



Mobile, Alabama Roundtable Summary Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The **Downtown Mobile Alliance** contracted with the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) to facilitate a consultation known as the Hospitality Zone Assessment (HZA). This process is designed to assist communities in developing and managing their city's nighttime economy. The goal is to highlight a community's resources and assets, identify development opportunities, and define practical solutions to the risks associated with hospitality zones and specifically, evening and late-night activity.

This process has been possible because of the generous sponsors of the assessment: **Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau, Budweiser Busch Distributing, Battle House Hotel, and Candlewood Suites**. These organizations and companies are to be commended for offering their financial support for a significant project that will result in a more sustainable and vibrant downtown.

A **"hospitality zone"** is an area of mixed or multiple uses that is distinguished by a high concentration of dining and entertainment businesses, such as restaurants, pubs, taverns, cafes and nightclubs. A hospitality zone often has an active street life and may serve as a center for community fairs, festivals and events during the day and weekends. While a hospitality zone centralizes amenities and attractions, it also has a higher potential for public safety and quality of life impacts.

RHI created the Hospitality Zone Assessment as an inclusive approach to assist communities in nightlife planning and management. By including a wide range of stakeholders in the process, a broad base of support and buy-in is achieved. RHI has accumulated innovative strategies from cities worldwide, and through implementing the HZA in dozens of cities, brings the experience to facilitate a holistic discussion evaluating current strategies and policy effectiveness to help participants reach consensus on priorities and next steps.

When properly planned and managed, hospitality zones can be a prosperous investment. They drive community revitalization, increase property value and generate much-needed revenue and employment. Yet without effective policies, regulation, monitoring and implementation, hospitality zones can be costly and lead to conflicts. RHI aims to help Mobile's nighttime economy reach its full potential.

Mobile as a Sociable City

Downtown Mobile is an historic district in transition to becoming a destination for dining and entertainment. Empty buildings and vacant storefronts scattered throughout the area mark the passage of an evolving economy that now features a mix of long-term and entrepreneurial start-up businesses. A palette is being formed for a portrait of a downtown with great potential. Investments are being made to revitalize or create new residential units. Entrepreneurs envision future markets while property owners recognize emerging opportunities. Modernization and upgrades are driving optimism and dedication for transformation and transition.

Core business and government activity sustain a traditional weekday 9 to 5 economy, periodic events programmed throughout the year drive intense levels of street life and activity, and social venues offering dining and entertainment maintain some evening business before transitioning to a more active late-night economy.

Recent incidents involving a shooting death and other impacts on residential quality of life from disorderly behavior resulted in new local policy proposals including restrictions on under 21 year old access in licensed beverage businesses not providing food and a pending proposal for limits on weekday hours of licensed beverage business operation.

The evolution of downtown is in a fragile transitional stage and some sought postponement of the implementation of new policy until completion of the Hospitality Zone Assessment. New insights gained will help shape the future direction of Mobile, guided by the overall objective of enhancing vibrancy and the economic potential of downtown as a "destination for sociability" while simultaneously assuring reduction of risk to residents and visitors.

The Leadership Summit and Action Plan

This report consolidates input from six structured focus groups on each of the core elements of hospitality zone development, involving more than fifty individuals representing almost as many businesses and organizations. The recommendations will be presented on March 7th to participants and others interested in prioritizing next steps to help establish Mobile as one of the nation's most sociable cities.

METHODOLOGY

RHI staff worked primarily with Elizabeth Sanders and Carol Hunter, Downtown Mobile Alliance, in identifying a balance of representatives to serve as a planning body, or Transformation Team. Individuals were recruited who bring a broad understanding of trends and issues in Mobile's development, have credibility in the community as being fair and balanced, and have the ability to reach out to peers -and encourage participation in the Six Core Element Roundtables.

Jim Peters, President, and Allison Harnden, Vice-President, Responsible Hospitality Institute, oriented all stakeholders to their role in the HZA process and next steps. The twelve members of the Transformation Team assisted in recruitment of representatives to attend Roundtables on RHI's Six Core Elements for Hospitality Zone Development. They are defined as follows:

- **Entertainment:** Nurturing talent and supporting venues that provide inter-generational entertainment.
- **Public Safety:** Adapting regulatory and compliance systems for an active nighttime economy.
- **Venue Safety:** Internal policies and procedures to improve service, safety and security.
- **Multi-use Sidewalk:** Managing public space use for events, entertainment, vendors and outdoor seating.
- **Transportation:** Assuring safe and efficient access to and egress from hospitality zones.
- **Quality of Life:** Managing impacts from sound, trash, traffic, nuisance behavior and disorder.

During the orientation, several key concepts were presented. The first focal point was to identify the "most Sociable Cities" and rate what factors made participants choose those cities. Many factors were identified, but universally they fell into three primary areas:

- **Safety:** A Sociable City is safe first and foremost. People feel comfortable walking at night, observe police or security monitoring the streets, and crowds are well managed both inside and outside of venues.
- **Vibrancy:** A Sociable City provides a variety of activities in public and private space for a mix of generations.
- **Development:** A Sociable City maintains the infrastructure to support the transition from day to evening to late-night activity, maximizing economic growth while minimizing risk and cost to public safety and quality of life. Well-maintained streets and sidewalks, proper lighting, litter and waste management, property maintenance and efficient mobility management for pedestrians, taxis, public transit and private vehicles are all critical components of a development plan.

Finally, the orientation introduced four primary "life stages" that can be correlated with social interaction and lifestyles. While this represents a broad generalization, an understanding of the essential needs of people represented within the demographics of markets trying to be built can inform the optimum mix of dining and entertainment.

- **Singles:** Individuals in their late teens and early twenties who are exploring relationships.
- **Mingles:** Older singles, couples and social groups of any age with a common interest.
- **Families:** Introduction of children into couple relationships requires adjustment to going out.
- **Jingles:** Business travelers on expense accounts, vacationers and empty nesters.

In preparation for the roundtable discussions, HZA participants were asked to work together to gather research and other pertinent information, and to do their own late-night tour / field study using RHI's checklist to observe

inside nightlife venues and outside in the Hospitality Zone. Beyond fact-finding, these assignments are as much about bonding and building trust amongst stakeholders.

THE FRAMEWORK FOR A SOCIABLE CITY

What follows is a summary of observations by participants involved in the Hospitality Zone Assessment, challenges facing Mobile in its evolution as a sociable city, and identification of areas for improvement. There was considerable consensus from group to group, particularly in regards to the development of the infrastructure required to move forward with safety and vibrancy oriented plans.

Six roundtable focus groups were held over the course of four days in January, 2012 on the following topics: Entertainment, Multi-use Sidewalks, Transportation, Quality of Life, Public Safety and Venue Safety. The six groups generated observations and key points that have been organized into three summary areas: Development, Safety, and Vibrancy. These three tenets of a Sociable City are required for cities to harness nightlife and sociability as an economic engine.

- The **Vibrancy** section encompasses discussion points from Entertainment and Multi-use Sidewalk roundtables.
- The **Safety** section encompasses discussion points from Public Safety and Venue Safety roundtables.
- The **Development** section encompasses key discussion points from the Quality of Life and Transportation roundtables, as well as information gathered from all six regarding demographic markets.

The first section includes the specific Action Plan for each of the six core elements for hospitality zone development. These actions are inter-related, and in many cases, require improvements first in the basic areas of lighting, trash management and zoning standards for maintenance and compliance.

The second section is a summary, organized by Vibrancy, Safety and Development, which provides more detail on topics discussed and issues presented which serve to substantiate the Action Plan recommendations.

Successful implementation of actions will require an on-going partnership to monitor progress and share success and resources.

What follows is a summary of comments and observations made by individuals participating in the hospitality zone tour, Orientation and Roundtables. This summary is based upon preliminary discussions, has not been verified and does not reflect the sponsors of this project.

