



SOCIAL ECONOMY EVALUATION

Milwaukee, Wisconsin

November 2021

PREPARED FOR:

Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21

PREPARED BY:

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“A group of dedicated people with a common vision can accomplish more than any strategic plan.”

James Autry, Author

Real Power: Business Lessons from Tao Te Ching

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Milwaukee Downtown Business Improvement District #21 re-engaged Responsible Hospitality Institute (RHI) in the summer of 2021 for a study focused on curbing public space disorder in downtown social districts, as well as understanding the impact of COVID-19 on the social economy.

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate options for street closure and secure access points to Water Street entertainment district.
- Engage key stakeholders' input on market forces and governance trends that have contributed to increased risk in entertainment districts.
- Explore creation of a social economy governance system that would be the best fit for Milwaukee.

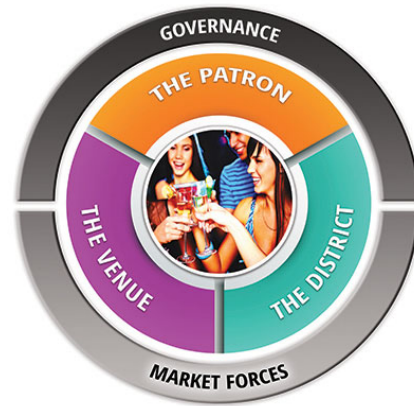
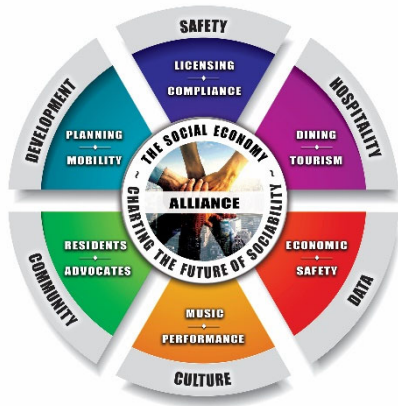
SCOPE OF WORK

RHI conducted the following work as part of this project:

- Convened a forum with guest speakers from Memphis, Kansas City and New Orleans to share their approach to public space management
- Facilitated a discussion with hospitality and nightlife business operators in Milwaukee.
- Recruited and interviewed prominent City leaders from multiple perspectives about their insights on trends, challenges and opportunities in planning, managing and policing Milwaukee's social economy.
- Summarized trends driving change in Milwaukee's social economy.
- Synopsized opportunities to explore for improvement in the social economy.
- Provided guidance on creation of an Office on Nighttime Management with an advisory board and dedicated staff.

PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT

A holistic view of the nighttime economy requires input from multiple stakeholders. RHI interviewed stakeholders representing diverse perspectives to gain insights on market forces and governance trends driving changes in venue operations, patron behavior and district management.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Interviewees were asked to respond to a series of broad questions in addition to ones specific to their areas of expertise. General questions included:

- What market forces are driving change in your city's social economy?
- What has changed for the better and the worse because of COVID?
- How have social venues adapted to COVID and other market trends?
- What is your opinion about the controlled access model being discussed on Water Street?
- What are the strengths and challenges in social economy governance (i.e. licensing systems and stakeholder collaboration)?
- Is there a need for a citywide social economy governance system? If so, how could this benefit your perspective and industry?

INTERVIEWEES

Stacie Callies
Executive Director
The Westtown Association

Drew Deuster
Owner/Operator
Wild Planet Hospitality Group

Matt Dorner
Economic Development Director
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21

Katie Falvey
Vice President Corporate Real Estate
Marcus Corporation

Timothy Gauerke
Lieutenant
Milwaukee Police Department

Kelly Hedge
Assistant District Attorney
District Attorney

Jeff Polenske
Commissioner
Department of Public Works

Patrick Rath
President/CEO
United Performing Arts Group

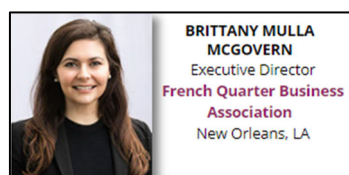
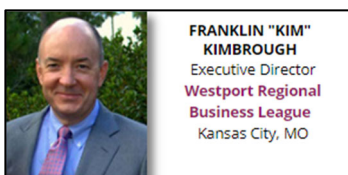
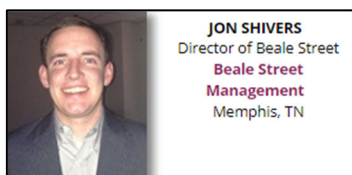
Peggy Williams
President/CEO
Visit Milwaukee

Gary Witt
President
Pabst Theater Group

Note: The summary and recommendations in this report do not imply an endorsement of those participating. Conclusions are those generated by RHI as a baseline for further discussion and development.

EVALUATION OF OPTIONS FOR SECURE ACCESS POINTS

RHI hosted a forum with guest speakers from three cities with active entertainment districts: Memphis, TN’s Beale Street; Kansas City, MO’s Westport, and New Orleans, LA’s Bourbon Street. The purpose was to help Milwaukee stakeholders explore district management strategies like controlled access points and street closures.



KANSAS CITY

In response to increased gun violence¹ in Kansas City’s Westport entertainment district, Westport Regional Business League negotiated with the city to privatize the sidewalks of the entertainment district. This made it possible to screen for weapons at designated entry points.

MEMPHIS

Memphis’ Beale Street created a controlled access point to manage crowds. An entrance fee was established to support increased security presence. Although the fee was challenged in the courts based on potential discrimination, the court ruled that a reasonable fee was allowed, as well as standards to prevent discrimination.

NEW ORLEANS

In New Orleans, it was decided that a controlled access point would not be the right fit for the French Quarter due to concern from residents who live in the district, as well as prominent hospitality business operators. Hotels and restaurants, in particular, felt it would be inhospitable to wand guests or force them to enter through designated gates.

¹ Increased gun violence and weapons offenses is attributed to the 2014 passing of a “constitutional carry” amendment in the state of Missouri, which protected the right to carry a gun in public spaces without a concealed carry permit. The amendment took effect in 2017, making Missouri the most permissive gun state in the country.

SNAPSHOT OF THREE CITIES' APPROACHES: MEMPHIS, KANSAS CITY AND NEW ORLEANS

City	Memphis, TN	Kansas City, MO	New Orleans, LA
Name of Entertainment District	Beale Street	Westport	Bourbon Street (French Quarter)
Brief description	Controlled access points for entry. Screening for weapons and underage starting at 9 PM. Open containers allowed.	Controlled access points for entry. Screening for weapons and underage between 11 PM - 3 AM.	Open pedestrian area (Bourbon St) between 7 PM - 4 AM with no controlled access points.
Cost	\$350,000/year	\$300,000/year	No specific cost affiliated since patrolled by NOPD
Funding	Paid through various funding sources: tenants, entertainment district management company, and funds from \$5 security fee.	Raised CID fees from sales taxes and assessments.	No specific funding affiliated since patrolled by NOPD and funded from City's general operating budget.
# Blocks	3	5	13x7 blocks
# Hospitality businesses (on-premise alcohol licenses)	50	49	313 (216 are members of the French Quarter Business Association)
Controlled ingress/egress points	Yes (5-6 gates)	Yes (4-5 gates)	No
Fencing or physical barriers	Yes	Yes, temporary (Fri-Sun)	Yes, portable and permanent
Fee charged to enter district	Yes, \$5 (On high intensity nights)	(Not usually, but have ability to do it 8x/year)	No
Streets are closed to allow pedestrian-only access	Yes	Yes (Fri & Sat April-Oct)	The 100-800 blocks of Bourbon Street become a pedestrian mall at 6pm (with cross streets open for through traffic)
Permit required to close streets?	Yes (1x/year permit requested)	Yes (1x per year permit requested for street closure)	NA
Safety presence at each entrance	Yes (Private security near gates, but they're there to respond to issues)	Yes (Either police, sheriffs deputy or full-time class A licensed Westport Public Safety officers)	NA
Training for Security Screeners?	Yes (Training for unconscious bias and certification for wands and metal detectors)	Yes (Training for unconscious bias and certification for wands and metal detectors)	NA
Open containers allowed within closed street or pedestrian mall	Yes	No, not allowed	Yes
People can openly carry weapons in the state without a concealed carry permit	Yes	Yes	No
Metal detector (wand) to screen for weapons	Yes (On the street)	Yes (11 PM - 3 AM) (On privatized sidewalks)	No
Curfew for under 21	Yes, 9 PM	Yes, 11 PM	Yes, 8 PM (Curfew is for under 18)
ID scanners to screen out underage	Yes	Yes	No
ID scanners to flag problem patrons?	Yes (Can flag them, but not prohibited from re-entering)	No, City agreement prohibits. A "trespass list" is used for frequent offenders.	No
Pushback?	Yes, there was a lawsuit re: charging a fee to walk on public streets. Beale St. won the injunction hearing at federal court.	Yes, some opposition to sidewalks privatization, but no claims or lawsuits.	



