

EXHIBIT 18



ENTERTAINMENT



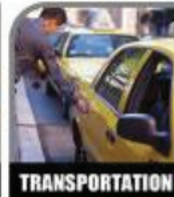
PUBLIC SAFETY



MULTI-USE SIDEWALK



VENUE SAFETY



TRANSPORTATION



QUALITY OF LIFE

HOSPITALITY ZONE ASSESSMENT *of* RHI'S SIX CORE ELEMENTS

RESPONSIBLE HOSPITALITY INSTITUTE: Assisting Businesses and Communities to Create Safe and Vibrant Places to Socialize

Columbia, SC Hospitality Zone Assessment

STAKEHOLDER ORIENTATION

OCTOBER 3, 2011

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

OCTOBER 25-27, 2011

ENTERTAINMENT

PUBLIC SAFETY

MULTI-USE SIDEWALK

VENUE SAFETY

TRANSPORTATION

QUALITY OF LIFE

LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

NOVEMBER 30, 2011



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Columbia, South Carolina Roundtable Summary Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Background

Columbia's City Center Partnership in conjunction with Greater Columbia Restaurant and Hotel Associations 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 preventing and managing nightlife impacts, as well as to maximize the benefits of a sociable economy. The goal is to highlight a community's resources and assets, and identify practical solutions to the risks associated with hospitality zones.

The terms "mixed-use district" or "multi-use district" traditionally describe the blend of residential, commercial and retail development within a particular location. A hospitality zone, meanwhile, 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.

Columbia is experiencing a challenge common to cities across North America: increased demand for nighttime socializing options with dining and entertainment due to the growth in a young adult population, mixed use development, economic and lifestyle trends. A variety of impacts are associated with nightlife activity, including fights, public disorder, intoxication, litter, trash and noise complaints.

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, 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 Columbia's nighttime economy reach its full potential.

Methodology

RHI staff worked primarily with Tom Sponseller, President & CEO, South Carolina Hospitality Association, in identifying a balance of representatives to serve as a planning body, or Transformation Team. This Team has twelve members, with three individuals representing four primary stakeholder perspectives – hospitality, safety, development and community. Individuals were recruited who bring a broad understanding of trends and issues in Columbia's development, have credibility in the community as being fair and balanced, and able to outreach to peers to participate in the Six Core Element Roundtables.

During the second phase, RHI facilitator Jim Peters 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:

- ◆ **Entertainment:** Nurturing talent and supporting venues that provide multi-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.
- ◆ **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.

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 and field study using RHI's checklist to observe inside social venues and outside in the Hospitality Zones. Beyond fact-finding, these assignments are as much about bonding and building trust amongst stakeholders.

On October 25-27, 2011, RHI staff facilitated six focus-group Roundtables. Nearly sixty stakeholders, representing a wide range of public and private organizations, participated in one of six roundtable discussions, each centered around a core element theme. The purpose of these Roundtables was to gather information about trends, issues, resources and gaps relating to dining

and entertainment, to hear observations from late night tours and to begin to formulate strategies to enhance the nighttime economy, public safety and quality of life of residents and district users. This report contains a summary of the discussion and suggestions by RHI staff and the group.

The Leadership Summit: Setting a Framework for Implementation Task Forces

On November 30, 2011, participants in the Hospitality Zone Assessment process reconvened and met in the Six Core Element Roundtable groups. Transformation Team members presented a summary from their group so participants could hear an overview of the primary issues and recommendations in the six core areas.

Following the presentation, each group worked towards consensus to complete the following actions:

1. **Verified:** Each group assured the summary of their group was an accurate reflection of the discussion, observations and recommendations.
2. **Prioritized:** Each group prioritized the action steps and milestones, including identification of resources or organization required, timeline and process for achieving the outcomes.
3. **Coordinated:** Each group designated two people to represent their core element task force and serve on a collaborative alliance (i.e. Hospitality Resource Partnership) to monitor and support the implementation of each Core Element Team's action plan. This may include some of the following next steps:
 - a. *Report* the results of the Hospitality Zone Assessment to the Mayor, City Council and key departments and organizations.
 - b. *Advocate* for resource allocation to assign city staff to work on projects, funding to support coordination of the process, changes in local, county and state policy and practices.
 - c. *Facilitate* coordination of overlapping recommendations from each Core Element Team to avoid duplication or inefficient use of resources.
 - d. *Define* measures of success and coordinate public awareness of progress and accomplishments.

Attention to the Six Core Element subject areas outlined in this report are known to improve safety and vibrancy of nighttime economies. Through the HZA process, Columbia now has nearly sixty stakeholders with a deep understanding of and commitment to those discipline areas.

This process tapped the expertise and resources within Columbia to determine a course of action. The following six reports and proposed action plans reflect a blend of each group's recommendations.

Summary of Observations

The Positives:

Columbia is at the epicenter of a diverse mix of vibrant activities as the state capital and largest city in South Carolina.

A regional destination year-round due to the presence of various historical sites, the U.S. Army basic combat training center of Fort Jackson, several esteemed colleges and universities, and local college football games, this "famously hot" city also hosts an active and growing nightlife scene. Four distinct districts (Five Points, Congaree "Vista", Harbison, and Main Street) serve as social gathering places that support a variety of experiences offered for a broad range of lifestyles, income levels and cultures. While other cities struggle nationwide with the economic downturn, Columbia continues to receive accolades for its economic strength and sustainability.

The city has an excellent foundation from which to grow. Yet it also faces a challenge common to cities with active nightlife: how to manage increased demand for nighttime socializing options while maintaining a high quality of life for residents, public safety and business vitality. Bringing together the key stakeholders at this time assures continued positive momentum.

The Process:

A paradigm shift is necessary to transition Columbia to a safe and vibrant community. There is currently no detailed plan for how to effectively integrate mixed-use development while proactively addressing concerns regarding noise, impaired driving, unruly behavior, etc. Despite these challenges, stakeholders in Columbia have demonstrated a strong commitment to maintaining a high quality of life in their community and dedication to finding innovative solutions.

The RHI assessment process uncovered trends, issues, resources and preliminary strategies that can help guide the vision for Columbia's future development. Gaps and inconsistencies in policy and legislation will require particular attention to establish a legislative system conducive to a safe and vibrant nighttime economy.