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MOBILE ACTION PLAN SUMMARY

Note: Each of the six Roundtables uncovered a rich source of information on current strategies, issues and challenges. The following pages include a cumulative summary based on each Roundtable and other Roundtable sessions where relevant insights and suggestions were generated, presented in three sections – Vibrancy, Safety and Development. The Action Plan Recommendations focus on the six core elements and were developed to address many of the issues discussed. Some specific areas will require future planning and action.

Discussed and Identified as a Priority at Leadership Summit

Entertainment Roundtable

1. Cater to Socializing Market
2. Mobile - Breakout City for Musicians

Multi-use Sidewalk Roundtable

1. Infrastructure Planning
2. *Anticipate and Plan for Street Vending*
3. *Animate Dead Zones and Dead Times*

Public Safety Roundtable

1. Re-Assess Resource Allocation
2. *Change Negative Perceptions of Safety*
3. Improve Safety Standards and Local Control

Venue Safety Roundtable

1. *Collaborate for Efficiency, Safety and Economic Success*
2. *Explore Exemption to Club Membership Rule*

Quality of Life Roundtable

1. Improve Management of Trash
2. Integrate Nightlife into Planning Process

Transportation Roundtable

1. *Improve Taxi Availability*
 2. *Expand Radius of Safe Walking Area*
 3. Night Transit or Circulator
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ENTERTAINMENT ACTION PLAN

With a desire to attract retail, an older clientele and more downtown residents, there are opportunities to tap local talent to animate dead times and create connectivity between daytime and late night activity. More coordination and awareness, as well as focusing on the after-work transition time, can close this gap.

The overall objective of this work plan is to harness socializing and music as the attractive features to fill the slowest patronage period between 5:00-10:00 p.m.

Entertainment Action Area I: Cater to Socializing Market

The social experience is the common underlying attraction that draws people to larger downtown offerings such as ArtWalk and food cook-offs, and smaller elements such as MOJO jazz club, speed dating, etc. There is an opportunity to reinterpret existing and potential activities under the umbrella of socializing.

- **Surveys:** Conduct surveys in greater Mobile and downtown to determine what people do after work. (grocery shop, mall, gym)
- **Identify Activities:** Do an inventory of smaller activities that could be re-expressed as socializing (yoga, trivia, etc.)
- **Promote New Brand:** Collect both larger and smaller elements under one brand: e.g. “The Living Room of the City.” Promote via various marketing channels online and in print form.

Entertainment Action Area II: Mobile - Breakout City for Musicians

Mobile has a long history of being a cultured city and playing host to a variety of talented people in the area. Downtown Mobile Alliance’s Urban Emporium is an incubator for retail talent. Expanding the incubator theme as a model to develop and retain local musical talent could also attract emerging artists from outside Mobile.

- **Partner Outreach:** Engage partners that support music and artists, including JADA Entertainment to organize and facilitate new events to support music.
- **Inventory Performance Space:** Inventory seats, dance floor, square footage of stage and current/desired entertainment type.
- **ArtWalk as Template:** ArtWalk is an event that has taken little money to produce, but after years of development has elicited a large and loyal following. A similar event can be done to promote music: A musical version of ArtWalk.
- **MusiConnect:** Connect musical talent with downtown performance venues. Bayfest attracts submissions from upwards of 400 musicians that can be invited downtown to showcase their music in downtown parks, street corners or venues.
- **Use Social Media:** Use LodaLive and Facebook to engage local musicians into a competition. Fan base can vote online and be drawn downtown to see finalists perform live.
- **Promote Outside Mobile:** Convention and Visitors Bureau representatives traveling to other cities to recruit conventions can take talent with them to set tone and promote a music brand.

6 Month Milestone:

- Develop concept and process for a Music Walk.
-

MULTI-USE SIDEWALK ACTION PLAN

Downtowns are social magnets that draw people who want to see and be seen. The suburban social experience is more predictable, usually with a predetermined specific destination in mind. In the urban socializing experience, the entire downtown or district is the destination. There is spontaneity in choosing what to do and where to go. Surprise and discovery make the experience unique and delightful.

Mobile has been successful in enlivening public social space – sidewalks, parks, plazas – during special events. But during the week, closed businesses (either vacant or daytime-only businesses), lack of activity and expanses of darkness create dead zones that impede vibrancy needed to facilitate comfort among a wider range of people to patronize downtown at night.

Multi-use Sidewalk Action Area I: Infrastructure Planning

For Downtown Mobile to achieve contiguously vibrant public space, it will require policy and infrastructure improvements.

- **Inventory of Improvements:** Conduct an inventory and document improvements needed to make better use of public space for socializing.
- **Sidewalk Café:** Review and streamline process by which to open a sidewalk café; flowchart the process and educate public.
- **Open Container:** Evaluate impact of proposed Entertainment District Ordinance to allow open containers in designated areas on crowd management issues on streets and sidewalks. Determine how the ordinance might improve other practices.
- **Lighting:** Create connectivity with islands of light to draw people along. Consider attaching a lighting requirement to city business license for night businesses. After all, the safer people feel, the more customers will come.
 - Floodlight is needed to bridge darkness between St. Francis and St. Michael.
 - Encourage businesses to attach lights to their buildings.
 - Regents can identify common pathways used at night.
 - GIS has maps which show where lighting is located downtown.

Multi-use Sidewalk Action Area II: Anticipate and Plan for Street Vending

Create a vendor plan to prevent costly impacts to downtown, as well as to anticipate growth of food truck trend.

Priority Discussed at Leadership Summit

- *Convene stakeholders: Get input from City revenue, vendors, City Engineering, Right of Way, Environmental, Health Department, Downtown Alliance.*
- Clarify standards and process for safe vending.
- Review and update codes.
- Contact the Revenue Department to determine whether street vendor revenue is being captured.
- Educate special event promoters and vendors; the majority of vendors originate from outside Mobile.

6 Month Milestone:

- Pamphlet by City Engineering on proper grease disposal.
 - Vendor Webinar produced and attendance mandatory before getting license.
-

Multi-use Sidewalk Action Area III: Animate Dead Zones and Dead Times

- **Identify Areas to Animate:** *Inventory what exists in terms of animation on the street – sound, light, sights. Then work to fill gaps. Identify suitable locations to position street entertainers, vendors, lighting, public art, wooden cutouts for photo ops, etc.*
 - *Obtain maps from Alabama Power (Sam Covert) and City (Mary Beth Bergin) to document where lighting is located.*
 - *Enlist DMA's Regents (Clayton Ratledge) verify and document lighting and dead zones on maps*
 - *Involve Devereaux Bemis from Historic Development Commission*
 - *Town hall meeting with businesses to enlist their support in animating dead zones*

Develop and tap

- **Promote Connectivity:** Use street entertainment and Music Walk events to promote vibrancy in focused areas.
 - Review and update codes related to street performance and vending.
 - Develop and tap local talent. Involve the following organizations: university drama, music, art departments. Centre for the Living Arts, Mobile Arts Council and Bob Sain were specifically named.
 - Determine best days/times for both customers and performers to program activity and keep it consistent.
 - Expand brand and understanding of entertainment beyond music – use spontaneity, surprise, discovery and experience i.e. "Downtown is your Canvas."

6 Month Milestone:

- Plan created for fall Music Walk
 - Convene buskers and music schools.
-

PUBLIC SAFETY ACTION PLAN

One participant observed, “It’s not what you do know that scares you. Fear is what you don’t know.” Locals know that, while boarded up vacant buildings aren’t pretty, they’re innocuous. Suburbanites “hear downtown is unsafe,” and believe it. Hotel guests and visitors don’t have pre-conceived notions; for them, perception is reality. Their feedback indicates they don’t like walking to restaurants past Cathedral Square and dead zones with dilapidated buildings that lie in sections of Dauphin Street. They’re approached by panhandlers. Garbage cans sit outside businesses whether they are open or closed. Darkness, presence of homeless and lack of people on street send cues that the area is unsafe.