REIMAGINING MILWAUKEE'S SOCIAL ECONOMY

The social, cultural and economic fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic will have long-lasting impacts on the fabric of cities' social economies. Milwaukee, like other cities nationwide, are also affected by the influence of the Black Lives Matter and Defund the Police movements of 2020. The combination of a public health crisis and social justice movement form the underlying roots of change as Milwaukeeans reimagine the future of their social economy.

Social Economy Definition

The dining and entertainment venues and public space events where people gather to socialize and share food, drink, music

Challenges in Milwaukee's downtown social districts appear to be cyclical (starting Memorial Day, then tapering off when the weather changes into Fall), yet they convey larger systemic challenges in social economy governance. While Water Street and Old World 3rd Street District are the two most well-known destinations for nighttime social activity downtown, social corridors exist throughout the City. Many business operators own venues in multiple locations in different business districts. The same issues tend to migrate and spill over. Interruption of anti-social behavior may temporarily displace the activity, only to migrate to a new area.

Various gatekeepers of the social economy—from engaged business operators and business district managers to the community prosecutor, police and residents—have stepped up to collaborate and explore solutions. Yet a citywide lens is necessary to reflect on lessons learned and address systemic challenges. Study participants were resoundingly supportive of the need for a citywide social economy governance system to assure the long-term sustainability of Milwaukee's social economy.

DRIVING FORCES FOR CHANGE IN MILWAUKEE

DIY SOCIALIZING DURING LOCKDOWN

COVID-19 cemented the undeniable fact that humans are social beings who need meaningful interactions with others. During the initial lockdown of March 2020, the “third spaces” where people typically hang out when not at work, home or school (e.g. bars, restaurants, cafes, music venues) were forced to close.

During lockdown, Milwaukee experienced a national phenomenon: DIY socializing. Yearning to connect, people created their own spaces—sometimes in unregulated and unsafe locations not meant for these uses. Milwaukeeans gathered in private homes, hotels, cars and out on the street. This behavior, particularly socializing in public space and in cars, continued for the second summer in a row post-COVID, even after social venues reopened. A large contributor to this public space congregation was that most participants were underage and therefore, could not legally access licensed venues.

YOUTH LACK SOCIAL OPTIONS, SO THEY CREATE THEIR OWN

All people—regardless of their age or life stage—need meaningful social interactions. Even youth. When in-person classrooms switched to remote learning and after-school activities halted, students lost critical opportunities to socialize. While licensed venues reopened for 21+, underage persons were left with limited options. So, they created their own spaces to socialize.

A large group of youth began congregating in a parking lot in Midtown (previously a mall; now a cluster of large format retailers). To interrupt this activity, the area was fenced off, restricting access. Why this group of youth migrated to Water Street is unknown, yet it soon became a destination for nighttime social activity.

WATER STREET BEARS THE BRUNT OF PUBLIC SPACE DISORDER

Thousands of people—many of whom were underage—partied on the streets, sidewalks and parking lots of the Water Street entertainment district. For the most part, they did not patronize social venues (since most could not legally access them); instead, they became “patrons” of the street. They engaged in activities common to a house party such as drinking from open containers and dancing to music played from car stereos.

Yet, with car stunts and guns in the mix, the party started to tip over into an out-of-control situation. Bystanders were injured when shots were fired into the air or into crowds over disputes. Unlike in a controlled environment (i.e. within the walls of a venue), with rules and a closing time, there were no similar stewards of the streets. Street party participants remained in public space until 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. —past bar closing time. Police attempted to maintain order, but they were far outnumbered. An underlying challenge inhibiting law enforcement’s effectiveness was aggression directed at police officers.

SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT INTERSECTS WITH THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

As the only safety agency deployed at night in social districts, the idea of “more police” is often put forth as a deceptively easy solution. During the summer of 2021, Code RED actually expanded to include three to four times as many officers deployed to Water Street as during a typical summer. Yet due to the national climate of tension and hostility towards police officers, the increased presence of police officers did not prove to be the end-all solution.

Officers deployed to Water Street experienced open aggression, taunting and even interference when police attempted enforcement action. Officers were surrounded by people who filmed their interactions with the public or were forcibly pulled off people they attempted to arrest. Officers describe being forced to choose whether it was worth potential unrest to enforce minor infractions; many chose not to further incite already disruptive crowds. Instead, they provided a safety presence to respond to major incidents.

The feeling of helplessness and lawlessness became pervasive on Water Street over the summer months that, at its height, led to a series of shootings. It became evident that something big needed to change. Thoughtfully, instead of blaming licensed venues, the City shifted gears to an environmental design approach.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES CURB ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR

The City of Milwaukee successfully interrupted anti-social behavior through a series of environmental changes to make Water Street less conducive to a street party atmosphere. The street was closed to car access, making it a pedestrian-only area. Cars could no longer cruise or park on the street due to parking restrictions. No parking signs and tow trucks followed through, and cars parked at a location nearby. Overtime cleaning crews were assigned at 3:00 a.m. to power wash the streets as an additional cue that it was “time to go home.”

The partnership between police and the Department of Public Works proved to be the intervention needed to curb anti-social behavior and the ability to congregate on Water Street. However, unintended consequences (e.g. perceived inconvenience of accessing the district, rideshare pick-up/drop-off being pushed farther away, etc.) indicate that this may not be the ideal solution long-term. The damage from negative perceptions of safety may also be difficult to undo and have long-lasting effects on tourism and patronage downtown.

THE TOOTHPASTE EFFECT: WHERE WILL IT GO NEXT?

While stakeholders laud the success of the intervention on Water Street, questions are being raised about the potential “toothpaste effect”: once you squeeze the tube, the toothpaste has to go somewhere. Where will it go next? If the example of Midtown is any proof, youth with few social options will likely congregate in a new location. Without a long-term strategy citywide, the City will be unable to get in front of this challenge and will continue to chase it around the City.

In the spirit of reflection and proactive collaboration, stakeholders on Water Street and throughout the City have begun to explore district management approaches from other cities with active social districts. Among the ideas considered include physical barricades and controlling ingress and egress through designated “gates” to the district. Yet, whether these are appropriate strategies for Water Street, or whether they address the underlying causes of the challenges experienced in the summer of 2021, is still being debated. What is clear is that Milwaukee needs a sustainable system of ongoing nighttime governance and will significantly benefit from a citywide body to oversee the social economy’s evolution.



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

TRENDS ANALYSIS: SNAPSHOT

Note: More detailed analysis can be found in the body of the report.

MARKET FORCES

HOW COVID-19 CHANGED THE WAY PEOPLE WORK, TRAVEL AND SOCIALIZE

Downtown has borne the brunt of social trends. The combination of remote work, loss of tourism and decline in business travel has resulted in limited footfall downtown. Participation in the Active Streets program, the Bucks playoffs and victory, as well as the return of events have helped reinvigorate downtown Milwaukee. However, an industrywide shortage of hospitality staff affects the City's ability to meet demand when there is increased activity.

HOW COVID-19 AND THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT INTERSECT WITH THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

The social justice movement of 2020, led to a myriad of outcomes. There is increased awareness of the value of diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of the City, including the social economy. Hard questions have been raised, such as: Which communities are served vs. unserved as patrons of downtown social venues? What level of ownership of social venues is by people of color? To what degree are events and content curation representative of the diverse demographics of the City? Exploration will likely continue about how Milwaukee's social economy can be more diverse, equitable and inclusive.

TRENDS IN PERCEPTIONS AND POLITICS

A pervasive narrative exists that downtown receives preferential treatment in resource distribution, especially in police deployment. Downtown's economic contributions benefit the rest of the City, yet it is also true that public disorder that took place on Water Street did require additional police resources from other parts of the City. Hospitality industry representatives expressed the perception that they are not supported by elected officials due to the lack of recognition of their industry as a legitimate business sector.

GOVERNANCE

LICENSING

In 2011, RHI's Hospitality Zone Assessment (HZA) identified the licensing system as "the root of dysfunction for a variety of problems...The existing process for obtaining and reviewing alcohol licenses is inconsistent and unpredictable from license application to license application, and threatens to inhibit economic development" (RHI, 2011). In response, RHI suggested development of objective criteria and identified the need for broader input in decision-making about licensing.