Every stakeholder holds a critical piece of the puzzle, yet has often worked independently to resolve challenges and problem-solve. Recommendations from the assessment can only be effective if a partnership is formed to sustain a focus on a positive vision for Columbia as a safe and sociable city.

Economics and Politics as Driving Forces:

Dining and entertainment businesses operate in a unique economic and political climate. Demand for their products and services (food, beverages, socializing space) are universal, and most people spend a portion of their disposable income in dining and entertainment establishments. Nightlife venues in particular, due to their operation in the evening and late-night hours, face competition within the markets they serve, while also depend upon competing businesses to be a draw to the district they operate.

The dynamics of nighttime activity also increases risks to patrons and businesses. Self-interest versus cooperation is the dichotomy, often compounded when a city has multiple districts for people to choose from. Connectivity is required among business leaders from the nighttime economy across districts to achieve citywide success.

From discussion in several of the Roundtables, many of the public safety problems in Columbia were identified as originating in the disbanding of the state alcohol regulatory authority. Responsibility has shifted to local authorities, who are now charged with enforcement, yet lack the tools, the training to do so, and already limited resources.

Some observed the current pro-business philosophy by the state administration may not always promote a healthy and safe business environment, which is particularly relevant to businesses seeking alcoholic beverage licenses. In fact, it was reported that changes in resources dedicated to enforcement (two officers for the whole state) may be contributing to the opposite. When the 'bad apple' operators can get away with irresponsible and illegal business practice, the responsible business owners are compelled to compete, and sometimes succumb to irresponsible practices as well because they know they will not be penalized.

Conclusion

Columbia represents a classic model, with four distinct districts, catering to diverse markets, and each seeking to evolve to maintain or expand market share. Future development and branding of Columbia as a destination for dining and entertainment, maintaining a balance of business mix, assuring proper regulation and enforcement, and coordinating resources for education and training will benefit from an improved state regulatory and enforcement system, a citywide resource partnership and on-going review and updates to the actions recommended in this report.

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.



Columbia Roundtable Summary Action Plan Snapshot for 2012

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. The Action Plan Milestones were developed to address many of the issues discussed, but some issues will require future planning and action.

Public Safety Roundtable

Determine Criteria for Ideal Business Mix to Meet Day, Evening and Late-night Activity

Enhance and Supplement Current Public Safety Systems

Venue Safety Roundtable

Create a Nightlife Network with Representatives from the Four Primary Business Districts

Develop a Self-Regulatory Process to Improve Service, Security and Safety

Transportation Roundtable

Establish a Late-night Transportation System to Integrate Parking, Valet, Taxi, Trolley and Shuttle

Develop a Synergistic Approach to Late-night Taxi Service

Quality of Life Roundtable

Survey and Document Challenges to Quality of Life

Initiate a "First Impressions" Responsibility Campaign

Sidewalk Roundtable

Inventory and Define Appropriate Areas for Temporary and Permanent Public Space Uses

Organize Accessible Information on Rights, Roles and Responsibilities for Public Space Uses

Entertainment Roundtable

Convene a "Sports and Entertainment Council" as a Central Clearinghouse and Advocate

Conduct an Economic Impact Assessment of Columbia's Dining, Entertainment and Events

Centralize Information about Columbia's Dining, Entertainment and Events to Improve Marketing



Public Safety

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

PUBLIC SAFETY ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

The shift in responsibility from state to local authorities to enforce alcohol licenses has resulted in significant challenges for maintaining public safety in Columbia. With limited staff resources and no efficient tools for revoking licenses, local entities have enacted various proactive initiatives to address challenges via alternate means. There is still room for improvement to streamline current systems, yet the city is on a positive track to sustain safety and vitality amidst a dysfunctional state enforcement system.

Driving Forces for Change

Local and State Policy Barriers to Enhancing Public Safety

- **State Enforcement of Alcohol Licenses:** After the reorganization of the state alcohol regulatory agency in the 1990s, responsibility for enforcement of alcohol regulations was transferred to the South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED). Yet with only 2 SLED officers allocated for alcohol enforcement in the entire state, enforcement capacity has been greatly diminished and preventative education/training programs have been cut.
- **Local Enforcement of Alcohol Licenses:** With changes in state enforcement, local law enforcement's only viable tool for revoking an alcohol license is to declare a business a public nuisance, yet this process takes significant time and faces resistance from the current pro-business administration. There is no penalty "with teeth" that can be implemented in a more timely fashion.
- **Restaurants Transitioning to Bars:** Under current state law, all new hospitality businesses must be a restaurant with 40 seats and the ability to feed 40 people during all hours of operation. Fueled by economic challenges or driven by increased revenue potential, it is common for businesses to transition from primarily food service to primarily alcohol service or entertainment.

Initiatives Implemented to Address Public Safety Concerns

- **Curfew:** Columbia City Council enacted an 11:00pm curfew in the Five Points neighborhood for youth 16 and under.
- **Surveillance Camera Initiative:** There are between 80 and 100 cameras, both city and private, which have helped solve various crimes such as shoplifting and car break-ins. This has proven particularly helpful in Five Points.
- **Citywide Bar Closing Time:** The city has enacted a standard bar closing time of 2:00am for all bars (previously there was no designated closing time). Whether this new policy enhances public safety has yet to be determined.
- **Hospitality Team:** The City established an interdisciplinary, six-person team composed of one police sergeant, two police officers, one business license officer, one zoning inspector and one fire marshal specially trained to address nightlife issues. The team works dedicated nighttime shifts (Thursday-Saturday nights) in the primary nightlife districts.
- **PACE Team:** A more experienced group of officers patrol nightlife districts Thursday-Saturday.

Current Challenges and Room for Improvement

- **Most Common Nightlife-Related Issues and Business Violations:** Include civil disturbances, fights, noise, overcrowding, underage drinking inside the premises, predatory crime directed at patrons, property crime (e.g. car break-ins), and incorrect permits/licenses.
- **Hospitality Team:** Lack of clarity in the goals and objectives of this team was addressed in several Roundtables.
- **Deployment:** Current deployment methods, particularly in Five Points, involve a clustering of officers in a central location rather than a consistently roving, visible presence to deter unruly behavior throughout the district.
- **Fire Hazards:** Businesses were recognized for creative marketing, yet decorations that use flammable materials and theatrical performances involving live flames present a concern to fire department officials.
- **Open Container Law:** Officers are no longer required to test open containers for alcohol content at an off-site facility, which had previously prevented them from effectively citing individuals for open containers. Yet enforcement is still hindered by lack of clarity in the boundaries of businesses' encroachment areas where smoking/drinking may occur.

