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## Downtown Group Releases New Nightlife Strategies

MILWAUKEE, Wis. (June 22, 2011) – According to the Sociable City Network, nighttime economies attract other economic development and the creative class that have catalyzed the renaissance of notable cities worldwide. Tapping the after-five potential can be prosperous investments that drive community revitalization, increase residential and commercial property value and generate much-needed city revenue and employment.

In response to the rapid growth of Downtown Milwaukee's nighttime economy, Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 retained the services of the Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) – a private, non-profit organization that assists businesses and communities in creating safe, vibrant and economically prosperous places to socialize. Downtown Milwaukee's nighttime energy is a heavy draw, which adds to Milwaukee's appeal as a tourism destination. Tourism is Milwaukee's second largest industry.

Contracted in the fall of 2010, RHI began a Hospitality Zone Assessment (HZA) that focused on the East Town, Westtown, Historic Third Ward and Brady Street neighborhoods. Six core elements of nighttime operations were used to assess the functionality and potential of these densely populated districts – entertainment, transportation & parking, quality of life, public safety, multi-use sidewalks and venue safety. Subcommittees for each of the core elements were assembled and a Downtown Milwaukee RHI Task Force of more than 55 individuals was created.

Comprised of downtown residents, legal counsel, business improvement district directors, police officers, club owners, marketing professionals, transportation operators, special event experts and more, RHI facilitated discussions to spur enhancements to the framework that will support positive nighttime growth. The process included an orientation, late night tour, numerous roundtable focus groups, and generation of a report and action plan, all culminating into an industry-wide leadership summit. Focus groups were also given access to RHI's Sociable City Network where members could research challenges and solutions executed by other urban centers.

"Downtown Milwaukee's nighttime economy represents more than just bars and restaurants," said Beth Nicols, executive director of Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21. "By tapping into our after-five potential, we can help foster a better sociable economy that adds to the tax base, creates jobs, attracts the creative class, and retains students and faculty talent."

Through the six-month Hospitality Zone Assessment, Downtown Milwaukee's Responsible Hospitality Task Force identified the following action steps for the six disciplines of nighttime operations:

### **Entertainment**

Progressive cities nurture dining and entertainment opportunities for diverse ages, lifestyles and cultures. In Milwaukee, multiple districts and distinct business clusters offer a variety of entertainment options spread out over a large area downtown.

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## **ADD ONE/Downtown group releases new nighttime strategies**

According to the Davidson Peterson Report on the Economic Impact of Travelers on the Greater Milwaukee Area, tourism generated \$2.5 billion in 2010. Evening entertainment accounted for over \$31 million and cultural events accounted for over \$18 million. The tourism/hospitality industry supported 61,879 full-time jobs in 2010 and generated \$1.4 billion in income for residents. Further, total government revenue generated by the State was \$270 million and \$130 million locally, offering \$950 of tax relief per person.

In addition, in the Milwaukee Metro Area, between 2001 and 2009, there was a 12% growth in businesses defined as "Total Food Services and Drinking Places" (Bars and Restaurants). In that same category, there was an 8% growth in the number of employees over that time frame (Wisconsin Restaurant Association).

Creating baseline research that strictly measures the economic impact of downtown's nighttime economy is the goal of the Entertainment Group. Downtown Milwaukee plays a significant role in Metro Milwaukee's tourism figures; however, extracting downtown's nighttime contributions is most crucial to measuring future growth.

To measure and document the benefits of the nighttime economy, the Entertainment Group is compiling data and information specific to certain niches within the entertainment and hospitality sector. Representatives from festivals, bars/restaurants, performance venues, and arts and culture venues are developing survey questions to determine attendance, spending habits and origins of patrons. The process will be modeled after Nightlife Economic Impact studies conducted by New York City, Seattle and Austin, and the estimated completion of the survey is September 2011.

### **Transportation & Parking**

Members of the Transportation and Parking committee examined safe and efficient access to, within and exit from hospitality zones. While the nighttime economy is often perceived as bars and nightclubs, in reality it spans beyond nightlife to night workers in 24-hour logistics companies, office janitorial services, hospitals and more.

An analysis of existing parking options, public transit, taxi services, pedestrian/bicycle access, shuttle services, valet services and private autos has already revealed that Downtown Milwaukee offers 42,000 parking spaces (34,000 off-street parking options such as structures or surface lots and 8,000 on-street metered parking options), minimally 30 valet stands at a variety of restaurants, hotels or clubs, and more than 100 taxis operating Thursday through Saturday evening (as many as 50 on other nights). Milwaukee County Transit System provides safe, consistent and reliable service to, from and within downtown; and a seasonal trolley service funded by the downtown business community serves as a circulator with limited operating hours.