Some progress has been made in the past decade. For example, the new tool, Public Entertainment Premises (PEP) license provides information about applicants' business plan; affidavits outline enhanced operated standards as a form of remediation; and the City does have the ability to revoke or suspend licenses for the most egregious of violations.

However, progress has been insufficient in making systemic change. The licensing process is still described as "subjective and unfair," lacking transparency and consistency for decisions about why licenses are granted, renewed or revoked. No objective criteria exist to evaluate the severity of licensed premise (PA-33) reports. Penalizing operators for non-violent PA-33s disincentivize them from calling police. This undermines ten years of proactive collaboration between police and business operators. Meanwhile, the PEP license fell short of expectations, as it did not bring greater objectivity or expansion of the review body for licensing decisions. RHI was unable to ascertain whether anyone with regulatory power has used the PEP to create change in licensee behavior.

CONCIERGE GOVERNING AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Major improvements have been made in a concierge governing philosophy for hospitality businesses. New business applicants are guided by various stewards of the social economy—BIDs, community liaison officer and the community prosecutor. Applicants receive an informal orientation and CPTED review, as well as mentorship opportunities with peers. Businesses in need of support receive education and are given an opportunity for voluntary compliance before interventions take place.

Stakeholder collaboration has also greatly improved. Robust partnerships between police and businesses continue due to the legacy of Code RED, while additional stakeholders play a key role in safety and vibrancy of the social economy: Department of Public Works, community prosecutor, common council members, and residents. However, leadership turnover and lack of institutionalization of approaches can impact the long-term sustainability of the positive approaches and partnerships established.

VENUES

One of the positive outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis is a greater cohesion, trust and collaboration among business operators. A formal association exists for Old World 3rd Street District venues, while Water Street venue operators maintain a group text. Downtown social venues face a variety of challenges: staff shortages, perceived competition with suburban social venues, and negative perceptions of safety on Water Street due to disorderly public space activity. Accessibility to the district was also hindered by the parking and towing intervention.

Music and performance venues, meanwhile, face unique challenges as they try to recoup lost revenue, which cannot be fully captured by just ticket sales. Even people who purchase tickets may “no-show” to the live event, which affects venues’ ability to make money through ancillary sales. Further, although national tours have resumed, shows continue to be cancelled or postponed due to members of touring groups getting COVID.

PATRONS

Patronage in the social economy can be characterized by those who are risk averse and risk tolerant. Among the risk averse, people are slowly returning to social venues downtown, but some still feel more comfortable in less crowded indoor environments or prefer outdoor areas. Among risk tolerant, they may be comfortable with pre-COVID standards for socializing. Patrons’ vaccination status adds an additional layer of complication, as some events and live music venues require proof of vaccination or a negative test.

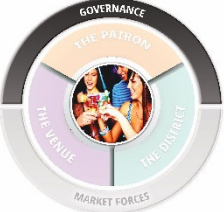

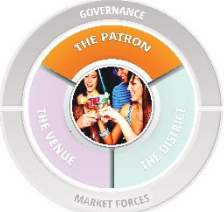
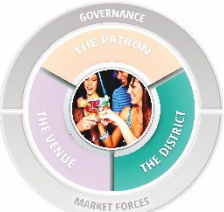
DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

When Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 initially engaged RHI, an idea was being explored about whether to apply a “managed access” approach to the Water Street social district on an ongoing basis to curb anti-social behavior. RHI hosted a forum with guest speakers from Memphis, TN; Kansas City, MO; and New Orleans, LA to discuss the pros and cons of controlled access points and physical barricades. At this time, this approach was eventually deemed unfeasible due to the multiple (nearly twelve) possible entry points to Water Street, opposition from key stakeholders, and concerns over potential lawsuits over equitable access to public space.

In the short-term, instead of moving forward with a controlled access approach, a series of environmental strategies were deployed. The Department of Public Works partnered with police to close a parking lot used for partying, employed a temporary no parking/tow away zone and deployed early morning cleaning crews to give people a non-confrontational signal that it was time to go home. These strategies successfully removed the opportunity for congregation on Water Street and curbed the promenading behavior (spectacles of cruising, car stunts, etc.). With the weather turning to fall, “patrons of the street” left. The crisis, for now, has been averted. But stakeholders are still committed to proactively planning for next summer, when nighttime social activity peaks. The strategies used were successful, but very resource-heavy and perhaps not sustainable.



OPPORTUNITIES TO EXPLORE

	<h3>GOVERNANCE</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a system of social economy governance with an Office of Nighttime Management, Night Manager and a Social Economy Alliance (i.e. Advisory Board). • Overhaul current alcohol licensing review system to incorporate greater equity and transparency. Incorporate standards for equitable review of PA-33s to determine appropriate outcomes. • Explore how to improve PEP as an effective regulatory tool. • Formalize and systematize the positive concierge governance approaches currently used.
	<h3>The Venue</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain effective and regular communication between venue owners, managers and security staff to create an atmosphere of support and less competition. • Create regular communication between venue operators and the police to diminish mistrust.
	<h3>The Patron</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider a campaign to bring patrons back to downtown post COVID, whether they work from home or not. This could include messaging about safety and offerings as compared to suburban options. • Engage with Milwaukee's Office of Equity and Inclusion. Bring to their attention the question of inequities in opportunities to socialize for youth in two cohorts: 18–20-year-old adults who are too young to enter licensed venues and 13–17-year-old minors who are also seeking opportunities to socialize. They need activities that are sanctioned, safe and legal where they can learn how to socialize responsibly where standards are conveyed for appropriate behavior. If they are forcibly displaced to another part of the City, the cycle will continue. • Start a dialogue with street party participants about what kind of social options they are seeking or would be interested in.
	<h3>The District</h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore long-term reconfiguration or redesign of Water Street. • Explore short-term solutions to address mobility challenges on Water Street, such as partial street closures to remove one parking lane and widen sidewalks for pedestrians. • Revisit hours of operation for food trucks. • Explore long-term considerations of making Active Streets for Businesses program permanent. The City, in partnership with local BIDs and associations, should evaluate speed limits to slow through-traffic of participating streets. This may potentially allow for expansion of the program to streets currently ineligible due to speed limits. • Consider how designated pick-up and drop-off locations can be used for ride-share associated with social district passengers.

ACTION: FORM A CITYWIDE SOCIAL ECONOMY GOVERNANCE SYSTEM

Creation of a citywide system of social economy governance will ensure the long-term sustainability of a safe, vibrant nightlife. Institutionalization of the city's approach to nurturing new businesses and keeping them in compliance will assure the health and vitality of the social economy. Further, it will help strengthen Milwaukee as a destination to live, work, visit and play.

A social economy governance system will ensure dedicated staffing to oversee management and advocacy of the social economy. It will also provide consistency, fairness and transparency lacking in the licensing process. Lastly, it will provide an opportunity for meaningful input and representation from broad perspectives impacted by or with a stake in the success of social venues.

"We absolutely need an office of nighttime management and/or a night manager for the city. It's long overdue. Right now, we're just piecemealing our approach," stated Stacie Callies, Executive Director, The Westtown Association.

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE

RHI suggests the following system of governance for the City of Milwaukee. It is highly recommended that **both** structures be established in tandem. Lessons learned show that a night manager without an advisory board will likely face challenges in galvanizing support and input from key stakeholders. Ideally, these groups would liaise with a citywide hospitality association and community advocates.

OFFICE OF NIGHTTIME MANAGEMENT WITH A NIGHT MANAGER

An Office of Nighttime Management is most appropriately situated within government as a new department or nested within an existing department (e.g. economic development). The office would be staffed by an executive director (i.e. "night manager") and administrative staff, if necessary. The role of the night manager would be to serve as a liaison between government and various entities such as resident associations, hospitality associations, BIDs, etc. citywide.

SOCIAL ECONOMY ALLIANCE (I.E. ADVISORY BOARD)

A Social Economy Alliance (i.e. Advisory Board) is a body representing multiple stakeholder perspectives. The group can be in charge of determining priorities and policy direction for the Office of Nighttime Management. It could also advise policy makers and elected officials regarding decision making about licensing for new or existing operators, and additionally provide guidance to other city departments on issues of nighttime transportation and conscious zoning and planning.

EXAMPLES OF CITIES WITH NIGHTTIME GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES

Cities have set up nighttime governance structures in many different ways. New York has an Office of Nightlife within the Mayor's Office of Media and Entertainment; Night Mayor; Advisory Board; and a citywide hospitality association. Washington, DC has a Mayor's Office of Nightlife and Culture with a Night Manager. San Francisco has an Entertainment Commission with representation from multiple stakeholders and a staff position in the Office of Economic and Workforce Development to support business development for the nightlife and entertainment sector. Cities such as Pittsburgh, Austin, Orlando and Ft. Lauderdale have just a Nighttime Economy Manager position without the additional support and clout of an office or advisory board.