With an average of 700 overnight stays in downtown Mobile each night, there are potentially 700 negative impressions made daily. Visitors leave Mobile convinced it’s dangerous. In reality, although downtown had a rough summer with a murder and three shootings, crime numbers downtown are quite low. But when it is serious, it’s a big story for weeks, further entrenching negative perceptions of safety.

Public Safety Action Area I: Re-Assess Resource Allocation

Determining an appropriate balance between resources and economic activity at night correlates to transportation systems, lighting, presence of more public safety stakeholders, traffic management, fire, BID, and police. There is a need to identify night activity to demonstrate and justify need for improvements.

- **Correlate Resources to Economic Activity:** Assess economic activity and contribution of nighttime economy then correlate it to resources that are currently allocated.
 - **Police Resources:** Help people understand the value of a core group of officers familiar with the intricacies of managing a complex downtown environment. Document current patronage numbers, as well as potential patronage by calculating total seating occupancies of night businesses to inform and relate to number of officers needed downtown.
- **Engage with Sherriff’s Department:** Until such a time that police supply is optimum, consider supplementing public safety staffing with sheriff’s department resources. There are no jurisdiction issues between county and local police. Sherriff officers already work Mardi Gras.
- **Extend BID Regent Hours:** Explore feasibility of extending or rescheduling ambassadors to cover peak time. Identify other cities that have done this and use their model. (See Norfolk, VA Case Study)
- **Assign Most-Suitable Officers:** Allow input from field supervisors on proposed officer transfers. Assign officers best qualified to work in Entertainment District to downtown precinct.

6 Month Milestone:

- Method to expand safety presence: Regents, officers, businesses.
-

Public Safety Action Area II: Change Negative Perceptions of Safety

It’s easy to say addressing safety is someone else’s problem to deal with, when in reality each stakeholder group holds a part of the solution. Improved communication is needed to help seemingly disparate stakeholders to see their connections. Convening a Sociability Safety Alliance could serve as a mechanism to connect resources and overcome perceptions of safety, as well as assure improved behavior to reduce risk.

- **Identify Safe Routes:** *In New Orleans, concierges encourage people to walk, but direct them on active routes rather than side streets. To create a similar plan in Mobile, convene police and stakeholders that*

have visitor interaction to agree on a route(s) that would enhance the visitor experience and reduce negative perceptions of safety.

- **Promote Safe Routes:** Educate visitors and hotel guests about safe routes by developing and distributing maps or guides. Orient frontline staff. Disseminate route information and updates through newsletter notices and venues.
- **Crisis Management (Emergency response system):** Create a coordinated plan for management of a crisis so everyone knows how to respond. Emergency access in the hospitality zone has been blocked in the past. Police and fire coordinate plans, but all nighttime economy stakeholders need to understand their role as well.
- *Meet Monthly with Employees of downtown's night businesses or provide a Safety Alert Newsletter for safety updates.*
- **Connect Vitality Gap:** The following were proposed as a means to connect currently isolated vitality nodes:
 - Safety kiosks in parks and squares can bridge dead zones.
 - Reassign officers between Warren and Claiborne, a “no man’s land” that hotel guests are reluctant to cross.
 - Animate storefronts with light and art displays. For daytime businesses, nighttime is an advertising period in which there is opportunity to market to locals and visitors to return in the daytime.
 - Mount construction walls in front of boarded up property and cover with murals.

Public Safety Action Area III: Improve Safety Standards and Local Control

There is a need to advocate for better planning in advance of a business’s opening. Just as the state has background checks and requirements to obtain a liquor license, the local government could create standards tied to business licensing that could assure greater safety for the downtown community, improved reputation and economic growth. Other cities include requirements for business plans, safety plans and community input prior to opening and an annual performance review.

- **Stakeholder Input:** Convene a balance of stakeholders to provide input and determine what’s needed to set standards for new and existing businesses and a workable process for revoking a business license.
- **Tie Standards to Business License:** Local governments can be more restrictive, but not less restrictive than state law. By tying standards to the city business license, the City gains an effective tool to assure a safe environment. Add a requirement to adhere to state ABC laws or risk revocation of city business license.
- *Modernize Club License: Filling out a form for club membership may have been appropriate in another era, but it’s confusing, cumbersome and unnecessary. A more direct approach to creating safety for late night and 18-20 year old patrons is possible. Integrating education into the current process of membership is a short term option. While difficult to change state law, it’s not impossible.*

6 Month Milestone:

- A draft ordinance that would require safety standards for those establishments that have ABC licenses that are not restaurants, in particular those that want 18-20 year olds and those that want to operate after 2am.

VENUE SAFETY ROUNDTABLE REPORT

As an entertainment district evolves with more activity, improved communication and collaboration is needed amongst businesses that operate at night, as well as between businesses and regulating agencies. Efforts by businesses to assure safety inside venues can be thwarted by outdated systems that look good on paper, but don't work in day-to-day operations.

The seamless access of opportunity for people to socialize in safe and professionally managed venues requires a commitment by business owners, managers, staff and patrons to a common set of behavioral standards. While regulations and community covenants may define boundaries of activity, there is sometimes a need to update and match expectations with practice. Nighttime businesses are a resource to the City by providing feedback on what's working and what's not. Collaboration as a group will provide one strong voice for the nighttime economy to communicate what's needed to improve the systems that ultimately attract or deter customers.

Venue Safety Action Area I: Collaborate for Efficiency, Safety and Economic Success

When there is a perceived threat, collaboration amongst nightlife businesses gains momentum. While businesses talk to each other, there is a need for consistent communication and a collective voice. An organization and agenda oriented to night businesses' needs and schedule can incentivize participation and leadership.

- **Convene Stakeholders:** *Survey nightlife stakeholders in advance for best entity to lead/convene, best meeting day/time/place and how they prefer to be notified of upcoming meetings.*
- **Regulatory Clarification:** Periodically, include guest speakers at nightlife coalition meetings, such as regulatory stakeholders, to clarify regulations for opening and operating a business, inspection protocols and hear feedback from businesses.
- **Community Connection:** Nighttime businesses can assist in the overall safety experience of downtown. Provide outdoor lighting to make patrons feel safe coming/going, disperse information on safety awareness and taxi zones.
- **Discounted Training:** Add responsible beverage service training as a standard and seek group discount and location to provide it to downtown employees.
- **Explore Common Membership:** *Seek an alternative to club membership wherein a patron gains access to all clubs by becoming a member in one. Ability to register online or at a downtown kiosk would improve visitor experience and reduce sidewalk blockage of member sign-up tables and lines. Combined fees could support joint advocacy and marketing (See Seattle's Pub Club), or a campaign that demonstrates how venues are contributing to the community's night image. Such an approach would require:*
 - *Agreement amongst venue owners*
 - *A common member database system*
 - *An added clause to the club's by-laws: "I share club membership with the following venues . . ."*
- **Develop Standards:** Get clarification on ABC requirements then seek input from venues and other stakeholders on controls that could meet ABC requirements within a system of a membership. Strive for fairness to individual venues and a more efficient system for ABC to verify compliance.
- **Shared Technology:** *Investigate technology that can support ability for multiple venues to register members for a common membership (online and print at home). Research other entertainment districts that use i.d. scanners with ability to connect multiple venues. Add outside video cameras to venues and/or create awareness of them as a safety presence.*

6 Month Milestones:

- Joint membership technology system in place

- Schedule and agenda created for regulatory clarification meeting (s)
-

Venue Safety Action Area II: Explore an Exemption to Club Membership Rule

The City's vision to attract industries and events with international draw is inhibited when businesses are not open to serve them. But businesses are bound by state liquor laws. Two types of licenses predominate in Downtown Mobile: a lounge license which requires businesses to stop serving patrons between the hours of 2:00 a.m. and noon on Sunday; and a private club license which allows businesses to be open continuously, but requires patrons to be members of the club. The creation of an Entertainment District with distinct boundaries could solve the crowd management and visitor experience issues associated with private club memberships.