Proposed Action Plan

The objective of this work plan is to facilitate creation of an ideal business mix and enhance systems for enforcement and compliance.

1. Determine Criteria for Ideal Business Mix to Meet Day, Evening and Late-night Activity

As Columbia's economy and downtown evolves, there exists an opportunity to achieve an optimal balance of business and residential space in hospitality zones. The ease of obtaining a business license has led to a proliferation of nightlife businesses without on-going consideration of ideal business mix or impacts on public safety and crowd management.

Collaboration between businesses, residents, city departments and business management districts can create incentives for new businesses to open and/or contribute to increased local vitality. Implementation of this plan will help determine criteria for new and incoming businesses to assure they comply with the ideal vision of each district and do not generate additional burden on districts already at or near capacity.

Action Steps

- **Assess the current capacity** of Columbia's dining and entertainment districts in terms of crowd management, occupancy of existing businesses, sidewalk width, zoning, and retail business mix. Determine if each district can support additional businesses and how they will best contribute to a diverse retail mix.
- **Develop a mechanism for denying a business license** due to legitimate cause for concern if a business does not meet criteria for contributing to the business mix and instead is expected to place additional burden on limited resources for public safety, transportation and pedestrian flow.
- **Establish a formal system for review of new licenses:** Systems for community protest of a new business license currently exist but use is limited. Notices of new licenses are posted in local newspapers. An inter-disciplinary review of new licenses by multiple stakeholders can help facilitate a more ideal business mix.
- **Encourage Zoning Board to consider all aspects of zoning appeals** in the hospitality and entertainment districts, particularly as related to zoning variances to ease parking requirements.

2. Enhance and Supplement Current Systems for Public Safety:

Columbia has already made great strides in improving public safety by enacting various proactive initiatives and systems. Greater communication and collaboration between hospitality and safety stakeholders can help streamline the effectiveness of these initiatives.

Action Steps

- **Refine the Hospitality Team's Mission and Objectives:** A lack of clarity was expressed by members of the Hospitality Team and those outside of it about this group's mission and objectives.
 - **Convene a working group meeting** with the team members and their representative departments to clearly define the objectives of the team.
 - **Consider "Code Compliance Team"** as an alternative name to better reflect the purpose of the group. Investigate other cities with a similar approach such as Seattle, Milwaukee, Edmonton, among others.
 - **Document Priorities:** Organize information on priority rules, regulations, inspections and other tools that can be provided in a handbook or checklist for businesses to use as a reference and self-inspection prior to regular visits by the Hospitality Team.
- **Formalize Collaboration between Safety/Hospitality Stakeholders:** The Hospitality Team was established with an aim of improving collaboration between safety and hospitality. The following are steps to more effectively achieve this goal:
 - **Convene a meeting between members of the Hospitality Team and all business owners** in each district to relay the objectives of the Hospitality Team, the team's expectations of businesses, and the information that will be sought during inspections. This forum can also determine inspection times and procedures that are conducive to business cooperation while still meeting safety goals. Schedule regular forums throughout the year for updates and conflict resolution. (see venue safety)
 - **Host Seminars and Trainings:** Determine how local safety agencies can fill gaps in education and training that were previously provided by the state alcohol regulatory agency. Particular areas of focus can be identification of false IDs, responsible beverage service, and door security.
- **Identify supplemental training to SLED Training:** It was reported that current training offered by SLED is insufficient in education about alcohol license enforcement. Investigate alternative means for instruction so that local law enforcement, perhaps via the Hospitality Team, can be deputized (i.e. designated as 'constables') and thereby enforce alcohol regulations to supplement SLED's limited staff resources.
- **Update Deployment Strategy:** Adjust current deployment strategy from a central congregation point to a proactive, roving presence of no more than two officers at a time patrolling districts. The aim is to provide higher visibility among patrons to serve as a deterrent to unruly behavior, as well as achieve more effective response.



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.

VENUE SAFETY ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

The ease in which business licenses can be obtained in Columbia has led to accelerated growth of nightlife venues. Yet inconsistencies in rules and regulations and limited enforcement capacity have resulted in risky business practices on the part of some business operators. Businesses that do consciously follow the rules face unfair competition with businesses that do not, as well as challenges stemming from a culture of drinking and unclear behavioral expectations for patrons.

Driving Forces for Change

Policies, Rules and Regulations and Potential Improvement Areas

- **Limited Access to Rules and Regulations:** No central access point was identified to easily disseminate rules and regulations from the city, county, state and federal regulations.
- **Inconsistency in Enforcement of Rules and Regulations:** Permit variances differ in different districts, which present confusion for both enforcement agents and business operators. There is a perception that some districts receive preferential treatment and less strict enforcement in comparison to other districts.
- **Training:** Responsible beverage service training is not required in Columbia; for those businesses whose staff do undertake the training, there have been reports that not all programs are consistent in their explanation of regulations. Future training topics identified for staff improvement include: ID/age verification, prevention of over-service and intoxication, improved conflict resolution for disorderly or risky patron behavior, and quality service/customer relations.
- **Drink Promotion Rules:** Despite state restrictions on drink promotions after 8:00pm, businesses that engage in these practices are not penalized by enforcement agencies. Enforcement agents observed that businesses offering drink promotions tended to also be over-occupancy limits.
- **Support for Original Intent of the Hospitality Team:** Business owners expressed overall support for the original concept and intent of a customer-service oriented team of enforcement agents who could set a precedent for consistent enforcement of nightlife policies. The current execution and approach of the team indicates room for improvement in communicating expectations with business owners.