THE NEED

There is a strong case justifying the need for a citywide governing body for the social economy in Milwaukee.

HARNESS ECONOMIC VALUE

A city's opportunities to socialize are critical to job creation, talent retention, company relocation and attraction of students, residents, tourism and conventions. Businesses that comprise the social economy are a significant source of employment and contributor to taxes and general funds. However, there are lost opportunities for social venues as a tool for economic development and revitalization when operators do not receive the support and guidance they need to open in a timely manner and stay in compliance. An Office of Nighttime Management can be instrumental in streamlining processes and giving support to new and existing businesses.

SAFETY IN SOCIAL DISTRICTS IMPACTS PERCEPTIONS OF MILWAUKEE OVERALL

The gun violence and street party atmosphere that took place on Water Street created a negative perception of Milwaukee that impacted patronage of downtown businesses both day and night, as well as concerns over safety when visiting the city. One participant commented, "It doesn't matter which entertainment district an incident happens in. It affects visitors' perception of Milwaukee." This comment speaks to the need for a citywide entity to focus its work on the social economy, not just downtown stakeholders.

SOCIAL ECONOMY IS CITYWIDE, NOT JUST DOWNTOWN

Precedent has been set for business improvement districts (BIDs), especially the ones located downtown, to serve as stewards of the social economy. A strong narrative, echoed by multiple study participants, conveyed a commonly held perception that downtown gets more than its fair share of attention and resources from the City. In part, this is due to the leadership and advocacy from BIDs on behalf of their business members.

However, BIDs have a broader scope of priorities than just the social economy. Further, there are other social destinations outside of BIDs' current jurisdiction that need advocacy and support. An Office of Nighttime Management would be a compelling rebuttal to this "downtown first" narrative, illustrating that the city's social economy has value regardless of which business district venues are located in. A citywide view is needed, not just focused on downtown social venues, but on the needs of social venues throughout the city.

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY GOVERNANCE

Milwaukee has gone through periods of significant reform, then regression, in social economy governance. Ground is lost when election cycles happen or retirements occur. Turnover of leadership and changing priorities results in taking steps forward then back. Although improvements have been made, structural issues remain that have yet to be tackled. Short-term strategies are implemented ad-hoc to cyclical challenges until they escalate, requiring intervention. Yet the social economy requires constant monitoring, oversight and guidance by a centralized entity.

Currently, a variety of partnerships between government agencies and public and private partners exist to help businesses open and stay in compliance. Yet there is no citywide convening force that unifies representatives of different perspectives in one body, as well as a single point person within city government dedicated to social economy issues. Every stakeholder on the steering team for the 2021 RHI study of public space disorder expressed resounding support for creation of a citywide government body with dedicated staff and representation from key stakeholders.

"The health of our social districts is of the utmost importance to growing our tourism industry," stated Peggy Williams, President & CEO, Visit Milwaukee

NEUTRAL OMBUDS ROLE WITHIN CITY GOVERNMENT FOR SOCIAL ECONOMY BUSINESSES

Currently, Milwaukee’s common council members serve as gatekeepers to city services for their constituents, both businesses and residents alike. However, as is commonly the case, small businesspeople are afraid to interact with elected officials due to a perception that they’re not friendly to social venues.

An Office of Nighttime Management would serve as an objective ombuds within city government and act as a neutral conveyer of facts on behalf of social venue operators, residents and other city departments.

VALUE AND BENEFITS

Among the value and benefits of creating an Office of Nighttime Management with a Social Economy Alliance as an advisory board include:

- Central point of contact within government for business operators and residents
- Coordination of city government departments in education and intervention
- Liaison to hospitality businesses and the community
- Convene diverse stakeholders with valuable input on the social economy
- Reduce the perception that certain perspectives wield too much influence over decision-making while others don’t have a voice
- Bridge the gap in communication between underrepresented stakeholders and elected officials
- Monitor and proactively respond to trends

PURPOSE AND ROLE

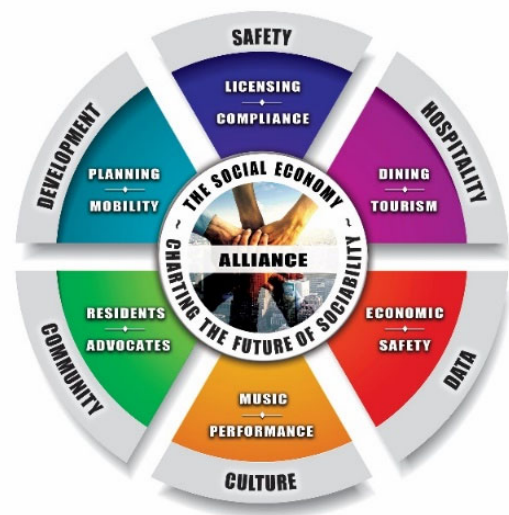
RHI suggests formation of an Office of Nighttime Management with a director to serve the following roles:

- Guide city leaders on decision-making
- Identify issues and remove barriers that inhibit the operation of safe, vibrant places to socialize
- Streamline business opening and event applications to be simple and intuitive
- Advocate for legislative changes and resource allocation for public health and safety
- Represent the perspective of the social economy on boards and committees
- Implement priority actions

COMPOSITION OF SOCIAL ECONOMY ALLIANCE

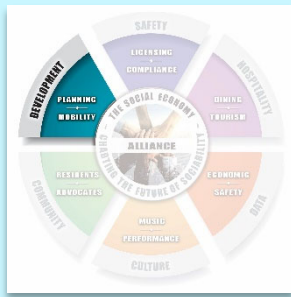
The Office of Nighttime Management can launch with the idea that diverse stakeholders are included in the Social Economy Alliance Advisory Board. We suggest a twelve-person body with two perspectives in each of the following perspectives:

- (1) Development
- (2) Safety
- (3) Hospitality
- (4) Community
- (5) Culture
- (6) Data



FRAMEWORK OF PRIORITIES

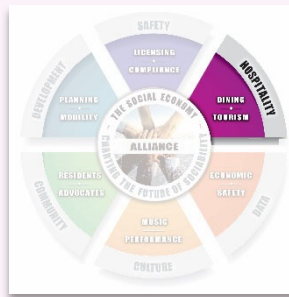
The following represents a framework of priorities for each set of stakeholders of the Social Economy Alliance.



Planning will require a focus on the future intersection of commercial offices, residential housing, hotels/Airbnb, retail storefronts and social venues.

Mobility will require a focus on the transition from auto to mass transit as it returns to full-service operations. Mobility will also explore how expanded outdoor seating will be

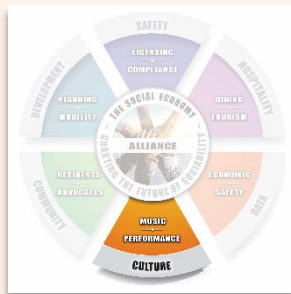
sustained or replace parking and open streets.



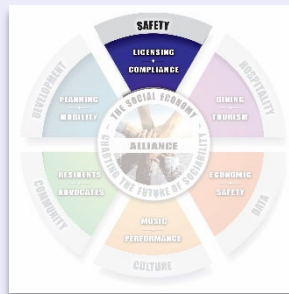
Tourism and conventions will require time for start-up and planning to return to pre-pandemic levels. This will be driven by revitalization of attractions and activities for visitors.

Dining venues that survive and new creative venues will require support and transitional guidelines to

maintain more consistency and predictability for sustaining staff, inventory and supply chains.

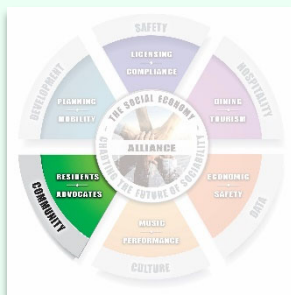


Music and performance venues have returned, yet face critical challenges in sustainability. Key will be availability of talent, touring performers, patron confidence and predictable and consistent guidelines for safe venue security and operations.



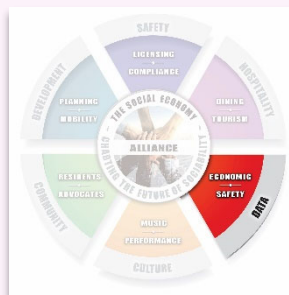
Safety is a continuum of government agencies and hospitality and business associations working together to facilitate access to a streamlined permit process, compliance training and incentives for responsible policies and practices.

Policing late-night social districts will require expanded alliances among all departments and agencies and self-regulation among venue operators.



Community residents and advocates will face challenges in finding the right balance between revitalizing music and late-night social venues and respect for quality-of-life expectations of residents.

