

Restore Late Night Order and Keep the MPD and the Citizenry Safe

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I spent Saturday evening, July 16, 2016 downtown. The Dauphin Street Vault brought young athletes, their trainers, and families to downtown for more than 12 hours. The International Corvette Club brought their fine machines to Bienville Square for a wonderful show. Earlier, I had shopped for tomatoes, watermelon, and corn at the Market on the Square in beautiful Cathedral Square. Dinner at Von's was a wonderful experience of visits with friends and enjoyment of delicious Gulf of Mexico seafood.

About midnight, the Dauphin Street Vault ended and the scene changed. I spent the next two (2) hours walking all around downtown observing the late night scene. There were 3 Mounted Unit Officers and 2-4 MPD patrolmen in the key area. That is in addition to the off duty officers and bouncers at the various bars. About one (1) hour after I left, fights began breaking out and eventually shots were fired in the exact spot where I had been standing at 2 a.m.

The city has many tools to manage the entertainment scene. These have been passed by the City Council over the past ten years. Let's ask for vigorous enforcement of the rules governing public consumption, noise, and underage visitation. Let's consider some additional tools to manage the car party in the street and the party in the parking lot. The MPD needs to know that the downtown community supports their efforts to immediately restore late night order in Downtown Mobile.

Some observations and recommendations for action:

1. About 90% of those walking around the designated Entertainment (portable alcohol) District were drinking out of illegal cups or containers. The law is very clear as to what is allowed: a 16 oz or SMALLER paper or plastic cup emblazoned with the LoDa logo or the licensee's logo. I observed hundreds of Styrofoam or clear plastic cups, hundreds of beer cans, and a handful of glass beer or liquor bottles being carried around. Since I left at 2 a.m., it is not known whether the rules for stopping outside drinking were enforced after 2:30 a.m.
 - a. ACTION: Vigorously Enforce the rules of the Entertainment District Ordinance as adopted by the City Council on March 5, 2013 and revised on August 19, 2014 – Sec. 30-13. Key points include the exclusive use of approved sized and logo emblazoned cups during the designated times of 4 p.m. and 2:30 a.m. inside the two (2) designated entertainment districts.
2. There were a few young people roaming with the crowds well after midnight. These children cannot go in any of the establishments that are open and should observe the law governing minors and downtown.
 - a. ACTION: Vigorously Enforce the Teen Curfew Ordinance for the Downtown Entertainment District as defined in the Curfew for Minors Ordinance Sec. 39-261.

Unaccompanied minors (under 18 years of age) shall not be downtown any day between the hours of 10 p.m. and 5 a.m.

3. The allowance by some bars of people under 21 is a source of much criticism.
 - a. ACTION: Vigorously Enforce Sec. 30-58 – Ordinance to prohibit minors from being in or on Licensed premises. For the purposes of this ordinance a minor is defined as any person under 21. People under 21 may only be in a licensee that has a full kitchen and received at least 50% of its revenue from food sales.
4. Enforce the Noise Ordinances
 - a. Action: Vigorously Enforce Sec. 39-96 which prohibits noise in the public ROW that is audible from 25' away. There are dozens of residences in the vicinity of Dauphin St and St. Francis St – two of the main corridors for cars entering and leaving downtown in the 11 p.m. – 4 a.m. window. There are pedestrians along these corridors. There are businesses along these corridors. All of the above have the right to not be disturbed by excessively loud music from cars passing by.
 - b. Action: Vigorously Enforce Sec. 39-96.1 on Noise. Noise may not exceed 85 db(a) between 6 a.m. and 10 p.m. or 50 db(a) between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. anywhere downtown.
5. Consider New Regulation
 - a. Commercial Parking lots – Lots should have lighting and security guards from Dusk to Dawn if people are able to park in them. The parking lots have become party zones and places of disorder. If lighting and security cannot be provided, the lot should be inaccessible to cars and gathering groups.
 - b. Cruising – People are not customers until they are pedestrians. Just driving endlessly around in circles is a hazard and downtown is not the place for this behavior. Atlanta, GA has an example of a “No Cruising Zone” ordinance. Let’s see if the council wants to consider such for downtown.