space** and lounge area. This initiative stems from the **growing number of start-ups and investors** in the city. Because of the economic dynamism, Paris is attracting talent and fostering innovation, thus making it one of the top 3 biggest start-up hubs in Europe.⁷

Sustainability, like innovation, has become prominent around the world, both for businesses and consumers, offering an opportunity for hotels to shape the path towards greener solutions while simultaneously **influencing communities** and individuals to do the same.⁸ In September of 2020, the city of Paris began the collection of food scraps in nearby local food markets, as an environmental initiative against food waste, where six food markets included are in the Belleville district.⁹

As a commitment to sustainability Accor created Planet 21 – Acting Here, a program that strives towards “Acting for People and the Planet”. The foundation of this project is built around four main pillars: involving the local communities, working with all employees, innovating with partners, and including the clients. Part of the objectives of this program include **reducing the group's carbon emissions by 46% by 2030**, reducing food waste by 30%, serving sustainable produce, using low-consumption lighting, and cutting down on water consumption.

There are two key issues that Accor has defined and need to be challenged: buildings and food. Already, a ban has been set in place on serving endangered fish species in Accor restaurants, along with implementing urban vegetable gardens, and buying more local food products. When it comes to the

⁴ Impoff. "Importance of Hospitality Industry" *Impoff*, 28 Oct. 2020, <https://impoff.com/importance-of-hospitality-industry/>

⁵ Hall, D.R. & Richards, G. eds. *Tourism and sustainable community development*. London: Routledge, 2000.

⁶ Traub, C. "Exploring Paris' Belleville District: A Haven for Artists, Immigrants & Revolutionaries" *Paris Unlocked*, 6 Nov. 2019, <https://www.parisunlocked.com/history-of-paris/belleville-paris-neighborhood-profile/>

⁷ Tucker, C. "10 Paris-based startups to have your eye on in 2021 and beyond" *EU Startups*, 30 Aug. 2021, <https://www.eu-startups.com/2021/08/10-paris-based-startups-you-should-have-an-eye-on-in-2021-and-beyond/>

⁸ Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau. "What are the challenges for tourism in the future?" *Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau*, n.d., <https://en.convention.parisinfo.com/latest-news/paris-headlines/challenges-tourism-future-paris>

⁹ Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Les marchés de proximité collectent vos déchets alimentaires" *Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau*, 9 Feb. 2022, <https://www.paris.fr/pages/les-marchés-de-proximite-collectent-vos-dechets-alimentaires-8196#arrondissement-20-yah6i>



buildings Accor has a set of fundamental initiatives set in place such as recycling hazardous waste, paper, glass, cardboard, and plastic; measuring and examining the hotels' water and energy consumption monthly, and recognising the standard water flows of all water outlets.¹⁰

With the introduction of Planet 21 Accor formed a plan of action comprising 65 actions that **promote sustainable development** for all their hotels, including a four-level rating structure to foster and encourage each property's commitment towards the implementations of the program.

As a member of Accor Hotels, the Novotel Paris 20 Belleville Hotel has set in place some commitments, in line with the Acting Here program, that aim to save water and reduce the use of plastic. One of the initiatives includes placing water fountains in the restaurant, lobby, breakfast area, and soon on the first floor, from suppliers such as Aquachiar, Castalie, and Eau de Paris. This project also fosters the initiative to reduce, and soon eliminate, the use of plastic bottles in the entire hotel by replacing these with Tetra Pak bottles and self-serve fountains. Actions like these not only encourage the surrounding community to act as multipliers of the positive initiatives but contribute to the overall well-being and maintenance of the city.

Eau de Paris is a French organisation, founded in 2009, that aims to provide healthy and clean water to all residents, and visitors, of Paris. Currently, there are 1,200 public water fountains around the city, available to everyone. Additionally, the non-potable water is used for cleaning the streets, watering the plants, among other uses. By partnering with organisation like these, and implementing the Planet 21 program into its operations, the Novotel Paris 20 Belleville will continue inspiring its employees, clients and local visitors to act and foster new initiatives.