Organized mediation process, such as with a “night manager” can help facilitate dialogue and conflict resolution.



Data measures are needed to monitor economic growth from a pre-pandemic baseline due to changes in lifestyles, work and travel.

Similar measures are required to monitor impacts on safety and quality-of-life due to more public demands with reduced venue staff.

TRENDS ANALYSIS FOR MILWAUKEE'S SOCIAL ECONOMY

MARKET FORCES

Local and national trends since 2020 have affected Milwaukee's social economy in significant ways.

SOCIAL TRENDS: HOW COVID-19 CHANGED THE WAY PEOPLE WORK, TRAVEL AND SOCIALIZE

COVID-19's Impact on the Social Economy

The pandemic had devastating effects on Milwaukee's social economy. Deemed "non-essential," businesses that offered space to socialize (i.e. eat, drink, dance, listen to music) were among the first to close and last to reopen. Though many venues survived, they are still struggling.

Pandemic-Era Pivots and Adaptations

The City of Milwaukee helped social districts adapt to the preference for outdoor socializing through an "Active Streets" program that expanded pedestrian walkways and extended dining to sidewalks and parklets. Businesses winterized these spaces through unique "snow globe" like enclosures and patio heaters. Social venues were also able to offer alcohol to-go as part of a statewide loosening of alcohol regulations.

New Social Destinations Emerge

If COVID-19 taught the world anything, it was this: people have a biological drive to socialize. During lockdown of social venues, people hosted parties in private homes and hotels. Milwaukee, like, other cities nationwide, saw a rise in sideshows, street racing and parties on the street.

Initially attributed to the void in things to do, people may have become conditioned to socialize in new ways despite the reopening of licensed premises. There is a perception among venue operators that remote office workers have preferred to continue socializing closer to home—in the suburbs.

An Empty Downtown: Loss of Day to Night Patrons

The combination of remote work, loss of tourism and a decline in business travel has resulted in a loss of patronage downtown. The loss of footfall is felt most keenly at lunch and happy hour. Labor Day was supposed to be a milestone date to return to the office, yet many major employers postponed the return to October to evaluate the effect of the Delta variant on schools and public health.

Bucks Playoffs and Victory

Nearly 100,000 people attended the Bucks' playoff games and NBA championship celebration. This event is a prime example of inclusive socializing that united multiple generations of fans. People coexisted (mostly peacefully, with the exception of some public safety incidents) in the Deer District. Described as a "shot of adrenaline," the Bucks games helped to reinvigorate downtown.

Events and Festivals Help Downtown's Comeback

The return of Summerfest and other events have helped bring crowds back to downtown, though crowds are smaller than pre-COVID times. Festival goers also drove patronage at hospitality venues.



How COVID-19 AND THE SOCIAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT INTERSECT WITH THE SOCIAL ECONOMY

COVID-19 and Social Justice Movement

The loss of jobs and of life disproportionately affected communities of color. The pandemic brought to the fore disparities in race and class. Coupled with the resurgence of the social justice movement, Milwaukee, like other major cities, experienced a reckoning and soul-searching.

Tough Questions on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) in the Social Economy

The social justice movement of 2020, led to a myriad of outcomes. There is increased awareness of the value of diversity, equity and inclusion in all aspects of the city, including the social economy. Hard questions have been raised, such as:

- Which communities are served vs. unserved as patrons of downtown social venues?
- What level of ownership of social venues is by people of color?
- To what degree are events and content curation representative of the diverse demographics of the city?

Impact of “Defund the Police” Movement

The “Defund the Police” movement, coinciding with the Black Lives Matter movement, raised awareness of police-involved incidents with citizens of color. The majority of Milwaukee residents, per a June study, are opposed to defunding the police department (Chen, Schumacher, Caughey, 2021). Yet the movement has opened dialogue about the appropriate role of police vs. social services.

An additional outcome experienced across the nation is open hostility towards police by members of the public. Given that police are usually the only safety agency deployed at night in social districts, police officers are experiencing open aggression, taunting and even interference when police attempt enforcement action. During the street parties of 2021, police were surrounded by people filming their interactions with the public or forcibly pulled off people they attempted to arrest.

This difficult climate of unrest and tension has led to low morale among officers, mass resignations and early retirements, and a decline in new officer hiring, a trend experienced nationwide.



TRENDS IN PERCEPTIONS AND POLITICS

Downtown Perceived to Get More Perks

The oft-cited narrative about downtown receiving preferential treatment proves challenging for continued advocacy of support and resources to sustain downtown as a safe, vibrant destination. This plays out in a number of ways, including the topic of equitable distribution of police resources.

Downtown's Value Not Recognized

Many downtown leaders still struggle to prove the economic value of downtown despite data and statistics. Although the downtown area only contains 3.5% of the city's land mass, it produces 23% of the City's economic revenue. Thus, downtown does economically contribute to the health and vitality of the rest of the city. It also a major draw for tourists, business travelers and residents.

Private Sector Outpacing Government

The private sector is racing to get back to normal, but many aspects of city government remain virtual with long backlogs. This results in delays for reviewing new development proposals and applications.



GOVERNANCE

LICENSING

In 2011, RHI's Hospitality Zone Assessment (HZA) identified the licensing system as "the root of dysfunction for a variety of problems...The existing process for obtaining and reviewing alcohol licenses is inconsistent and unpredictable from license application to license application, and threatens to inhibit economic development" (RHI, 2011).

In response, RHI suggested development of objective criteria and identified the need for broader input in decision-making about licensing. While some progress has been made in the past decade, it has been insufficient in making systemic change.

STRENGTHS

New Tool: Public Entertainment Premises (PEP) License

Initially heralded as an achievement in licensing reform, the PEP requires operators to specify their type of entertainment and use of promoters and sound amplification. The PEP provides value in providing additional information on the applicant's business plan and details of planned operations.

Consequences with Teeth for At-Risk Businesses

Alcohol licenses can be revoked or suspended by the city's Common Council if a business continues to operate with violations or risk to the public. (Unlike in other cities, the State of Wisconsin authorizes the City of Milwaukee to issue and regulate alcohol licenses. This gives the City an effective enforcement tool.)

Enhanced Operating Standards as Remediation Tool

Affidavits outlining enhanced operating standards are added to license renewal applications as a form of remediation to past challenges.

Public Testimony at Licenses Committee Meetings

There is an opportunity for the public to provide input on new licenses and renewals.



CHALLENGES

Negative Perceptions of Licensing System

The licensing process is still described as “subjective and unfair,” lacking transparency and consistency for decisions about why licenses are granted, renewed or revoked. Insufficient change has been made since RHI’s 2011 study to influence this perception.

Inequitable Penalties for License Renewals, with all Licensed Premise (PA-33) Reports Treated the Same

No objective criteria exist to evaluate the severity of PA-33s. Some PA-33s demonstrate proactive collaboration with police on minor issues (e.g. credit card fraud) while others may be of a violent nature (e.g. shootings, large fights, homicide on-premise). Currently, the higher the number, the greater the penalty for operators, despite the level of severity.

Penalties for license renewals are inequitable and inconsistent. For example, some businesses receive suspensions for non-violent calls for service, yet others receive no suspension despite violent incidents that occur on premise.

The current approach by Licenses Committee could undermine ten years of proactive collaboration established by police and business operators. Penalizing operators for non-violent PA-33s may disincentivize them from calling police. Or, venue staff may try to handle situations they are not properly trained for.

The precedent of renewing licenses for venues with a history of violent incidents, without a plan for remediation and enhanced operating standards, jeopardizes the health and safety of Milwaukee’s social economy.



Clarification Needed about Affidavits

Confusion exists about whether affidavits attached to license renewals are legally binding and/or enforceable.

Concern about Potential Lawsuit to City

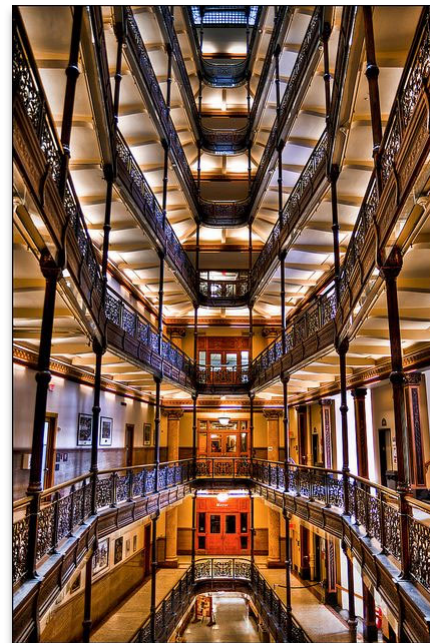
There is a possibility that the City could be sued if precedence is established by an attorney that the licensing system lacks objective standards.