Patron Behavior and Communication of Standards

- **Communication of Standards:** Prior to registering for classes, the University of South Carolina requires that all individuals 23 years and under take an online class on alcohol education and expectations for behavior. Nightlife businesses do not currently have a mode to communicate expectations of patron behavior via signage or other means. It was also noted that protocols for tipping wait-staff may need to be better communicated.
- **Underage Drinking Culture:** It was reported that there is a prevalent culture of alcohol consumption in Columbia, especially with the presence of a large college-age population, amongst whom drinking is considered a rite of passage. This is a particular challenge in Five Points due to the proximity of the University of South Carolina and student housing. There is increased risk for underage access to alcohol as bar patrons can now take open containers outside to smoke. Further, a large number of high-quality fake IDs are produced and used by underage students in the hospitality zones adjacent to colleges and universities.
- **Pre-Loading/Pre-Gaming:** Many individuals pre-load in cars and at college football tailgate parties prior to entering licensed establishments. This makes it difficult for door security and servers to weed out already intoxicated individuals, who may become intoxicated quickly after only limited on-premise alcohol consumption.

Challenges

- **Negative Perceptions:** Several high-profile crimes involving mob-style beatings and shootings at night have occurred during the late-night hours. Although these incidents were committed by underage individuals on the streets, not by bar patrons nor within establishments, they have generated negative perceptions of Five Points' hospitality businesses.
- **Competition versus Cooperation:** Dining and entertainment businesses operate in a unique economic and political climate. Demand for their products and services (food, beverages, socializing space) are universal, and most people spend a portion of their disposable income in hospitality venues. Nightlife venues, operating in the evening and late-night hours, face competition within the markets they serve, while also depend upon competing businesses to be a draw to the district they operate.

Proposed Action Plan

The objective of this action plan is to increase communication, resource exchange and compliance with safety standards among nightlife venue operators.

1. Create a Nightlife Network with Representatives from the Four Business Districts

Columbia represents a classic model, with four distinct districts catering to diverse markets, and each seeking to evolve to maintain market share. Future development and branding of Columbia as a destination for dining and entertainment will benefit from a nightlife network that encourages balance of business mix, proper regulation and enforcement, and coordination of resources for education and training.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Establish a Columbia Nightlife Network:** Identify one or more nightlife venue operators to represent the business districts which they serve (Five Points, Vista, Main Street, Harbison) to provide leadership in development of improved communication and safety.
- **Improve Peer-to-Peer Communication:** Establish a process for Nightlife Network representatives to communicate efficiently with all business operators, managers or designated representatives about meetings, forums, recommendations on practices or upcoming trainings or forums.
- **Facilitate Resource Exchange with Government and Community Organizations:** Identify one or more Nightlife Network representatives to serve as a resource to the Hospitality Team, residential/neighborhood organizations, and/or college and university task forces.
- **Convene Community Forums:** Convene at least one forum. Schedule periodic (quarterly) forums citywide or district specific for nightlife venue operators. The program agenda can include a presentation by the Hospitality Team to review procedures, compliance criteria for business inspections and complaint resolution.
- **Encourage the University of South Carolina, Benedict College, Allen University, and Columbia College** to increase alcohol education to students and enforcement of underage drinking. Education should particularly address consumption of alcohol at football games and other events, such as "right of passage" events, which can lead to preloading prior to going into the hospitality zones later in the night.

2. Develop a Self-Regulatory Process to Improve Service, Security and Safety

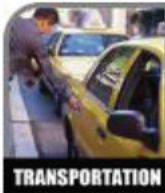
Columbia has worked to create policy and practices to address immediate concerns of a changing economy and market, including the formation of the interagency Hospitality Team to outreach to businesses and improve compliance.

However, government cannot be nor should it be a solution for all risk situations. Businesses working together can implement more peer-to-peer strategies that raise business standards and improve the district image for more collaborative marketing and promotion.

Consolidating and agreeing upon best practices for compliance, maintaining on-going business communication with key government agencies, organizing education and skill training for management and staff, and providing point of sale information to patrons about their responsibilities can combine to establish a more vibrant, dynamic and safe socializing environment.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Convene a "Best Practices" Working Group:** Using the Nightlife Network, and in collaboration with the Hospitality Team and their recommendation on priorities, convene a working group to develop recommendations for voluntary policies, practices and training on service, security and safety.
- **Collect and Analyze Model Guides:** Use existing Best Practices from other cities (New York, Seattle, Boulder, etc.), as well as information from the Hospitality Team, as a template to develop recommendations for the creation of Columbia's Nightlife Network Venue Safety Guide. Incorporate recommendations for patrons and their responsibilities (e.g. providing identification, monitoring personal consumption, protecting personal property, complying with safety guidelines, etc.).
- **Identify Management and Staff Preferred Training Providers:** Identify one or more preferred training providers able to effectively educate and train supervisory, service and security staff on implementation of venue safety policies and practices.
- **Present Venue Safety Guide:** Organize a public event to announce the Columbia Nightlife Network Venue Safety Guide. Incorporate venue safety standards and practices in various media (i.e. on venue websites, through advertisements, signage at venue entrance and other interior locations) and orientation materials for local college students (i.e. incorporate information in online alcohol awareness course for students on responsibility in venues and public space).



Transportation

Planning for a comprehensive network of transportation services such as “safe ride” programs, taxi stands and extended public transportation hours, can help cities ensure safer and more efficient access to and egress from hospitality zones, and reduce impaired driving.

TRANSPORTATION ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Participants reported a prevalent cultural norm that driving personal automobiles is preferred over alternate means of transport. Even if measures were taken to shift this paradigm, supply is insufficient to meet demand for safe rides home. There is opportunity for existing transit providers to partner on filling gaps to provide interconnectivity between the Columbia’s hospitality zones.

Driving Forces for Change

Pedestrian Safety and Opportunities for Traffic Control

- **Poor Street Design for Pedestrians:** Crosswalks can be located far from one another, which sometimes results in pedestrians choosing to cross in undesignated areas. Further, crosswalk timing is not always sufficient for elderly or disabled pedestrians.
- **Pedestrian Safety:** Participants reported a lack of awareness or conscious disavowal of pedestrian rules. Congested pedestrian flow, coupled with the speed and density of car traffic in Five Points, has led to many safety concerns.
- **Preventative Measures:** Although some measures to calm car traffic are under development in the Vista and parts of Five Points, overall speed of traffic is still high given the large presence of pedestrians.
- **Traffic Control:** For college football games, several officers are dedicated to slow car traffic and facilitate pedestrian crossing. There is an opportunity for this method of traffic control to be expanded to major intersections at night.