- **Research:** Develop an understanding of the referendum process to see if it's a viable strategy.
- **Outreach:** Poll City Councilors for their thoughts, concerns and advice.
- **Plan:** Create a plan that would demonstrate improvements to safety inside and outside venues as a result of exemption. Identify how current requirements contribute to safety risks. e.g. accumulation of long lines that block exits, create a hostile environment, impede crowd management, block access for EMS, create potential for identity theft and contribute to violation of ADA laws.
- **Draft a Referendum:** Modify Gulf Shores' variance with Baldwin County verbiage, and using themes of safety, economic stimulus and improved image to build tourist destination.
- **Messaging Campaign:** Raise money for mailings and messaging campaigns. Tap customer base for financial and advocacy support.

6 Month Milestones:

- Gulf Shores' variance adapted
 - City Council review of Referendum
-

QUALITY OF LIFE ROUNDTABLE REPORT

First impressions currently constitute a negative experience, which translates into negative economic impact. Tourists, suburbanites and new residents and businesses won't come downtown if their experience is a negative one. Visitors have sent letters appalled at trashcans all over the sidewalks. Downtown's infrastructure presents physical limitations; there are limited spaces behind buildings to store trash cans. Additionally, businesses have no incentive to comply as existing ordinances, albeit outdated, are not enforced.

Quality of Life Action Area I: Improve Management of Trash

Anticipating impacts before a business opens is a way to prevent some of these negative impressions.

- **New Business Requirement:** Most impacts can be solved in the pre-construction phase. Prior to construction or improvements, require new businesses to demonstrate trash management plan.
- **Focus on Need for Change:** Communicate to businesses how their actions contribute to negative economic impact and how now that trash is on the radar, their non-compliance may lead to expense. Explain the need to train busboys, dishwashers, etc. to segregate liquids from trash.
- **Review and Modernize Ordinances:** Current outdated ordinances do not reflect modern operation. Gain support for City to take action based on economic impact of failure to modernize.
- **Shared Trash Sites:** Identify locations such as alleys and parking lots as drop-off points for businesses to take their trash. Sites can have shared solar-powered compactors.
- **Tailored Trash Service:** Find or create a business or service that will transport trash from venues to a central downtown location, clean trash cans and store cans for those businesses closed 4 days a week. Overcome noise of moving cans at closing time.

6 Month Milestone:

- Garbage Summit with Waste Management, Recyclers, Businesses, Health Department
-

Quality of Life Action Area II: Integrate Nightlife into Planning Process

Impacts of adaptive use in nightlife areas go beyond the four walls of businesses that own or lease the space. Downtown has reached a point where consistent standards are needed to create an environment more attractive to new businesses, and persons of an age that would be able to afford downtown living, as well as consumers that would fill the 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. gap. There is opportunity to anticipate a residential influx and potential future outcry about impacts, while improving quality of life for current downtown residents.

- **Zone According to Intensity of Use:** Some lots and buildings are located in such a way that they cannot support high intensity uses such as nightclubs with high occupancy and loud music or restaurants that generate too much trash without space to store it. The City can identify low, medium, and high intensity zones where businesses are more likely to succeed.
- **Business Plan:** Educate new businesses about what business activities are feasible for the area. Ask them to demonstrate intended use in a plan. This will assure they are locating in an area with infrastructure suited to support businesses' activities and impacts.
- **Noise/Sound Source Management:** Address noise issues at the source. Utilize quieter trash receptacles and collection process, and schedule pick-ups for later times. Close business doors and windows during times when a band plays.
- **Resident Disclosure:** Notify residents moving into high intensity zones.

6 Month Milestone:

- A Sound Summit that orients the planning world to nightlife and mixed use challenges.
-

TRANSPORTATION ACTION PLAN

A goal of mobility management is to connect parking/taxi/public transit users to destinations they want to reach. To achieve this goal, customers need to feel safe and comfortable getting to, from and around the entertainment district. Transportation modes and connectors are key, but lighting also plays a role in facilitating mobility. People are willing and comfortable to walk a wider radius in daylight than they are at night. There is an opportunity to increase the night mobility radius by improving conditions that contribute to patrons' comfort.

The goal is to facilitate a smooth network of transportation modalities to accommodate people from early morning commercial and office commutes to late-night staff and patrons of nightlife venues and other nighttime economy workers.

Transportation Action Area I: Improve Taxi Availability

Optimum taxi service requires a healthy balance between ridership (demand), promotion and taxi supply. Mobile Bay Transit has 45 vehicles to lease to drivers. Most of the time, many of those vehicles go unleased. Yet, at downtown's peak night hours, demand is so concentrated and intense, the number of cabs to supply the nighttime economy is inadequate. *Priorities discussed at Leadership Summit.*

- **Convene a Cab Task Force** with the goal to remove barriers to optimum taxi service. Agenda can include:
 - Improve Access: Cabstands on side streets, signage, and maps.
 - Explore Zone Fare: Consider zone fares between I-65 and downtown which might motivate more customers to use taxis and may also motivate taxi drivers to work downtown.
 - *Efficient Use of Limited Fleet: Determine a location for taxi staging and staff it at peak times with an expediter who facilitates shared rides in common directions. Turn loading zones into taxi stands.*
 - Traffic Control to facilitate traffic flow on Dauphin, particularly at Jackson Street.
- **Motivate and Orient Drivers to Being Downtown:** Drivers are independent contractors, not employees, so they can't be assigned to downtown; they must want to be there. Host a meeting to orient drivers to opportunities to make money downtown and at night.

6 Month Milestones:

- *Request of City to Designate a Night-Only Zone Fee for Taxis*
 - Promote Taxi Usage to Patrons through Venues
-

Transportation Action Area II: Expand Radius of Safe Walking Area

With limited taxis and night transit, the options are to walk or drive and park. Younger, less risk averse nighttime customers don't mind parking further out and walking to their destination. Older clientele and suburbanites, however, are more fearful. They perceive poorly lit, unmaintained parking areas and walking corridors as scary. As a result, they not only avoid the dead zones, they avoid downtown. Efforts must be made to make people feel safer as they patronize downtown at night.

- *Identify Areas to Improve: Identify corridors to improve so people feel comfortable walking to core night areas, i.e. area across from Saenger was identified as an area where security patrol is needed.*
- **Improve Public Space Lighting:** As a starting point, review Volkert's research on other cities' best practices.
- *Light Buildings: Research and apply Building Minimum Lighting Requirements*

- **Promote Night Lots:** Indicate parking lots open at night on promotion portals, including Downtown Alliance, parking companies and LodaLive.
- *Parking Lot Standards:*
 - Work out issues with power companies, parking companies and absentee lot owners.
 - Enforce current standards on parking lots.
 - Update standards to a higher level for lighting and surface maintenance, and provide time (amortize) for landowners to make improvements to meet that standard (5 yrs).
 - Educate lot owners that downtown is changing, and long term investment is needed.

6 Month Milestones

- *Identify corridors that are a priority for liabilities related to parking and lighting.*
- Plan for amortizing property owner investment in upgrading parking facilities.

Transportation Action Area III: Night Transit or Circulator

Inherent in public transit is the duty to serve everyone, including the growing number of people who work, shop or patronize nightlife. Most routes are currently designed for a daytime economy, though, many of which seem to run empty of passengers. The need for night transit is anecdotal at this point. In the downtown plan, midtown neighborhoods expressed desire to have transit connections to downtown at night. Hotel guests desire transport to bridge them over scary dark areas to/from restaurants. Venue operators indicate the majority of current customers originate a short distance from downtown (3-5 miles). But data is needed to justify rerouting services. Other cities have successfully studied and rerouted transit to meet the needs of the nighttime economy, and seen increases in overall ridership. (See RHI case study Boulder, CO).