Public Entertainment Premises (PEP) License’s Potential Not Realized

The PEP has fallen short of expectations. There were hopes that the PEP would bring more objectivity and transparency with a new licensing review body with broad representation. As of today, the liquor license and PEP both currently go through the same process of approval by Licenses Committee. So, it didn’t fulfill the promise of fairness and greater equity.

Cross-Examination by Licensees’ Attorneys during Public Testimony Period

The public testimony process at Licenses Committee allows cross examination of the public by a licensee’s attorney. This has resulted in intimidation of people who wish to provide feedback on a prospective license or renewal. The timing (middle of day) also disincentivizes broader public input.



CONCIERGE GOVERNING AND STAKEHOLDER COLLABORATION

Major improvements have been made in stakeholder collaboration since RHI's 2011 HZA (and even from the 2017 follow-up study). While COVID-19 galvanized new partnerships, others were already well established. The result is that the City of Milwaukee provides many examples of a "concierge governing" ("How can I help you?" instead of a "Gotcha!") approach in the social economy.

Several notable stakeholders, such as downtown BIDs and the community prosecutor, act as stewards for the nighttime economy and play a critical role in sustaining the safety and vibrancy of the social economy. While police are an integral part of sustaining public safety, more police is not a sustainable solution. New stakeholders have proven that environmental strategies can be equally if not more effective, such as Department of Public Works.

STRENGTHS: CONCIERGE GOVERNING APPROACH

Help Applying for a Business

BID staff are among the first stakeholders a new business applicant contacts to help them navigate City departments and how to move forward with business opening.

New Business Orientation and CPTED Review

Once an alcohol license is applied for, a variety of stakeholders provide an informal orientation. The community prosecutor (assistant district attorney) and police department's community liaison officer conduct an informal meeting to orient the business operator to the downtown environment, how to keep their employees safe and even conduct a CPTED review of the interior and exterior (e.g. lighting, parking) of the business to provide suggestions. BID staff also conducts an application review with the community liaison officer to orient operators to their neighborhood.

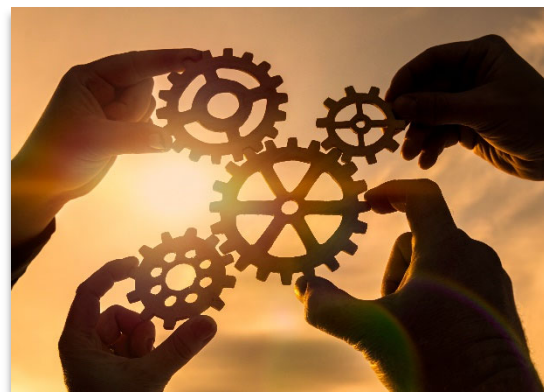
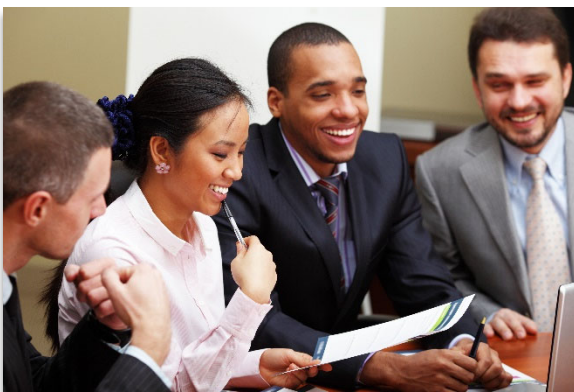
Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

BID staff help connect new business applicants with seasoned operators as peer mentors.

Early Intervention and Compliance Assistance

The community prosecutor reviews Code RED analytics reports to review data and identify businesses that may need intervention and assistance with compliance. Support to businesses with violations or safety issues is provided in the form of education by the community prosecutor, community liaison officer and BID staff. The venue is given an opportunity for voluntary compliance.

If issues continue or venues don't respond to intervention efforts, these stakeholders coordinate enforcement. The BID Board of directors takes a formal vote and submits a letter to Licenses Committee to oppose renewal of the alcohol license.



CHALLENGES

Leadership Turnover

Relationships can be tenuous and be based on people, rather than built into job descriptions for positions.

Lack of Institutionalization for Concierge Governing

Current approaches (e.g. new business orientation) are informal, one-on-one based and not yet institutionalized as part of the City's programming.

Police Turnover

Changes in police leadership requires a reorientation of new officers, who will hopefully share the vision for a safe and vibrant social economy. Police turnover can potentially undo the positive relationship established between police, BIDs and venue operators.

Scope of BIDs goes beyond Social Economy

BIDs have other priorities and a broader scope of work than just the social economy. They've taken on the role of "social economy ambassadors" but this role would be better served in a dedicated government position overseeing sociability citywide.

Common Council Members Perceived to be Anti-Bar

Hospitality business operators express that they don't perceive elected officials as a resource; instead they are intimidated to reach out when they need help.

Residents Perceived to have too much Power

Perception expressed that residents wield more power in complaints than venues have in their economic contributions.

No Central Body Dedicated to Social Economy

Different stakeholders each contribute to nighttime management yet without formal coordination. Establishing a body where different stakeholders have a seat at the table would lessen the perception that certain perspectives wield too much influence and power over decision-making while other perspectives feel like they don't have a voice.



VENUES

STRENGTHS

Increased Collaboration

One of the positive outcomes of the COVID-19 crisis is a greater cohesion, trust and collaboration among hospitality business operators. Some formal partnership models exist, while others are informal:

Hospitality Association for Third Street Businesses

A formal organization exists that represents the interests of hospitality businesses in the Old World Third Street entertainment district.

Water Street Businesses (informal)

Venue operators on Water Street maintain a group text thread to communicate weekly and while operating regarding problem patrons.

Venue Security Help at Closing Time

Per police, venue security help “end of night push to clear streets.”

Live Music and Performance Venues Require Venue Passports and/or Negative Tests

Performance venues are encouraging people to return by requiring proof of full vaccination or proof of a negative COVID test within 72 hours of the show. Masks are encouraged, though not required. There is a desire for more across-the-board guidelines for all hospitality venues.



CHALLENGES

Social Venue Survival

Overall, many bars and taverns in Milwaukee survived the economic fall-out from COVID. Restaurants saw a marked decline, though, with several that have closed permanently.

Shortage of Staff

Following national trends, there is a severe shortage in staff in the hospitality industry (i.e. bars, restaurants, hotels). Many seasoned hospitality workers have started new careers; others are reluctant to return given patron hostility toward health guidelines, as well as concerns about personal safety downtown with a summer increase in public disorder on Water Street. Even when there is an uptick in tourism or business travel, there is insufficient staff to meet demand.

A recent trend is for managers to receive applications, then get “ghosted” (no-shows to interviews). To qualify for unemployment, applicants need only show they’ve applied to a business and note the supervisor’s phone number.



Perceived Competition with Suburban Hospitality Venues

As office workers continue to work remotely and closer to home, they may have become conditioned to socialize closer to home – in the suburbs. Venue operators indicated a loss of regular customers, potentially due to suburban communities’ laxer health guidelines. (The City of Milwaukee enacted public health mandates that required hospitality venue staff to wear masks indoors, stay seated, operate with capacity limits, etc., but surrounding cities in the county had only suggested guidelines, which were far laxer.)

Water Street Hospitality & Nightlife Association

The formal association disbanded.

Barriers to Sustaining Collaboration with Police

Calls for service to police that are documented as PA-33s are considered during license renewals (regardless of severity). Businesses thereby may be fined for police staff time, assessed in taxes and be fined for calls for service. This disincentivizes operators from calling police when in need for issues large and small.

Safety and Access Issues on the Street

Regular customers reported negative perceptions of safety on Water Street due to disorderly public space activity. Also, accessibility to the district was hindered by the parking and towing intervention, which helped curb the street party atmosphere.

Live Music and Performance Venues

Live music and performance venues have begun to host regional and national touring acts, though many have had to be postponed or cancelled due to COVID-related circumstances.

Performance venues are struggling to make up for lost revenue. Ticket sales are not able to capture the full benefit. Offering credit to people who purchased tickets to events that were postponed takes away revenue (and seats) in the future. Many performing arts venues are living off reserves. The lingering effects of COVID will take many years of recovery.

Upcoming shows are scheduled as “soft dates” due to COVID-related circumstances e.g. having to cancel or postpone sold-out shows if a member of a touring group contracts COVID. For shows with hard dates, 35-40% of people who purchased tickets don’t show up, which affects the venue’s ability to make money through ancillary sales (ticket sales go to the artist).