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## **ADD TWO/Downtown group releases new nighttime strategies**

The Parking & Transportation Group is developing a marketing campaign to increase the awareness of existing transportation options within and between hospitality zones, including tools such as [www.parkmilwaukee.com](http://www.parkmilwaukee.com). The creation of mobility centers is also being explored. These transportation hubs would provide taxi stands, public transit options, shuttle services, restrooms, snacks/coffee vending, information and assistance.

In addition, the group is looking to improve and promote the use of Safe Ride programs, evaluate evening bus routes and fares within the hospitality zones to determine where adjustments can be made, develop a mobile parking application to complement [www.parkmilwaukee.com](http://www.parkmilwaukee.com), and open additional private lots/structures to evening customers.

### **Quality of Life**

Mixed-use development places residents and commercial businesses in close proximity. Downtown Milwaukee's central business district is home to 15,000 residents. Issues that can impact residents living entertainment districts include noise, trash, vandalism, fights and public urination. The Quality of Life Group examined ways businesses and residents can collaborate to prevent and address these negative behaviors.

The first initiative of the Quality of Life Group is to rally for a collective voice by creating a Downtown Neighborhood Association. The organization would give residents a platform to address not only concerns of the neighborhood, but also recognize responsible businesses through a "DNA Seal of Approval" program. Another element of the association could include community cleanup, utilizing Del Ray Beach, Florida's "You've Got a Great Backside" alley cleanup as a model.

Quality of Life is also working on a late-night bites program that would alleviate the mass exodus of patrons at bar close. Food carts and food truck vending is a growing national trend. Quality of Life hopes to mobilize a Nighttime Food Truck Court that would stay open past bar close. Other amenities such as portable restrooms and taxicab stands are additional amenities being explored.

### **Public Safety**

Public safety in hospitality zones requires a continuum of collaborative partnerships, from licensing and permitting to enforcement and regulatory agencies. Although not documented, it is estimated that Downtown Milwaukee hosts 30,000-80,000 patrons on any given Thursday, Friday or Saturday evening. The peak time for safety management is at bar closing time and after.

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## **ADD THREE/Downtown group releases new nighttime strategies**

While police are the sole partner tasked with managing public safety, the Public Safety group examined late night safety partnerships. The Milwaukee Police Department's District 1 has already initiated meetings with night venue owners, managers and bartenders in downtown hospitality zones to assist venues in identifying best practices that assure the safety of patrons and the surrounding community. These interactions have and will continue to encourage nightlife businesses to organize, meet regularly and work collaboratively to ensure a sense of order and civility, so that safe and vibrant entertainment areas can be cultivated.

### **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.

The Multi-use Sidewalks Group focused on the connectivity between the Historic Third Ward and East Town. Water Street, Broadway and Milwaukee Street serve as the primary connecting paths between these two adjacent hubs of activity. Between Clybourn Street and St. Paul Avenue an elevated section of Interstate 794 traverses these three streets creating a physiological barrier between the two districts. The imposing structure creates dark and uncomfortable spaces void of street life and interest, especially during the evening hours.

This deters pedestrian movement between the two districts, and divides the downtown area. To address this challenge, the Multi-use Sidewalks Group is seeking creative design solutions that mitigate this perceived barrier, and promote better pedestrian movement between the Third Ward and East Town neighborhoods. The group will launch a "Brighten the Passage" design competition aimed at students and design professionals.

The competition will launch in September 2011 with judging taking place in December 2011. Funds are currently being sought to help implement the best concept.

### **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.

The goal of the Venue Safety Group was to create safe, fun and unobtrusive ways to prevent and solve potential issues, while being respectful to neighboring businesses, residents and the community. The task force plans to develop consistent training models and raise awareness amongst entertainment/taverns/restaurant industry-based businesses about the importance of responsible beverage serving, crowd control and recognizing potential issues before they occur.

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## **ADD FOUR/Downtown group releases new nighttime strategies**

Other tasks include reviewing and enforcing responsible beverage service certification, establishing communication networks within entertainment communities to share potential issues that can affect the entire community, standardizing universal and cohesive policies for door security personnel, and reviewing 911 procedures and law enforcement policies.

Many of the action steps defined by Downtown Milwaukee's Responsible Hospitality Task Force are currently underway. The group intends completion of the identified tasks by late September 2011 unless otherwise specified. A full report of RHI's Hospitality Zone Assessment is available at [www.milwaukeedowntown.com](http://www.milwaukeedowntown.com).

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### **About Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21**

*Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 is an organization established in 1998 to support the interests of the downtown Milwaukee business community. Created through private sector leadership, Milwaukee Downtown is a management district organization that oversees 120 square blocks representing approximately 400+ property owners in the center of downtown Milwaukee. The organization funds specific initiatives aimed at creating a clean, safe and friendly downtown. For more information, visit [www.MilwaukeeDowntown.com](http://www.MilwaukeeDowntown.com) or call 414.220.4700.*

