

Current:

Bars in Gainesville are located citywide but are congregated most densely in two (2) hospitality / entertainment districts in the Downtown and College Park (Midtown) area. Other municipalities and regions internationally have many ways to deal with closing times at bars and this is currently a very highly debated topic. The concept of “soft,” “staggered,” and “hard” closing times does have public safety impacts. “Soft Closings” is a mechanism that allows bars to stop serving alcohol at a certain time but remain open for a short time afterward. Staggered closings are a related concept that allows bars to serve alcohol and close at various times.

Public Safety Considerations:

While this report does not take an agency position on extended bar closing times, the impact of any changes would involve the following considerations:

- Patrol personnel shifts currently overlap between busy night time hours of 10:00 p.m. – 3:00a.m.
 - Staffing is maximized for current bar closing times. Extended hours may involve fiscal and/or overtime impacts.
- Downtown Unit personnel work 12 hour shifts. Shift personnel work 10 hour shifts.
- Noise – Extended hours may mean extended noise.
- Intoxication levels – Research is mixed. Persons may be leaving bars more intoxicated if bar hours are extended since drinking occurs right up until the last minute alcohol can be served.
- Transportation alternatives – Later Gator run times and taxi service impacts.
- Staggered closings – System devised for bars must be created if used.
- Locations – If bar closing times were enacted, City Legal will need to be consulted to determine if this must be citywide.

Legal Considerations:

Can the City enact soft closings? Florida Statutes provide that bars must close when they stop selling alcohol unless the local government says otherwise. So City ordinance may have to add language that they can remain open past the alcohol selling time and state what time that is. If enacted, ordinances could be sunsetted to allow for mandatory review.

Research / Sources:

Last year, Gainesville Police posted questions in two (2) online forums representing the Town Gown Association and the Responsible Hospitality Institute / Sociable City Network related to bar closings. Not much information was received though additional research options were provided.

Other resources reviewed include:

Assaults In and Around Bars. 2nd Edition. Problem guide. Center for problem oriented policing guide. 2006.

“Do relaxed trading hours for bars and clubs mean more relaxed drinking? A review of international research on the impacts of changes to permitted hours of drinking.” Crime Prevention and Community Safety Journal. 2009. Studied drinking in the UK and Australia.

Downtown San Jose Hospitality & Nightlife Alliance: Downtown historic district. Pilot closing program. Several documents. 2007.

“Inviting, Safe, and Cohesive: A proposal for the Management of the South Side Using Responsible Hospitality Practices.” Prepared for Councilman Bruce Kraus, Pittsburgh City Council. August, 2009. Research report.

Planning, Managing, and Policing Hospitality Zones: A Practical Guide. Responsible Hospitality Institute, 2006.

Public Order and Drinking Environments. International Center for Alcohol Studies. www.icap.org

A GPD volunteer is currently tasked with calling other municipalities and a written report will be provided at a later time compiling bar closing practices in other areas.