Less shows means less artists will have an opportunity to perform. Young, diverse talent will have difficulty getting started.

Performance venues have not been able to pivot the same way that hospitality venues through e.g. outdoor operations. Operating at a reduced capacity is not possible given the fixed costs for performances.

PATRONS

Prior to COVID, RHI typically analyzed patron demographics by life stage, age, student vs. non-student, race/ethnicity and sexual identification. However, new overarching categories have emerged since the pandemic.

NEW CATEGORIES

Vaccinated Risk Averse	Unvaccinated Risk Averse
Vaccinated Risk Tolerant	Unvaccinated Risk Tolerant

Patronage in the social economy can now be characterized by those who are risk averse and risk tolerant. Among the risk averse, people are slowly returning to social venues downtown, but some still feel more comfortable in less crowded indoor environments or prefer outdoor areas. Among risk tolerant, they may be comfortable with pre-COVID standards for socializing.

Patrons' vaccination status adds an additional layer of complication. In Milwaukee, unlike some other major cities (e.g. San Francisco and New York City), venues do not require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test, though some events and live music venues have established precedent for this.

A divide has emerged in downtowns between two different groups of “patrons.”

PATRONS OF VENUES	PATRONS OF THE STREET
<p>Traditional “patrons” (“patrons of venues”) are people who go downtown to socialize in bars, restaurants and other social venues, paying for their goods and services.</p> <p>To enter licensed premises, they are 21+ and exit venues at closing time.</p>	<p>A second group of “patrons” has emerged: “patrons of the street,” defined as people who come downtown to create their own party. Many are reportedly underage, some as young as 13. They may stay until 4:00 or 5:00 a.m., as there is no “closing time” for the public streets and sidewalks.</p>

STRENGTHS

Patrons Supportive of the “New Normal”

Some venues (e.g. live music, performance venues) and events (e.g. Summerfest) require proof of vaccination or a negative COVID test. Overall, participants have been supportive of such requirements and say they contribute to a feeling of safety.

Milwaukee Shows Attract National Audience

One upcoming show in late October at the Pabst Theater will be attended by people from 49 states. The tour is nationwide, yet Milwaukee is seen as an attractive destination.



CHALLENGES

PATRONS OF VENUES

Earlier Departure Time

Water Street venue patrons left earlier than was typical to avoid anti-social activity in public space.

Decrease in Local Tourism Due to Safety Concerns

Patronage reportedly declined from suburban residents within the county due to concerns about safety downtown given media stories about high-profile incidents involving gun violence.

Preference for Suburban Hospitality Venues

As remote work became the norm, office workers who traditionally worked and socialized downtown chose social options closer to home due to convenience and proximity.

There is a perception among venue operators that their more risk-tolerant patrons flocked to suburban social venues due to their laxer health guidelines (e.g. no mandates for capacity restrictions, mask-wearing indoors and staying seated).

Some may have become conditioned to patronizing suburban venues and have not yet returned downtown.

Reticence to Return

Even people who purchased tickets to upcoming shows at performance venues may not show up.

Hospitality Staff

Many patrons of hospitality venues and live performances are hospitality employees; because so many lost their jobs, they have cut back on spending.

PATRONS OF THE STREET

Displacement Trend

A group of youth traditionally congregated in a parking lot in Midtown (previously a mall; now a cluster of large format retailers). Then the parking lot got fenced off, restricting access. The group then migrated to Water Street.

While various forms of intervention did curb this activity, this group will likely reconvene in a new location if the underlying reasons for congregating in public space are not addressed.

Disorderly Conduct

This group, numbering at times in the thousands, did not adhere to social norms for behavior in an entertainment district. They played loud music from car stereos, smoked marijuana and consumed open containers of alcohol, creating a “street party” atmosphere. In some cases, guns were brandished and fired. Street racing and sideshows also occurred. They reacted with hostility to police when enforcement was attempted.



DISTRICT MANAGEMENT

When Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21 initially engaged RHI, an idea was being explored about whether to apply a “managed access” approach to the Water Street social district. RHI hosted a forum with guest speakers from Memphis, TN; Kansas City, MO; and New Orleans, LA to discuss the pros and cons of controlled access points and physical barricades. This approach was eventually deemed unfeasible due to the multiple (nearly twelve) possible entry points to Water Street, opposition from various key stakeholders, and concerns over potential lawsuits over equitable access to public space.

Instead of moving forward with a controlled access approach, a series of environmental strategies were deployed. The Department of Public Works partnered with police to close a parking lot used for partying, employed a temporary no parking/tow away zone and deployed early morning cleaning crews to give people a non-confrontational signal that it was time to go home. These strategies successfully removed the opportunity for congregation on Water Street and curbed the promenading behavior (spectacles of cruising, car stunts, etc.). With the weather turning to fall, “patrons of the street” left. The crisis, for now, has been averted. But stakeholders are still committed to proactively plan for next summer, when nighttime social activity peaks. The strategies used were successful, but very resource-heavy and perhaps not sustainable.

The summary below outlines the environmental strategies used to address public space disorder, as well as broader trends in mobility, public space and public safety in the social economy.

ENVIRONMENTAL STRATEGIES INTERRUPT ANTI-SOCIAL ACTIVITY IN PUBLIC SPACE

DPW a Positive Interrupter to Anti-Social Behavior

DPW has proven to be a powerful ally, with police, in enhancing the social economy through positive environmental changes that curbed anti-social behavior.

Closed Parking Lot Used for Partying at Night

DPW and police negotiated with Milwaukee School of Engineering to fence off a parking lot used for partying out of cars.

Early Morning Cleaning Crews

DPW deployed an extra cleaning shift (overtime) to sweep streets and pick up litter at 3:00 a.m. This provided a non-confrontational signal that “it’s time to go home.”

Parking and Towing Intervention

DPW and police worked together to create no-parking and tow-away zones on Water Street to curb anti-social activity and reduce crowds congregating near their parked cars.

Parking restrictions were enacted between 9:00 p.m. and 4:00 or 5:00 a.m. The main intersection on Water Street was closed in four directions to vehicular traffic. Cars were ticketed and towed to a location near downtown by DPW staff, who were escorted by police officers. Later, as DPW staff indicated fear of being out at night, they trained officers on how to ticket and tow.

This intervention removed easy access to alcohol, drugs and firearms in close proximity to venues, as well as curbing the spectacle of cruising.

Although it is not generally ideal to close the streets entirely (this can generate more of a party atmosphere), the crowd size far exceeded sidewalk space. Closing the street helped to spread out crowds and successfully “lowered the temperature” of tension associated with dense crowds.

PUBLIC SPACE & MOBILITY

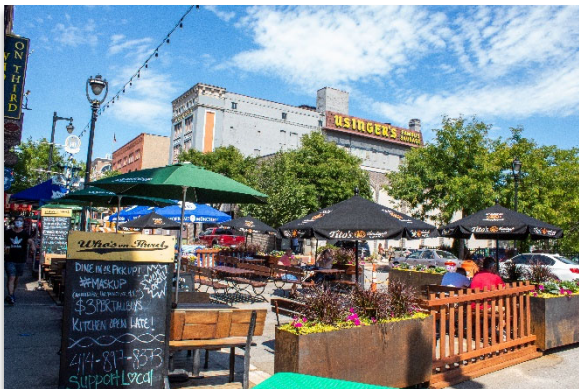
STRENGTHS

Active Streets Model Expands Outdoor Dining

The Active Streets model helped hospitality businesses pivot to outdoor service for the health and safety of patrons given airborne transmission of COVID. Two different versions launched in Milwaukee, one with a neighborhood-oriented activation of the public-right-of-way and another, business-specific version, which allowed restaurants operate in the street.

BIDs pivoted funding earmarked for in-person events to help make the Active Streets program a success with planters, signage, marketing, promotions, etc. The program was so popular that it may be made permanent.

Unlike many of the Water Street venues that have large existing rear patios or side enclosures that became accessible once a patron entered the building, many Old World 3rd Street venues are long and narrow with zero side or rear spaces. The establishments in this District chose to participate in the Active Streets for Businesses program to recapture underutilized street parking along the sidewalk and convert it to approximately 100 new socially distant outside seats.



Partial Road Closures in Social District

Prior to large crowds of non-venue patrons congregating on Water Street, partial traffic closures (no east to west traffic) were used to help slow down cars. This made it safer for pedestrians while still allowing ride-share vehicles to pick up passengers.

CHALLENGES

Speed Limit Requirement to Participate in Active Streets

Water Street businesses did not participate in the Active Streets for Businesses program due to the requirement that the street's speed limit be 25mph or less (Water Street's speed limit is 30mph).