Parking

- **Supply:** Parking is in short supply in Five Points, ample in the Vista and Harbison, and sufficient on Main Street.
- **Barriers to Increased Use:** Negative perceptions of safety prevail in parking garages and lots due to the presence of homeless, and the potential for assaults and car break-ins. It was also reported that parking lots can be the site for underage drinking and pre-loading.
- **Initiative Underway:** To address these concerns, a police sub-station will be placed into a garage as a pilot initiative.
- **Employee Parking:** Employees usually arrive earlier than patrons, but take prime spots in front of businesses. Although discount parking is available in garages, usage is limited.

Taxi Service

- **Obstacles to Increased Provision of Taxi Service:** Driver safety is a significant concern as of late due to two incidents in which drivers were assaulted and robbed by nightlife passengers. Because taxi drivers are independent contractors, it is not possible for companies to mandate specific times/locations for service.
- **Obstacles to Increased Taxi Ridership:** The barriers cited for increasing ridership among bar patrons include: cost, inconvenience in finding a cab, and lack of availability during peak hours.
- **Queuing Area:** Taxis congregate around the fountain in Five Points, yet this area is not publicized as an official queuing area for taxis. Group participants reported that dim lighting is a barrier to increased use of this location.

Other Transportation Resources and Areas for Improvement

- **Valet Service** is provided to streamline traffic flow, particularly in the Vista. Concern was expressed for liability risk if someone drives under the influence after their car is returned, even if the valet suggests alternate means home.
- **Trolley:** Although trolleys were not widely used when piloted in 1997, the city is considering a plan to resurrect a trolley service to operate on a simplified route system between Main Street, the Vista, Five Points and a few other locations.
- **Carolina Cab:** A partnership between the university and Checker Yellow Cab provides transportation for USC students between Five Points and campus on Thursday-Saturday nights between 10:00pm and 3:00am.

Proposed Action Plan

The objective of this work plan is to create an integrated transportation system that adapts to the changes in district usage from day, evening and late-night usage in Columbia which formalizes a plan of marketable action to promote ways to enhance transportation flow, improve pedestrian traffic and reduce drinking-related crimes.

1. Establish a Late-night Transportation System to Integrate Parking, Valet, Taxi, Trolley and Shuttle

It is important to establish a coordinated, seamless transportation system. An obstacle that stands in the way of this goal is to streamline current forms of ridership in conjunction with implementing new possible modes of transport. Among the most promising and innovative strategies discussed at the Transportation Roundtable is a system to merge public and private services into a mobility management system.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Create an expanded partnership:** Organize a working group of representatives from parking, valet, taxi, public transit and business district associations to lead the initiative.
- **Design an Integrated Transportation System:** Identify one or more parking lots or garages to participate in the program incorporating a valet parking service, a circulator transportation vehicle (taxi, shuttle, trolley or PediCab) to key hospitality zones.
- **Designate Circulator Stop Location:** Identify the safest and most accessible locations for circulator vehicles to drop-off and pick-up passengers and identify with signage and communication options (phone, email, text).
- **“Park and Play” Campaign:** Design promotional strategy for raising public awareness of the Park and Play (or similar theme) system including benefits, efficiency, and peace of mind.
- **Valet Training:** Develop and implement intervention techniques regarding intoxicated individuals and additional security protocol measures that can be taken to reduce liability risk for businesses and parking facility ownership.
- **Facilitate teamwork between local police and valet members:** Training officers to provide immediate officer response upon reports of intoxicated driving.
- **Generate a Self-sufficient Funding Mechanism:** Develop a public/private partnership arrangement with business and individuals to provide value incentive for the customer parking and utilization of provided transportation as well as to providers in the chain of service.

2. Develop a Synergistic Approach to Late-night Taxi Service

One challenge in addressing the diminished supply of taxi service at peak times to hospitality zones in the area during peak times is a lack of drivers willing to work in nighttime districts. Due to fear for their safety, many drivers refuse to service after-dark localities, particularly around business closing hours. Recent changes in taxis regulations, programs to train taxi drivers and other procedures are initial steps to improve safety for drivers.

For the customers, impatience waiting for the arrival of cabs, expensive fair or a general lack of awareness of where to find a cab all can serve to deter patrons from utilizing taxis as a regular transportation alternative. The objective of this action plan would be to enhance access and opportunity for both patrons and drivers.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Create Efficient Taxi Stands:** Identify ideal, centralized well light locations for taxi stands at the Five Points and Vista locations. Consider approaching the owners of major retailers with large parking lots in the event that no street-side locations adequately serve as a taxi stand. Also consider assigning on street parking spaces or unused transit stops as a taxi stand during late-night hours.
- **Trained Expeditors:** Establish a process for providing an expediter at designated taxi stands during peak hours to manage lines, provide security, screen people for driver safety (*see Brisbane case study*). Staffing can be provided by a collaborative of nightlife venues either on a rotating basis or by hiring an individual paid monthly. Locating near a police deployment area could provide enhanced safety and traffic control.
- **Signage:** Create signage indicating the direction of taxi stands and inform venue staff to direct patrons to these locations.
- **Media Campaign:** Launch a media campaign to educate patrons, where the overall mission is to shift public awareness surrounding the benefits of cab use so that taxi service is promoted as a viable option for evening and late-night transportation.



Quality of Life

Mixed-use development places residents and commercial businesses in close proximity, often resulting in conflicts about noise, trash, vandalism, fights and public urination. Coordinated approaches to set community standards and hold patrons accountable for behavior can prevent or address impacts to residents and visitors.