- **Data Mine Travel Patterns:** Identify travel patterns of current and potential nighttime patrons. Club venues with memberships have customer zip code information which can provide origin points for a transportation study.
- *Study Feasibility of Midtown/Downtown Night Service:*
 - *Define area for service*
 - *Survey to assess and understand needs*
 - Research rerouting transit to service nighttime economy between midtown and downtown - provide a close proximity bus service east of I-65 to downtown.
 - Consider other style (spoke and hub, loops) that would best serve night riders.
 - Recommendations to improve public transit delivery Public Transit received recommendations to improve transit delivery, but most of them have not been implemented.
- *Private Venture Circulator: In lieu of a public transit circulator, consider using a private venture (Mobile Bay transit has 15 passenger vehicles).*

6 Month Milestones

- Contact other city resources from RHI (Boulder, CO).
- Define parameters for a few options: route, budget.

SUMMARY OF VIBRANCY ISSUES

Ray Oldenburg, author of *The Great Good Place*, notes that a social scene designed for locals attracts a broader market. Tourists, convention attendees and hotel guests want to experience the unique offerings of the destination to which they have traveled. A vibrant downtown is also important for business recruitment, as companies seeking to relocate look for social amenities to enhance the integration of their employees into the social fabric of the community. Vibrancy is the blend of “social magnets” a city or district offers to bring animation to the social experience. Vibrancy is the intersection of activities that creates a focal point to enhance socializing and social activity. This includes animate public space through art, landscaping, parks, street entertainers and street food or commercial space serving food, drinks, music, dance or other entertainment.

In the urban socializing experience, the entire downtown or district is the destination. There is spontaneity in choosing what to do and where to go. Surprise and discovery make the experience unique and delightful.

Entertainment

Progressive cities nurture dining and entertainment opportunities for diverse ages, lifestyles and cultures. Support mechanisms include incentives for business development and retention, as well as assessments of nightlife’s economic value and contributions.

- **Perceptions to Overcome:** The following perceptions about the nighttime economy were expressed: “It’s just late night spots for college age kids;” “Mobile is a weekend city;” “Mobile is not a city that supports live music.”
- **Events:** Monthly ArtWalk and weekly farmers’ market are well attended. ArtWalk does not engage bars much.

Live Music Opportunities and Challenges:

- **Touring Acts:** Mobile fills the gap for touring artists as a midweek stop between weekend performances in larger cities on the tour schedule.
- **LodaLive Music Fest** used the Square to showcase bands in the daytime who would play later at night inside venues.
- **Live Music Venues:** Soul Kitchen and the Saenger are successful concert venues, as well as the Civic Center, but there is a need for a mid-sized 700-900 seat venue. The Methodist diocese was approached about turning the old sanctuary into music space, but alcohol would not be allowed on church property.
- **Barrier for Musicians Under 21:** At the Under 21 Ordinance Council sessions, musicians under 21 testified they wouldn’t be able to perform in bars if the ordinance was passed.
- **Nurturing Musicians:** Bayfest has a forum that provides students with opportunities for songwriting, performance competitions, and mentorship to learn the business side of music and perform with professionals. There is another program that recognizes local Mobilians. There is an opportunity to approach them to add a first year musician category for recognition.
- **Price Points:** For breakout artists or mid-priced acts, Civic Center is the most appropriate venue, but the ticket price required to break a profit is priced too high for their fan-base.
- **Umbrella Approach:** “Instead of one venue trying open mike night for one week and abandoning it for another approach, get all the venues to have open mike night.”
- **Need for Consistency:** One venue offered Wine Down Wednesdays, which was very successful. They stopped it when the weather got hot. There is a need for consistency and giving efforts a longer chance to catch hold. ArtWalk is an example of consistency leading to success. Businesses may need marketing workshops.

Multi-use Sidewalks

Hospitality zone vitality often extends to the streets and sidewalks through outdoor dining, street entertainment, public markets and vendor shopping. Balancing pedestrian flow and safety with ADA rules, panhandling management and lighting to connect pathways is critical to success.

Opportunities for Improved Navigation:

- **Sidewalk Width:** The condition and narrow width of sidewalks in some areas make it difficult for strollers and disabled people to negotiate.
- **Access to Sidewalks:** Bouncers and membership tables block access on sidewalks and generate lines of people waiting to sign up or have their memberships verified. These, in addition to obstacles such as trash cans and grease traps, cause crowd control issues and ADA concerns.
- **Way Finding Signage:** Visitors and tech-averse people need directional assistance on the street. Phone apps and websites exist to provide directions and parking locations, but hard copy maps and improved street signage are needed.
- **Smoking Ban:** A smoking ban is being discussed, which presents an opportunity to anticipate and address unintended consequences on the street like noise from congregating smokers, and the need for designated smoking areas and cigarette litter receptacles.

Potential for Vitality Generators:

- **Sidewalk Cafe:** Process to create a sidewalk café in Mobile is not easy, particularly if the business desires to serve alcohol. ABC and City regulations are at odds. ABC requires physical barricades to enclose the sidewalk cafe, which then violates City right-of-way laws. The business, then, has to apply for a non-utility right-of-way use agreement.
- **Vendors:** The presence of vendors is almost exclusively during events. Events like Bayfest are produced by a promoter in partnership with the City. Most vendors come from outside of Mobile. The bond collected from vendors by the City has been ineffective in discouraging improper disposal of solid and liquid wastes, resulting in costs borne by Downtown Business Improvement District and city agencies.
- **Food Trucks:** A huge trend in other cities and often used to revitalize targeted areas, food trucks can animate the street, but can also be the focus of controversy. They're just beginning to appear in Mobile. Participants did not have a clear understanding of opportunities or what is required of food trucks.
- **Buskers:** For reasons unknown, downtown has only one or two buskers (street entertainers).

SUMMARY OF SAFETY ISSUES

Downtown contributes to overall opportunities for the greater Mobile region. International business and industry are attracted to cities with vital urban cores. The Downtown Business Improvement District (BID) generates property value-based revenue higher than anywhere in the city. Downtown property owners pay both to the city and the BID. As both the resultant tax base and economic benefit to the city has grown, the City has not increased their share to support downtown.

Negative perceptions of safety create a ripple effect through the entire downtown economic system. Non-compliant operation by a single rogue business goes beyond four walls, creating negative impacts to the entire nighttime economy and its future. Such rogue businesses drain scarce police resources, create extra work for policy makers, and deter customers from patronizing downtown. While in reality, crime is lower downtown than other areas of Mobile, perception of criminal activity drives customers elsewhere.

Feedback from visitors about their safety perceptions are an opportunity to make corrections and get on the right track. Some fixes are simple such as lighting and staffing locations where people are known to feel unsafe. Others require deeper investigations into outdated or ineffective systems, and a more proactive approach that includes forethought into crisis management for the district, education to keep downtown's night patrons and workers safe, and proactive means to address the most pressing matters in nightlife districts.

Policies and Legislation

Policies can help shape desired outcomes for entertainment districts. Without modernized policies, undesirable behaviors by patrons and business go unchecked. The goal is to create safe venues, deal with rogue operators and deal strategically with 18-20 year olds.

Open Container Ordinance

- A proposed entertainment district ordinance allowing open containers outside venues would energize public space with people on the street, but could create liability and challenges around underage access, policing and might encourage people to "BYOB."
- **Highlight:** The ordinance could be a catalyst to achieve other standards desired in the entertainment districts, such as lighting, etc.

Ordinance Banning 18-20 Year Olds:

- To address a perceived issue that underage patrons were the key cause of nightlife safety problems that had reached a tipping point, an ordinance was created, which bans 18-20 year olds from alcohol licensed venues unless they have a kitchen, a food menu and demonstrate a ratio of food to alcohol sales. Venues have added food service, but the strong demand of the 18-20 year old market is for music and drink (not food) so venues are forced to inflate food prices and lower drink prices to stay compliant with ratios.

Club Membership License

- **Outdated Requirements:** It's believed that the state-issued club license was created to circumvent blue laws more suited to counties outside Mobile. Without it, a business must close by 2:00 a.m. on Sunday morning and remain closed until after noon. Weekend hours are peak recreation time, and many businesses find it worthwhile to gain ten extra hours of operation. The license also permits clubs to legally allow admittance to 18-20 year old patrons. Both options present higher safety risks that are not effectively addressed by the license requirements.
- **Membership Requirements:** The license requires clubs to collect personal information from patrons. However, visitors from outside the region perceive it as invasive, burdensome and strange. Alternatives to expedite registration include 1) Amend membership requirement to allow

members to have 5 guests; 2) or create one membership that would permit entrance into all Clubs.