Aggressive Panhandlers Accost Outdoor Diners

Attracted to the Active Streets model, some panhandlers accosted outdoor diners for money. Challenges ensued when hospitality staff attempted to intervene.

Trash and Litter

There was increased trash and litter on the streets and sidewalks due to public space activity on Water Street, necessitating additional cleaning hours by restaurant staff and the clean sweep ambassadors.

Unintended Outcomes from Parking Intervention

Study participants reported that venue patrons felt it was more inconvenient to access downtown social venues as a result of the parking and towing intervention. Further, it made it more difficult for ride-shares to access passengers. One person commented, "It stopped the bad behavior, but it also drove away good customers."

Electric Scooters

Electric scooters were banned entirely from the Central Business District (CBD) on August 3, 2021 in the 2021 City of Milwaukee Pilot Study, due to excessive sidewalk riding.

Improperly Licensed Mobile Food Operators

Unlike in 2020, health department staff were not as active in inspecting food carts and food trucks for health violations during the summer of 2021. As a result, food trucks, carts and pop-up food tents proliferated, some of which did not have proper licenses. They contributed to an "after party" atmosphere, where people loitered until 4:30 a.m. The operating time for food trucks is unusual in that it extends 2+ hours past bar closing time.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Milwaukee Police Department enacted major interventions in partnerships with DPW, as discussed above. This section describes broader issues related to public safety in the social economy and the strengths and challenges specifically faced by the police.

STRENGTHS

Code RED (“Responsible Entertainment District”) Expanded

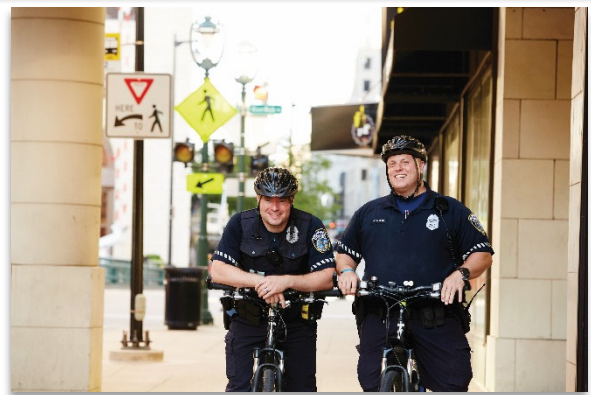
The positive legacy of the Code RED program continues in 2021 with robust upgrades. The goal of the program is to “set social norms and standards for conduct and provide a safe and inclusive entertainment district for all to enjoy.”

More on-duty officers are deployed than in the past (1/3-1/2 are on-duty) in a combination of modes: foot, motorcycle, mounted, tactical enforcement unit, and traffic safety unit. Analytics reports are compiled every week for review by the Assistant District Attorney and BIDs.

Officers, even volunteer overtime officers are regulars – they know the venues are well versed with expectations for this assignment.

Accomplishments include:

- Addition of portable light towers
- Closing of a parking lot owned by Milwaukee School of Engineering where people were engaging in a disorderly way
- Enactment of parking restrictions and, when deemed appropriate, full street closures
- Officers trained by DPW to ticket and tow cars parked illegally
- Relocation of food trucks away from venues to a Food Truck Park (1.5 blocks north of Water St). Forced them to shut down at 2:30am for their safety and to disperse crowds.



CHALLENGES

Increased # Officers Deployed to Water Street

Officer deployment was 3-4 times greater during the summer of 2021 than on a pre-COVID summer. This means instead of the typical 12-14-foot officers with about 3-4 mounted officers, there were 40-45 foot officers and 7-8 mounted officers in the entertainment district (handling non Bucks game related activities).

Deployment Focused on Downtown

During the height of summer 2021, when Code RED had to deploy more officers to Water Street, there was less officer deployment to other social districts and in general, other districts throughout the City. Other policing districts expressed frustration with the lack of coverage in their areas.

Overtime Officers

One half to two third of officers are overtime (working after their regular 8-hour shift). Officer burnout is becoming commonplace after large events like the Bucks playoffs. It is becoming difficult to find OT officers willing to work for Code RED. The police department overall is understaffed.

Nighttime Presence of Safety Officers

Police are still the only safety presence out at night, with the exception of the health inspector (who sporadically is present). DPW did send officers for parking enforcement until 10:00 p.m., but were afraid for personal safety, despite police escorts.

Crime and Safety Challenges

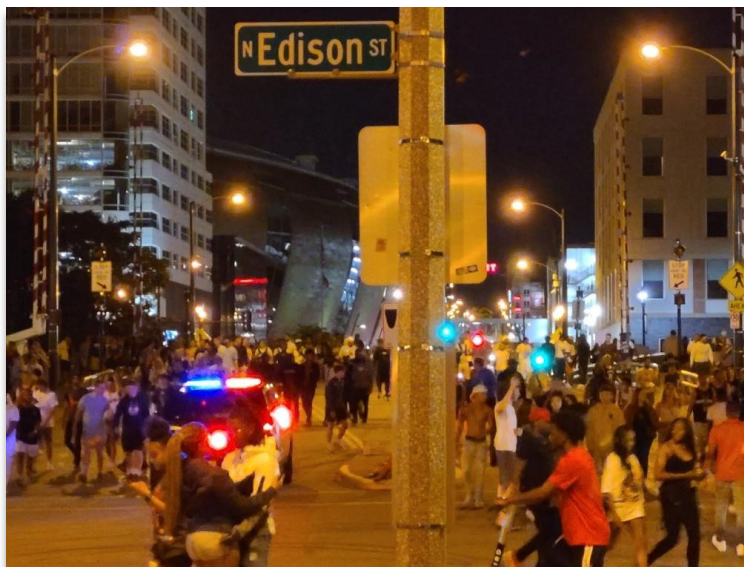
There has been a marked shift since 2009 (12 years ago), when the primary challenges were drug dealing and prostitution. Current challenges include:

- Large crowds of loiterers not patronizing businesses, but creating their own party (crowd sized estimated to be between 2-5,000 people)
- Public drinking and marijuana smoking
- Juveniles with firearms
- Stolen cars
- Shots fired in the air, at cars and into crowds of spectators
- Cruising and street racing
- Cars parked directly in front of venues provide easy access to alcohol, drugs and firearms
- Car thefts downtown rose 500%
- Gun violence in/around social venues
- Fireworks and firework vendors

Anti-Authority Pushback

A national trend of hostility and antagonism toward police played out on the streets of a downtown social district. Officers report fears of starting a riot for enforcement of minor infractions (e.g. loitering, public drinking).

The lack of public cooperation when attempting enforcement action made it difficult to address quality of life issues. In fact, crowds actually tried to prevent officers from taking enforcement action by filming interactions and pulling officers off of perpetrators.



STUDY METHODOLOGY

RHI was invited to conduct a series of interviews and group meetings on the topic of public space disorder in downtown entertainment districts. The following meetings were held:

August 17, 2021

Virtual Forum on public space management

Virtual Transformation Team (steering group) meeting

August 31, 2021

Virtual venue operators meeting

September 10-16, 2021

Virtual interviews held with 10 stakeholders.

October 2021

Prepared a summary.

November 11-12, 2021

RHI staff will come on-site to Milwaukee for a group presentation of findings and individual meetings.

PARTICIPANT DIRECTORY

PROJECT COORDINATION

Downtown BID 21

Beth Weirick

PARTICIPATION

NOTE: The summary and recommendations in this report do not imply an endorsement of those participating. Conclusions are those generated by RHI as a baseline for further discussion and development.

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Stacie Callies

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Drew Deuster

Owner/Operator
Wild Planet Hospitality Group

Matt Dorner

Economic Development Director
Milwaukee Downtown BID 21

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Marcus Corporation

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Lieutenant
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District Attorney

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Peggy Williams

President/CEO
Visit Milwaukee

Gary Witt

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Pabst Theater Group

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REFERENCES

Chen, D., Schumacher, Y., and Caughey, E. (June 24, 2021). Six charts illustrate how Milwaukee residents view defunding the police – and what they think that means. *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Retrieved from <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/2021/06/24/how-milwaukee-residents-view-defunding-police-and-what-means/5299272001/>

RHI. (March 2011). Hospitality Zone Assessment Summary Report. *Responsible Hospitality Institute*.

PHOTO CREDITS

Photos provided courtesy of:

- Milwaukee Downtown, BID #21
- Milwaukee Police Department's Code RED
- Visit Milwaukee
- Water Street Collective
- Westown Association
- Wild Planet Hospitality Group



**Vision is the art of seeing what is
invisible to others.**

Jonathan Swift



RESPONSIBLE HOSPITALITY INSTITUTE

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