QUALITY OF LIFE ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Columbia has a foundation of residents and visitors who consider the city a special place to live, work and play due to the rich cultural history and variety of social opportunities. There is opportunity for improving the mix of uses for both residential and commercial interests to flourish, to alleviate impacts generated by patrons of social amenities, and improve existing infrastructure

Driving Forces for Change

Contributors to the Composition of the Community

- **Residential Housing:** Historic suburban neighborhoods surround the Five Points area, while housing units in the Vista and along Main Street are relatively new. Development is particularly underway along Main Street in proximity to amenities such as the Mast General Store, which serves as an anchor for new residential units. The growth in residents downtown may spur increased retail and hospitality development.
- **Student Population:** The University of South Carolina (USC) enrolls approximately 27,500 students. Many other colleges and universities (e.g. Allen University, Benedict College, Columbia College) also contribute to the student population. USC students tend to have classes scheduled for Tuesdays and Thursdays, so Thursday-Saturday are active for nightlife.
- **Clean and Safe Ambassadors:** The presence of clean and safe ambassadors on Main Street was cited as contributing to a positive atmosphere downtown.
- **Mix of Uses:** Participants suggested that there is an opportunity for an ideal business/residential mix to be achieved via appropriate business recruitment on Main Street. There is interest in communicating input on types of businesses to recruit, as well as incentives to property owners and developers to prefer a mix of business options. Applying lessons learned from Five Points and the Vista may help prevent potential challenges in public safety and quality of life.

Current Modes of Communication and Opportunities for Improvement

- **Communication & Education:** There is an opportunity to increase communication and cross-education between various entities – (1) between new businesses and regulatory/enforcement departments to better understand rules; (2) between businesses and residents to communicate community standards; and (3) between business districts to share strategies. There is already an initiative underway to connect business district managers in open communication.
- **Responsiveness to Community Concerns:** In several cases, businesses and/or property owners were praised for responsiveness and cooperation when residents requested they reduce sound levels and address litter issues.

Current Challenges & Areas for Improvement

- **Quality of Life Concerns:** Among the quality of life concerns cited as most impactful on residents and businesses are: noise, trash, litter (e.g. cigarette butt litter), underage drinking, fights, public intoxication, assaults, car-break-ins, vandalism, vomit, and public urination. Some residents volunteer their own trash receptacles in Five Points to reduce litter.
- **Public Facilities:** In general, public facilities are scarce to nonexistent in hospitality zones, particularly after bar closing time.
- **Homelessness:** There is a large homeless population in Columbia, who are provided ample access to dining facilities, yet limited access to bathroom facilities. The high incidence of public urination and defecation impacts the quality of life of residents and businesses, in addition to reports of aggressive demeanor.
- **Sound Impacts:** Noise complaints originate from various sources – music within venues, traffic, patrons continuing conversations while walking through neighborhoods to return to cars, etc. Businesses are required to turn off music outside at 10:00pm, but there is limited awareness of this rule.
- **Smoking Ban:** Despite the pro-health intentions of the smoking ban, this initiative has generated impacts on residents' quality of life. Smokers now crowd the sidewalk areas, inhibiting pedestrian flow, cigarette butt litter has increased, and smoke emanates to residents' homes via open windows. Limited to no cigarette butt and ash receptacles are available.
- **Pedestrian Accommodations:** The narrow width or altogether lack of paved sidewalks was cited as a cause for concern in accommodating safe pedestrian travel. Insufficient time for pedestrian crossing when buttons are pushed, difficulty in finding the push-buttons, or large distances between crosswalk areas were considered detrimental to visitors and residents, particularly if disabled. There is a prevalent perception that the city is not pedestrian-friendly.

Proposed Action Plan

The objective of this work plan is to raise standards for behavior, cleanliness and walkability to enhance the visitor and resident experience in Columbia.

1. Survey and Document Challenges to Quality of Life

Visual cues such as the presence of litter on the street, poor lighting, and narrow or unpaved sidewalks can make a poor first impression on visitors to Columbia and negatively impact the quality of life of residents. Identification and removal of these cues will contribute to a perception of order and maintenance in Columbia that will also enhance the pedestrian experience.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Conduct an inventory of barriers to a positive experience for pedestrians.** Factors to review include the following:
 - Lighting, especially at transportation hubs (like taxi stands and bus stops), in parking structures and in alleys.
 - Sidewalk width – which should be sufficient for crowds during peak hours – and availability.
 - Crosswalk timing, location and density.
 - Public facility availability.
 - Trash receptacle availability.
 - Locate the most dangerous areas for pedestrians and assess the pedestrian experience in those areas. Identify the causes of increased danger.
- **Determine Principal Sources of Sound Impacts:** Poll residents living in proximity to Columbia's active hospitality zones to determine the principal sources of sound impacts, which in turn, will help identify the most appropriate steps to take. For example, if noise is primarily generated from patrons walking through neighborhoods, then increased business regulation will not be an effective approach to mitigate this impact.
- **Identify “Champions”:** Determine which organizations and departments should be responsible for collecting data and implementing necessary changes.
- **Establish Communication Forums:** The entity that collects and disseminates information relating to quality of life challenges can also facilitate regular forums of communication among stakeholders for group problem-solving. Convene one forum within six months.

2. Initiate a “First Impressions” Responsibility Campaign

Organizations and city departments can influence social behavior in hospitality zones through coordinated campaigns that promote new norms relating to public behavior, pedestrian crossings, litter prevention and compliance with safety policies. Campaigns that address these issues have already been piloted in various cities in North America, which can serve as a model for Columbia.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Establish Peer-to-Peer Business Mentoring:** Businesses can hold each other accountable through self-regulation. Identify best practices and commend model businesses for their commitment to safety.
- **Launch a Student Responsibility Campaign:** Convene a forum on university campuses to communicate community standards for behavior and university policies for when students are caught engaging in unruly behavior or underage drinking off-campus. Models include Edmonton, Alberta's “Turn it Down” and “Be a Lover, not a Fighter” campaigns.
- **Research Pedestrian Safety Campaigns:** Contact the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) for messaging campaigns such as “share the road” standards to promote roadway awareness. Install signage and launch awareness campaigns.
- **Contact Keep America Beautiful to Improve Cigarette Litter Prevention:** Connect with the national organization, Keep America Beautiful, for strategies to enhance the local program operating in Columbia, which is not considered effective in cigarette litter prevention.



Sidewalk

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.

SIDEWALK ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Current nighttime activity on streets and sidewalks has far exceeded the capacity of Columbia's historic infrastructure. Delineation of permissible sidewalk activities is unclear due to the simultaneous presence of business patrons smoking/drinking in front of businesses, patrons waiting in line, passersby, and loiterers on narrow sidewalks. The resulting unruly atmosphere presents a challenge for public safety officials, for whom the rules and regulations, as well as delineation of sidewalk activity, are unclear.