- **Membership Compliance:** ABC and venues both recognize membership is a formality. Venues know days and times ABC is likely to monitor. When ABC arrives downtown to inspect unannounced, the venues notify each other in order to be prepared.

Gaps in Licensing and Enforcement

- **No Awareness of One-Stop-Shop:** Multiple agencies license and regulate food and beverage businesses. Many guidelines are unclear, contradict other agencies' requirements or are non-existent. If there is a central point that convenes this currently scattered information into one access point, people are unaware of it.
- **Lax Enforcement of Existing Laws:** Based on 911 calls and violence that occurred, the City had the authority, but did not act to revoke the license of a business at the center of the controversy. Because the business is closed now, on the surface the problem looks solved.
- **At-Risk Businesses:** The core issue not addressed by the 18-20 year old ordinance is not the age of the customers, but a process by which to address non-compliant businesses that create risk for their own clientele and the surrounding community through their business practices.

Public Safety

Public safety in hospitality zones requires a continuum of collaborative partnerships, from licensing and permitting to enforcement by regulatory agencies. Communication among safety, business owners and residents is key to reducing risk.

Safety Stakeholders as Resources:

The following stakeholders represent current and potential resources that can collaborate to improve safety. In many cases, budget limitations inhibit the ability for improved operations.

- **Police Department:** Police assigned to the entertainment district are considered overtime pay, which comes out of the City's general fund. Money to pay police officers is less the issue than a shortage of officers. The pool is shrinking due to retirements and resignations. All precincts have staffing shortages. Those with higher crime get more officers.
- **Downtown Safety Regents:** Regents act as eyes and ears on the street, but are challenged with just two people staffed to cover 77 blocks. Because all businesses pay for the service, they can't target one area or time of day. Limited funding prohibits their working later hours. Midnight Thursday through Saturday is the latest Regents are scheduled.
- **Sherriff's Department:** The Sherriff's Department enhances police force at Mardi Gras and other events.
- **Insurance Stakeholders:** Insurance companies that underwrite alcohol-licensed business have information about incentives and risk that can motivate businesses and inform police and fire. They are willing to host seminars, as well as work with police and fire on a crisis management plan.
- **Underage Task Force:** The Task Force provided some venues with i.d. scanners.
- **Regulatory Agencies:** In prior years, regulatory agencies and businesses met prior to Mardi Gras to team up on safety, and to share concerns and information. As the district grows, a more regular update will be necessary.
- **Nightlife Organization:** An Entertainment Consortium is loosely organized and is convened whenever members feel issues merit discussion. Regular meetings are always possible if members desire such.

Current Procedures

- **Police Deployment:** Officers are deployed by car, bike patrol and mounted horse unit. Foot patrol is used less often. Police presence fluctuates widely after high profile crime.

- **Downtown Mobile Alliance:** The Alliance passes on complaints from citizens to police.
- **City Video Cameras:** Awareness of video cameras in public space can deter crime and incivility. The City currently uses a DVR system, which is outdated. A system with Internet Protocol would provide optimum coverage and applications such as face recognition and license plate identification.

Priority Concerns:

- **Fights Over Taxis:** Lack of sufficient numbers of cabs at peak time leads to fights, which then require police intervention.
- **Impaired Targets:** Night pedestrians, particularly the alcohol impaired, can be targets for robbery or being hit by cars.
- **Homeless:** A barrier to use of parks is the presence of homeless people and the perception that they're intimidating.

Venue Safety

With greater demand for nightlife, there is increased pressure for licensed beverage businesses to prevent sales and service to underage and intoxicated persons, as well as assure the safety of patrons inside venues and as they exit.

- **Improved Communication:**
- There is an opportunity for public and private stakeholders to meet and communicate. Some businesses don't see how their operation and their patrons' behaviors contribute to the problem. Likewise, the City or police might apply what they believe to be a good fix, only to discover after implementation that it's a hardship for businesses.

Current Business Practices and Procedures

- **Venue Video Cameras:** Some venues have outside video surveillance. It was recognized as both an asset in assisting the community with deterrence, and an asset and liability in supporting criminal or civil cases.
- **Scanners:** Some venues use i.d. scanners.

Fire Inspection Procedures:

- **Inspections:** Bureau of Fire Prevention performs 30 minute annual inspections prior to Mardi Gras to assure working fire extinguishers are in place and exits are free of blockage.
- **Crisis Prevention:** The Fire Department inspects new businesses to document the building's layout and to pre-plan how to get people out fast and fight the fire. The department maintains notebooks of "pre-plans" noting egress and ingress for emergency response.

Opportunities for Improvement:

- **Training:** Though not mandatory in Alabama, many venues' policies require that employees access certified Responsible Beverage Service training independently or through the venue's in-house certified trainer. Recognizing that 100% compliance is not realistic, the Responsible Vendor Act mitigates penalties for good faith efforts to comply with alcohol laws, including RBS training. Past attempts to organize multi-business training were challenged by scheduling issues.
- **Banning Problem Patrons:** Currently, downtown venues lack a common technology for communication and sharing information. If venues all used the same scanner type, they could communicate about problem patrons that leave one venue and impact another. Alternatively, a cell phone texting strategy can address this aspect. (See Sacramento, CA)

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

Currently, Mobile's nighttime economy serves crowds who attend events, as well as 20-somethings and residents of downtown and nearby areas Thursday through Friday from 10:00 p.m. to closing. Efforts to attract more people are scattershot. It was noted that "there is a lot going on but nothing successfully corralling the various efforts." With a desire to attract retail, older clientele and more downtown residents, there is an opportunity to tap local talent to animate dead times and create connectivity between daytime and late night activity. More coordination and awareness, as well focusing on the after-work transition time, can close this gap.

While this connectivity is important, the perception in Mobile is that rules and enforcement are believed to discourage new business development. However, others believe loose standards allow the condition of downtown to stay stuck in disrepair and motivate unwanted behavior by property owners, businesses and patrons.

Addressing trash cans on sidewalks, noise, walking hazards and unclean appearances were improvements cited that would please current residents. These would also help attract day workers and new residents as a customer base to support businesses and services with night offerings oriented to the 30+ market.

Participants expressed that they want smart planning choices that support healthy respect between businesses and residents, but don't limit businesses with "silly rules." Some infrastructure limitations (e.g. lack of space to store trash bins) will require greater thought in locating future businesses in areas more suitable for the operation's impacts. As downtown Mobile evolves, policy can incent and support a vision of mixed use that is equally successful during day, evening and night.

Demographics Served and Market Gaps

The current nightlife environment serves downtown Mobile's customer base of primarily young adult patrons. To attract more visitors, residents, happy hour clientele, and other patron demographics, social offerings can be expanded and the environment altered to one that a broader market would enjoy.

Customer Base: Residents of Downtown and Neighboring Areas

There are a growing number of downtown residents, and most nightlife customers live 3-5 miles from downtown. Many of those working in nightlife venues live very close, especially single people.

The various events and venues such as the ArtWalk, Serda's, Gulf Coast Exploreum Science Center, Mardi Gras, Senior Bowl, among others attract a diverse mix and introduce the region to the changes in the downtown experience. The Mystic Order of the Jazz Obsessed (MOJO) demonstrates some of the niche markets, attracting 65-70 people one Monday per month.

The recent rule limiting 18-20 year olds in licensed beverage businesses serving food has begun to change the business plan of some venues, creating a different experience that could appeal to an older adult clientele as well. Larger venues principally presenting live entertainment shows such as Soul Kitchen have sought and received an exemption to maintain the younger clientele often required by promoters.