Furthermore, the capital is currently deploying an ambitious strategy for **tourism development**, with the aim of making Paris the city with the most visitors in the world and, more importantly, the most welcoming city in the world, through **quality**, sustainability, international influence, and more employment in the sector. The first step towards this goal is through a municipal approach called "*Embellir votre quartier*" or embellish your neighbourhood. This initiative for social and environmental development aims to transform public spaces by adding more vegetation, pedestrian areas, bicycle paths, and more, making the city's neighbourhoods more accessible, comfortable, safe, and sustainable for an overall better quality of life. The Belleville Saint-Maur district is currently undergoing various improvements.¹¹

Only three months after the opening of the new Accor property, the Novotel Paris 20 Belleville is among the 100 best Parisian hotels on Booking.com and has obtained a 5/5 review on TripAdvisor. During this same period, the hotel had an occupancy rate of over 70%, with 100% during the weekends, expected to keep growing to an average of over 80% in the upcoming months. These figures are the result of the removal of all Covid-19 restrictions and the opening of travel. France has been the world's leading tourism destination for over 30 years, and in Q1 of 2022 tourism nearly reached 2019 levels. Easter weekend marked a turning point, with 20% more tourists in Paris than there were in 2019, and hotels at 82% of capacity. This **strong performance** is expected to continue throughout the upcoming summer months and exceed pre-pandemic levels later in 2022.¹²

Moreover, following the new trends and **increased travel demand**, hotels must collaborate with local businesses, individuals, and suppliers, and participate in the cultural traditions and **local events** to fully integrate with their surrounding communities, and allow them to benefit from the increased influx of visitors.

The hospitality industry can help support local musicians, artists, and businesses, by hosting exhibitions and events for both the public and hotel guests. These actions can also **reunite the community** by

¹⁰ Accor Group. "Acting Here – Our commitment" GroupAccor. <https://group.accor.com/en/commitment/positive-hospitality/acting-here>

¹¹ Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau. "Embellir votre quartier: Belleville Saint-Maur" *Paris Convention and Visitors Bureau*, 31 Mar. 2022, <https://www.paris.fr/pages/embellir-votre-quartier-belleville-saint-maur-20359>

¹² Askew, J. "Tourism in France surges after pandemic, with Easter marking a turning point" *Euro News*, 2 May 2022, <https://www.euronews.com/my-europe/2022/05/02/tourism-in-france-surges-after-pandemic-with-easter-marking-a-turning-point>



fostering a stronger sense of belonging in society.¹³ To this extent, Novotel Paris 20 Belleville prides itself in supporting local artists by exhibiting their work in the halls of the property, namely, with Julia Wong in March, and currently exhibiting Damoon Paris until the summer. To respond to the lifestyle demands of such a dynamic district, the hotel lounge offers live acoustics by collaborating with musicians such as DJ Benji De La House and Bruno Naccour.

To date, the hotel has partnered with 5 local suppliers, including “la Parisienne” beer, Pressing de Belleville, La Pharmacie de Belleville, the florist “Dandelion”, and “Café Coutume”. The hotel’s restaurant, le Mozami, further contributes to the social impact of the area, inviting guests to share an array of dishes made from local French products. Furthermore, participations in school forums, such as “Le Forum des Métiers 2022 du Collège Aubrac” on Saturday the 12th of March, highlight a positive commitment and effort to the children that live in the local community. Over 40,000 young people, under the age of 18, live in the 20^{ème} arrondissement making education and future career options for these individuals a priority to the municipality.

In a city full of art and history, the Belleville district is no different. Alongside the ambitious tourism development strategy recently established and the increasing tourism demand, the entirety of Paris will get a new outlook and a more sustainable infrastructure, improving the quality of life of its residents and its visitors. With these renovations, the 20^{ème} arrondissement is on the road to becoming a popular and trendy neighbourhood. Every actor in the district, including new hotels, will have the responsibility to influence the community in a positive manner, but will also bring in new opportunities that the locals can benefit from. The Novotel Paris 20 Belleville property will be vital to the development of the area not only through the creation of new jobs, but through a dynamic influence and social contribution to the Belleville community. On the opening night event, on the 5th of April this year, the Aina team and Edmond de Rothschild members greeted guests, Belleville residents, and the mayor of the 20th arrondissement, Mr Éric Pliez.



As seen from left to right: Simon Castella, Johnny El Hachem, Carolina Thiede, Jaume Tapies, Liza Masias, Jaume Tapies Rautenberg, Carlos Escoda and Ramon Perez.

¹³ Sarrantonio, N. “How hotels can give back to the community” *Travel Media Group*, 22 Nov. 2021, <https://www.travelmediagroup.com/how-hotels-can-give-back-to-the-community/>