Driving Forces for Change

Encroachment on Public Space and District Impacts

- **Smoking Ban:** In an attempt to adapt to market preferences for drinking while smoking, businesses allow patrons to take their drinks outside to the sidewalk in front of their business premises. Although well-intentioned, the smoking ban initiative has led to unintentional consequences and exacerbated outdoor crowd management challenges.
- **Sidewalk Encroachment:** Rules are unclear for permissible activities within encroachment areas by business operators and public safety officers. Permits are required for businesses to utilize the encroachment area in front of their premises, but there is limited enforcement to confirm permits are valid or to ensure renewal procedures are followed.
- **ADA Requirements:** Concerns were expressed in complying with ADA requirements if stanchions are used on already narrow sidewalks to mark the boundaries of encroachment areas. A requirement of a five-foot clearance of sidewalks may result in revocation of existing encroachment permits.
- **Pedestrian Flow:** The distinction is blurry between patrons with open containers using businesses' designated smoking areas, patrons in line, and passersby attempting to access other businesses due to limited sidewalk width.
- **Loitering:** The outdoor street-scene in Five Points has attracted loiterers in the district comprised of underage youth who cannot legally enter licensed establishments and individuals of legal age who choose not to enter businesses. Concern was expressed that some may be waiting for an opportunity to prey on impaired patrons.

Barriers to Walkability

- **Sidewalk width and placement of sidewalk obstacles** was reported to be poorly planned and executed. Items like trash cans, newspaper racks, mailboxes, street signage/poles, low hanging tree branches, and sidewalk café tables may contribute to vitality, but they also serve as an extra obstacle for pedestrians to avoid.
- **Dim lighting** was identified as a potential safety hazard for pedestrians on Main Street and the streets that connect Five Points businesses to parking lots and residential neighborhoods.
- **Wayfinding signage** can be improved for both pedestrians and cars to help orient visitors to the locations of various amenities and social options in the districts.

Current Issues

- **Aggressive Panhandling:** It was reported that aggressive panhandlers tend to congregate on Main Street and in the Five Points neighborhood, particularly during the day.
- **Food Trucks:** A burgeoning trend in Columbia, food trucks are cropping up throughout the city. Some brick and mortar businesses (e.g. Insomnia Cookies) originated as a food truck, reflecting the entrepreneurial drive of small business owners. However, food trucks are often perceived as unfair competition with existing brick and mortars. A new ordinance is being drafted to address health and sanitation standards, as well as to ensure compliance with fire safety.
- **Public Demonstrations:** Dining and entertainment districts in Columbia, particularly Five Points, have become a hotspot for public demonstrations and political protests. An informal notification process exists; parade permits are rarely used. Ad hoc groups are not aware of the permitting requirements as to public demonstrations and political protests, particularly in hospitality zones.

Proposed Action Plan

The objective of this action plan is to determine appropriate uses and regulations for public space to create safe and vibrant Sidewalks.

1. Inventory and Define Appropriate Areas for Temporary and Permanent Public Space Uses

As Columbia evolved with greater concentration of mixed use areas (i.e. combined residential, commercial, entertainment), the infrastructure available to accommodate increased pedestrian traffic, such as sidewalk width, lighting, pedestrian crosswalks and space for crowds, did not keep pace.

Further, the recent smoking ban led to rapid demand for encroachment permits to accommodate business patrons in outdoor spaces who were accustomed to drinking while smoking. However, the clustering of businesses and now outdoor patrons in areas such as Five Points, has created an unmanageable environment for monitoring and enforcement. As other areas of the city develop with more dining and entertainment venues, a more clearly defined strategy and policy will be required.

Conducting an inventory of current and emerging hospitality zones, documenting areas where public space use would be appropriate, as well as where such use would conflict with limitations of historic infrastructure, is critical for safe and vibrant multi use-sidewalks.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Inventory Current Public Space Use:** Inventory all current uses of public space/encroachment areas to identify what challenges exist in those areas, what improvements could be made, or if permits might require revocation.
- **Require training for public safety officers** working in Columbia's nightlife districts on laws pertaining to encroachment and open containers.

2. Update Policy on Encroachment with Standards for Delineating Uses for Monitoring

A lack of clarity was expressed by participants on the rules and regulations for encroachment areas in the public realm. This action step will develop and/or refine the system of managing permit applications, renewals and revocations for public space uses. New components may include the following.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Set hours** of use in appropriate locations.
- **Mark the boundaries** of designated encroachment areas per business with permanent barriers, removable stanchions, paint or other means so they are easily visible to business operators and public safety officers. Require business operators post their encroachment permits on the window so public safety officers can easily view their validity or if they have expired.
- **Establish an annual encroachment permit renewal process** that involves a review of complaints directed at businesses with encroachment areas. Start issuing encroachment permits administratively (the current process requires city council approval).

3. Organize Accessible Information on Rights, Roles and Responsibilities for Public Space Uses

The blurred line between customers with open containers in designated smoking areas, passersby, and loiterers make it difficult for enforcement officers to determine whether businesses are following the rules or not. This contributes to a public safety concern and has resulted in an unruly street-scene atmosphere.

A variety of stakeholders ranging from business owners to public safety officers expressed confusion over their role in implementing or enforcing the rules and regulations for public space uses. Each can play a critical part in alleviating crowd management issues once their role and responsibility is clarified.

Action Plan Milestones

- **Convene a Communication Forum:** Review the regulations currently in place for public space, and what needs improvement to further enhance public safety. Determine how public safety officers and business operators can best work together in maintaining safe pedestrian passage in public spaces. (*see Venue Safety Roundtable recommendations*)
- **Prepare a Public Space Use Guide:** Develop a practical guide or handbook (print or online) for applicants of encroachment areas. (*see Venue Safety Roundtable recommendations*)
- **Define the Role of Public Safety:** Improve the role of public safety officers in facilitating pedestrian flow and crowd management in dispersing areas with higher levels of pedestrian congestion by providing training and clearly defined roles and responsibility.
- **Define the Role of Business Operators:** Establish a standard for defining business operators' responsibility to correctly utilize public space uses, obtain needed permits and monitor their encroachment areas.
- **Develop "People" Flood Plan:** Similar to plans in place for traffic management, street closure, parking restrictions and other preparation in advance of weather conditions resulting in floods, establish a procedure for events that may result in a "people flood" overtaking districts or areas of a district (e.g. major sport victories, annual holiday events, etc.).