Market Gaps and Development Opportunities

Recruiting venues to fill niche markets would diversify the mix of people, and attracting more residents could motivate a market to fill in the 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. gap in activity and add more people on the street, thereby creating a safer and more vibrant experience. Potential areas identified in the Roundtables for future development include:

- **Adaptive Use:** More residential could be attracted by courting a university presence downtown and utilizing the Gayfer Building, as well as creating intentional neighborhoods. "The city did a

great job to create 17 lots in DeTonti on which to build and it changed the entire neighborhood for the better.”

- **The 30+ market** wants venues more comfortable than “beer joints focused on late hours.” Downtown used to have venues like Trinity, and Martinis that attracted more of an older adult patron. Music volume and style, lighting and more seating are changes that can be employed. Visitors remarked that they desired venues to be cleaner, too.
- **Social Atmospheres:** There is a desire for more venues that offer an experience like Royal Scam and the “Bull,” which serve the female socializing market, as well as the 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. and after work crowds. Casual public space for families is also desired.
- **Retail as Entertainment:** More upscale clothing and an anchor like H & M could be a draw.

Time Connectivity

There is an opportunity for businesses to attract two time markets: one before and one after 10:00 p.m. Currently, the 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. Monday to Friday market represents a significant gap in downtown vitality that could potentially be filled by enhancing and diversifying the social activities offered.

Among the reasons downtown workers don’t stay downtown after work are believed to be concerns about drinking and driving risk; the city is more spread out than it used to be; and suburbs offer more places now than were available years ago. It was also noted that Alabamans entertain at home a lot. Patrons expressed that 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. is their personal time to stop at drycleaners, eat or go to the gym. This creates an opportunity to implement unorthodox strategies to integrate socializing with such errands

Challenges and opportunities to expand connectivity

- **Lack of Incentive to Stay:** Unless a convention is in town, there is very little after-work foot traffic, due in part to a lack of car traffic congestion. It’s easy for locals to get in their car and get home fast.
- **Viability of 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. Patronage:** It’s possible that, until downtown is more populated, it’s not feasible to fill businesses with patrons between 5:00 – 10:00 p.m. on weekdays. “There needs to be something more compelling than a bar as enough reason for people to stay or come downtown 3 times per week.”
- **Retail Catch 22:** Stores close at 5:00 or 6:00 p.m. Stores won’t stay open later if there are no customers. Customers won’t stay/come downtown to shop until such a time as stores consistently stay open later and there is retail that people want. Participants expressed desires for a shopping experience like Charleston or Birmingham.
- **Market Fillers:** With bike and running groups, and pay-as-you-go yoga already up and running, the fitness market was targeted as a potential focus to fill the 5:00 – 8:00 p.m. gap. The Crescent Theater, with shows at 6:00 and 8:30 is also gaining popularity and has developed a loyal following of movie-goers who often patronize restaurants before or after the film. Older patrons also expressed interest in seeing live music if it started earlier.

Barriers to Property Development

For improvements to be made to current properties and to recruit new commercial development, several barriers will need to be overcome relating to property development.

- **Condition of Buildings:** Many nighttime businesses lease from property owners. Some landlords and tenants make improvements, some buildings are historically protected, others (particularly vacant ones), are in violation of codes.

- **Inconsistent Information:** For property developers seeking information on licenses and building requirements prior to investment, information from one department or agency sometimes contradicts what they were told by another.
- **Unsophisticated landlords:** Some property owners are unaware that renovated space is much more attractive to potential tenants than unimproved space. Long-vacant buildings in terrible shape continue to languish because most potential tenants lack the resources or vision to tackle the job of renovation themselves. Property owners are likewise unschooled in lease negotiation and tenant management.

Lighting

The majority of downtown is not well lit. Gaps in lighting or insufficient lighting create a “no man’s land” between two areas of downtown. Vacancies, closed daytime businesses and parks devoid of activity create expanses of darkness that inhibit visitors and residents from walking to downtown amenities. Lights are burning out at random intervals, though the city’s schedule is to replace them twice a year.

Impact of Dead Zones

- **Crime:** Stretches of dark, vacant buildings invite crime and certainly make one feel alone and vulnerable.
- **Side Street Usage:** A growing population uses side streets to get home, but they’re not well lit. More businesses are opening on side streets and need light connectivity, too.
- **Employee Safety:** Night employees use up parking closest to venues because they don’t feel safe walking to their cars after closing time.
- **Lost Parking Revenue:** Many lots not being used at night might get more business if they were better lit.
- **Lost Patronage:** Church Street East and DeTonti neighborhoods are close enough to walk to and from downtown, but some people don’t due to lack of light in dead zones.

Barriers to Lighting Improvements

- **Placement of Lighting:** As an area that is transitioning to more of a walking culture, lighting is positioned too high. It shines into residential windows.

Noise Management

Noise is a multi-faceted issue that requires determination of the precise source of impacts. Throughout the Roundtable discussion, several sources of noise and sound were identified.

- **Behavior-related Sound Impacts:** Noise complaints originate from internal and external sources: music within venues with doors open, outdoor amplification, traffic, patrons continuing conversations while walking through neighborhoods to return to cars, etc.
- **Event Sound Survey:** Thompson performed a sound survey during events and found the decibel level to be within OSHA standards. Generally, noise complaints in entertainment districts revolve more around the content or the impression it makes.
- **Infrastructure-Related Sound Impacts:** Downtown buildings, often constructed before the advent of powerful sound systems, are constructed in a close manner such that sound vibration carries through shared walls.
- **Refuse Collection Noise:** Downtown residents are awakened at 4:30am by dumpster pick up. The Civic Center made some changes to reduce noise impacts when changing out huge dumpsters (e.g. turned off back-up beepers, etc.). Church Street Neighborhood is looking into ability to make those changes in their area.

Trash Management

Trash was identified as a significant impediment to enhancing downtown vibrancy. Trash strewn on streets is a visual cue for disorder and lack of care that contributes to a negative perception of safety.

Sources of Trash:

- **Trash Cans on Street:** Trash cans are left on street due to a variety of reasons. Bars open three nights a week are not present to collect trash cans after pick-up, so leave them out while they are closed. The City does not require a trash management plan for those opening a business. Downtown lacks enough alleys and space to store trash containers, so businesses are forced to leave cans on the curb or bring them inside, which might violate health codes for food businesses.
- **Sidewalk Obstacles:** Garbage cans and grease traps block access on sidewalks. In many cases, there are no alleys for businesses to store garbage until collection days.
- **Grease Containers:** Large grease recycling dumpsters are placed on sidewalks for collection. Eventually the containers become nasty and emit especially foul odors in the warm weather. Also, some event vendors improperly dispose of grease, causing storm water pollution.

Procedures and Ordinances:

- **Trash Collection and Seeping Liquid:** Trash is collected downtown free of charge, twice daily in certain zones. A large percentage of what is collected is liquid, which leaks from bags and then is spilled in the collection process. Businesses are not cited for leakage. Periodic cleaning of trashcans and sidewalks by businesses would prevent odors and sticky sidewalks.
- **Trash Ordinances:** There are laws on the books, but they are not enforced. Ordinances are outdated. Public Works Department has written dos and don'ts and rewritten the ordinance, but it needs to be passed by City Council.

Transportation

Customers who want to come downtown, but are unwilling to risk DUI, are a missed economic opportunity. A gap in night transportation that connects midtown to downtown contributes to this negative economic impact. Yet supply and demand for transportation is reliant on customers being downtown on a consistent basis. Inconsistent business hours on nights and Sundays were noted as a contributing factor for transportation service providers and patrons being unwilling to come downtown at night.

Public Transit

- **Public Transit:** Routes close to downtown include: Airport, Hwy 90, Springhill, , Dauphin/Parkway and Crosstown/Dauphin.
- **Transit:** Most public transit in downtown ends at 6:00 p.m.; a few routes run until 10:00 p.m. Community input on the New Downtown Plan recommended transit service that connects neighborhoods to downtown at night.