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.

ENTERTAINMENT ROUNDTABLE SUMMARY

Introduction

Named "famously hot", the city of Columbia offers a variety of entertainment options in multiple districts. There is an opportunity to attract and promote high quality, diverse experiences in a more coordinated manner to overcome perception barriers.

Driving Forces for Change

Overview of Columbia's Social Offerings and Opportunities as a Destination

- **Hospitality Zones:** Dining, retail and entertainment opportunities are concentrated in four primary locations: Main Street (an emerging district just starting to develop retail, residential and dining), The Vista (a developing district with dining, entertainment and retail), Harbison (a developed district with primarily chain dining and retail), and Five Points (a mature district, at the tipping point of oversaturation in entertainment options). It was reported that young adults who previously patronized Five Points are starting to transfer to the Vista, which may soon see an uptick in activity.
- **Social Options** exist for a variety of price points and for different demographic groups, in particular young adults. More options are desired that provide social experiences for under 21-year olds, adults 25+ and families. There is an opportunity for greater connectivity between pockets of activity in different districts, as well as connecting culinary students at USC with local restaurants to encourage culinary diversity.
- **Events:** Columbia offers a multitude of diverse events and festivals that appeal to families and diverse demographics. Due to the lack in coordination, there is sometimes an overlap between events occurring in different districts simultaneously, which drains potential patronage at both events as well as public safety resources.
- **Tourism:** The city of Columbia is recognized as a major tourist and conventions destination; entertainment venues are responsible in part for attracting these markets.
- **Legacy of Live Music:** Columbia used to be known for its live music scene. Live music is still featured in various venues and festivals, but not to the same degree as in the past.
- **Hospitality Tax ("The H-Tax"):** A 2% tax is collected from customers who eat prepared meals or drink beverages (non-alcoholic and alcoholic) inside the city limits. City officials collect the taxes as a way of generating money to attract tourists to Columbia, awarding some of it to organizations, particularly to the benefit of the Vista and Five Points neighborhoods.

Current Challenges and Areas for Improvement

- **Limited Awareness:** Participants noted limited awareness of the various options for dining, art, entertainment and socializing in Columbia. There is also a prevailing perception that Columbia doesn't attract large, national acts, when in fact social magnets such as the Colonial Life Arena, the coliseum, the Koger Center and many independent venues do fill this niche.
- **Marketing:** Several marketing sources exist to promote venues and upcoming events in Columbia, yet they are not coordinated or centralized. The currently disbanded Action Columbia Committee had served as a central coordinating body for events in the past.
- **Perception Barriers:** Negative perceptions about Columbia were cited as barriers for increased patronage at entertainment venues, including concerns about public safety, limited parking, distance from the suburbs to activity hubs, and the quality of performance acts.

Proposed Action Plan

The overall objective of this work plan is to revitalize Columbia as a premiere destination for music, dining, entertainment, and events.

1. Create a “Sports and Entertainment Council” as a Central Clearinghouse and Advocate

Columbia is emerging as a hotspot for social and cultural programming in the form of events, dining venues and entertainment. Yet many of these opportunities are not coordinated among the four main hospitality zones. The resulting overlap in dates and themes, for events in particular, represents a loss of potential patronage and revenue. Central leadership to coordinate entertainment and events can help facilitate mutual benefit for each hospitality zone. The overall goal is for this entity to develop/retain talent, coordinate entertainment offerings and publicize options available.

- **Determine Appropriate Structure:** Determine whether this organization should function at the city level or be incorporated into another group. Evaluate lessons learned from the Action Columbia Committee.
- **Identify Funding Sources:** Propose that some of the revenue generated from the Hospitality-Tax initiative fund this coordinated body in full or partially. The Economic Development Department is another potential funding source.
- **Advocacy:** Whether for sports teams, music venues, policy to facilitate events, this could be a central clearinghouse for review of proposals or recommendations for improvements.

2. Conduct an Economic Impact Assessment of Columbia’s Dining, Entertainment and Events

The cultural and economic value of Columbia's dining, entertainment and events is not widely known among city departments or the general public. An economic impact assessment can help establish Columbia's nightlife and sociability as a critical economic engine that drives tourism, conventions and revenue for the city. An inventory of current entertainment offerings can serve as a resource to promote Columbia as a destination. Meanwhile, the economic figures generated by the assessment will be a significant tool in advocating for the value of nightlife and social options.

- **Document Occupancy and Economic Impact:** Collect information on # seats (occupancy of entertainment venues), the # venues with live entertainment, # employees, how many nights per week live music is offered, attendance records, influence of entertainment on tourism, total tax revenue generated from nightlife venues, how much businesses is done after 8:00pm, etc.
- **Collect and Analyze Model Guides:** Lessons learned can be drawn from various existing models of other economic impact studies of music, nightlife and entertainment from cities such as New York, Nashville, Seattle, Austin, and Chicago.
- **Outreach to Local Universities:** A team of graduate students attending one of the several colleges and universities in Columbia could be assigned to conduct this project.

3. Centralize Information about Columbia’s Dining, Entertainment and Events to Improve Marketing

Columbia offers a variety of events and opportunities for dining and entertainment, yet there is limited awareness of these opportunities. Several marketing sources provide information about various aspects of Columbia, yet no central access point exists. Centralizing information about social options available can help promote Columbia more effectively.

- **Document Current Sources of Information:** Pooling together all the disparate sources of information is the first step. Among the resources identified include:
 - *Free Times* – online and published versions
 - The Convention and Visitors Bureau website has business listings and upcoming events, but it was reportedly difficult to browse without an organization system.
 - *The State* newspaper
 - *The Free State* publication
 - Various other online calendars.
 - Colonial Life Arena staff has marketing sources that could serve as a resource.
- **Identify Central Location for Marketing Information:** Determine what the best location is to collect the various marketing information online and in print form (perhaps via the Sports and Entertainment Council).
- **Design or upgrade a search system** that is easy to browse by categories for social experiences.
- **Publicize this location.**