Taxi Service:

The Convention Bureau facilitated a taxi task force. Some recommendations, such as passenger/driver bill of rights posted in cabs, were accepted; others, such as requiring new cab companies to have a minimum of 6 vehicles, were not. Mobile Bay Transit's Yellow Cab franchise and numerous smaller independents provide taxi service.

- **Taxi Stands:** Areas exist downtown for taxis to queue, such as bus stops after bus service ends. Improvements in promoting them will increase drivers' and users' awareness of their locations.
- **Barriers to Ingress/Egress:** Taxi drivers expressed that it's aggravating to get in and out of downtown due to poor signage, traffic congestion at night and drivers' unfamiliarity with downtown.

- **Driver Awareness:** Some drivers wait all day for a couple of airport fares, while numerous short fares are available downtown. Airport fares occupy cabs longer and contribute to long waits for taxis downtown.

Parking Services

Property owners typically lease their lots to parking companies, some of whom don't clean or maintain the lot on which commercial parking operations are located. Maintenance standards outlined in ordinances slip through the cracks since inspections for business licenses are not required on properties without buildings.

- **First Impressions:** As common to other nighttime economies' "emerging stage," there is sufficient parking downtown, however a common complaint is not knowing where to find it. For people not accustomed to frequenting downtown, such as the symphony crowd, parking lots look and feel unsafe. Parkers pay someone, but they're not sure if it's staff or a "shady character."
- **Issues in Parking Areas:** Partying in lots has become a growing problem. Some lots located farther out from the core are chained off at night because commercial parking companies believe it to be unsafe for employees to operate the lots.
- **Valet Service:** Valet service is used at hotels and special events, but restaurants and clubs have not used the service. Valet parking hosted by venues might make some patrons feel safer, but may not be a viable option due to lack of demand to support it and high cost of liability insurance that parking companies must pass on to the host business.

SPONSOR DIRECTORY

This process has been possible because of the generous sponsors of the assessment: **Mobile Bay Convention and Visitors Bureau, Budweiser Busch Distributing, Battle House Hotel, and Candlewood Suites.** These organizations and companies are to be commended for offering their financial support for a significant project that will result in a more sustainable and vibrant downtown.



Consider us home.



PARTICIPANT DIRECTORY

Thanks to all who participated in the November 17 Orientation and/or January 9-11 Roundtables. Each person brought unique insights and experiences, and contributed to the general discussion and recommendations in this report. Participation does not imply endorsement nor agreement with summaries or recommendations in the report. The focus represents the core element to which participant was assigned, though some individuals may have participated in more than one section. *Attended Leadership Summit.*

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AFRICAN AMERICAN HERITAGE TRAIL

Chandra Brown, Chairman
Focus : Quality of Life

ALABAMA ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE

CONTROL BOARD

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ALABAMA POWER

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Vince Duncan, Promotions/Marketing Director
Focus : Entertainment

DAHLIA'S PIANO HALL

Scott Morlock,
Focus : Transportation
Tyger Kunz, Bartender / Manager
Focus : Venue Safety

DOWNTOWN MOBILE ALLIANCE

Elizabeth Sanders, CEO
Focus : Transportation
Valerie Kleinschmidt, Project Coordinator
Focus : Entertainment
Fred Rendfrey, Dir. Economic Development
Focus : Entertainment
Clayton Ratledge, Manager of BID Services
Focus : Quality of Life
Carol Hunter, Communications Director
Focus : Coordinator
Sherri Bumpers,
Focus : Entertainment

EMERGING CHANGE MAKERS NETWORK

Jessica Norwood, President
Focus : Entertainment

FORT CONDE INN

Alan Waugh, Director
Focus : Entertainment

GRAND CENTRAL

Bill Monahan, Owner
Focus : Venue Safety

HAYLEY'S

Delane Bond, Manager
Focus : Venue Safety

HEROES SPORTS BAR

David Rasp, Owner
Focus : Quality of Life

HUKA ENTERTAINMENT

A. J. Nilan, Promoter
Focus : Entertainment

ION247

David Barnett, President
Focus : Venue Safety

JANETTA MITCHELL'S COMPANY

Janetta Mitchell,
Focus : Entertainment

LAGNIAPPE

Kevin Lee, Arts Editor
Focus : Entertainment

MLK JR. REDEVELOPMENT CORP.

Michael Pierce, Director
Focus : Public Safety

MOBILE AIRPORT AUTHORITY

Bill Sisson, Executive Director
Focus : Transportation

MOBILE ARTS COUNCIL

Bob Burnett,
Focus : Entertainment

MOBILE BAY CVB

Stacy Hamilton, VP of Marketing & Communications

Focus : Entertainment
Katy Sapio, Director of Partnership Marketing
Focus : Entertainment

MOBILE BAY TRANSPORTATION

Maggie Wilcox, President
Focs: Transportation
Mark Barlow, Vice President
Focus : Transportation

MOBILE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Claudia Zimmermann, Economic Development Dir.
Focus : Entertainment

MOBILE COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Bert Eichold, Health Officer
Focus : Quality of Life

MOBILE FIRE DEPARTMENT

Don C. Meyers, Deputy Chief
Focus : Public Safety

MOBILE FIRE-RESCUE DEPARTMENT

Billy Pappas, Assistant Fire Chief
Focus : Venue Safety

MOBILE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Tommy Menton, Lieutenant
Focus : Public Safety

MOBILE POLICE DEPARTMENT

Phillip Snodgrass, Major
Focus : Public Safety

MOBILE SHERIFF'S OFFICE

Lori Myles, Public Affairs
Focus : Venue Safety
David Phillips, Underage Drinking Task Force
Focus : Venue Safety

MOBILE SYMPHONY

Gregg Gustafson, Executive Director
Focus : Entertainment

MODERN LIMOUSINE

Don Gomian,
Focus : Transportation

OK BICYCLE SHOP

Jim Walker, VP
Focus : Venue Safety

RENAISSANCE HOTELS OF MOBILE

Bailey Mixon, Sales Manager
Focus : Multi-use Sidewalk

RESIDENT WENDELL QUIMBY

Wendell Quimby,
Focus : Transportation

ROBERTS BROTHERS

Susan Milling, Realtor
Focus : Quality of Life

RUMOR UNION

Elizabet Elliott, Artist/Program Director
Focus : Entertainment

SCOTT MERLOK'S COMPANY

Scott Merlok,
Focus : Transportation

SERDA'S COFFEE COMPANY

John Serda, Owner
Focus : Entertainment

SOUL KITCHEN

Brad Young, Talent Manager
Focus : Venue Safety

STEPHEN E. CLEMENTS, PC

Steve Clements, Attorney
Focus : Venue Safety

THE BATTLE HOUSE RENAISSANCE

MOBILE HOTEL & SPA
Margo Gilbert, General Manager
Focus : Multi-use Sidewalk

THE ROYAL LIVING ROOM

Thelma Thrash, Owner
Focus : Venue Safety

THOMSPON ENGINEERING

Barbara Connell, Senior Project Manager
Focus : Quality of Life

TIM DARNELL'S COMPANY

Tim Darnell, Event Security
Focus : Public Safety

U.S. ARMY CORPS OF ENGINEERS

Niklas Hallberg, Engineer
Focus : Multi-use Sidewalk

VALLAS REALTY, INC.

Herndon Luce, Resident
Focus : Quality of Life

VOLKERT

Jennifer Miller, Project Manager / Engineer
Focus : Transportation

WANDA COCHRAN

Wanda Cochran, Attorney
Focus : Multi-use Sidewalk

WAVE TRANSIT

Tyrone Parker, General Manager
Focus : Transportation
Gerald Allford, Director of Planning
Focus : Transportation

WELLBORN IDEAS

Stacy Wellborn, President
Focus : Quality of Life

WESTON ABERNATHY'S COMPANY

Weston Abernathy, Door Security
Focus : Venue Safety

WILLIS

John Baker, Safety & Loss Control Director
Focus : Venue Safety

WINTZELL'S

Buffy Donlon, Principle
Focus : Multi-use Sidewalk
Bob Omainsky, President