Comprehensive Safety Proposal

Background

Significant safety issues have plagued LoDo for many years. The crux of the problem is that: 1) Bar patrons flood the streets between 1:30 a.m. and 2:00 a.m; 2) mobile food options keep many people in the area, and 3) Poor taxi / transportation options slow people's ability to leave the area quickly. This comprehensive proposal is one attempt to address these issues. More importantly, it should be seen as a vehicle to foster discussion about the problems and to solicit other potential solutions. As such, the iterative process and outcomes / solutions are of great importance, not this specific proposal.

This comprehensive proposal is a package of three components, addressing each of the contributing problems: 1) An amended cabaret component to address the closure crowding issue; 2) The LoDo-related portion of a City-wide mobile food proposal; and 3) A taxi / transportation-related component. Each may be accomplished independently at different times, and additional sub-proposals may surface during a vetting process.

These issues have been discussed for months and years among a number of City agencies and departments, as have many solutions, including these specific ones. Each one, however, has not been vetted by all germane internal stakeholders, and they have not been vetted as a package.

I - Amended Cabaret

The Issue

Under the Colorado Liquor Code, on-premises consumption liquor licensees cannot sell or serve alcohol, and their patrons may not consume alcohol, after 2:00 a.m. This law applies to all bars and restaurants in Colorado. The City's cabaret licenses, governing music, dancing, etc, are directly tethered to the liquor licenses, and therefore, music and dancing must cease at 2:00a.m. As a result, bars and restaurants – especially in downtown Denver on weekend nights – close at 2:00 a.m. forcing thousands of patrons onto the streets. This leads to instantly dense crowding of intoxicated people, setting the stage for serious fights, altercations and congestion. This proposal would stretch patrons' exits over a longer period of time, reducing the surge effect, provide inside food options and allow a little extra time to sober-up.

The Proposal

1 – Extended Music and Dancing

Amend the Cabaret Ordinance to allow music, dancing, entertainment, etc, until 3:00 a.m. Liquor sales and service still must stop at 2:00 a.m. under state law.

2 - Amend the Cabaret Ordinance to allow no new customers to enter cabaret licensed establishments after 1:00 a.m.

3 - Amend the Cabaret Ordinance to allow no outdoor speaker use after 1:00 a.m.

II – Mobile Food

The Issue
Food trucks, food peddlers, hot dog stands, etc, keeps drunk bar patrons congested in one area upon leaving the bars, increasing the possibility of violence and hampering emergency personnel from accessing the area.

The Proposal
1 – Enforce the post-midnight ban on food vendors.

2 - Extend prohibition to include all non-bricks-&-mortar food sales.

3 - Expand the Food Truck ban from the current Downtown Business District to also include LoDo.

III – Transportation / Taxi Stands

The Issue
The surge crowding has a snowball effect on transportation options. The crowds make it difficult for taxis to access the areas, and the Police will often close a street for safety reasons, but without regularity. Then many taxis find it is not worth the hassle to try to pick up fares; then patrons have their transportation options reduced.

The Proposal
Create regular taxi / transportation stands through either or both of the following extremes:

1 – Pop-Up Taxi Stands. The Denver Taxi and Limo Council has been working for months, and have made significant progress on, the idea of temporary taxi stands in LoDo Friday and Saturday nights. The taxi companies have made great strides on issues such as staffing and cost sharing. This process has been led by Tina Scardina of Public Works' Right-of-way Enforcement, and is at the end stages.

2 – Mega-Transportation Stands. The idea is that DPD and Public Works would schedule two consistent street closures, and turn them into giant transportation stands. For example, the City could close the 1400 block of Market and the 1700 block of Wynkoop every Friday and Saturday night, April through October from 8PM until 3AM. Taxis would use the right side of the streets and pedal cabs and golf carts would use the left sides. They would operate much like the arrival / pick-up lane at DIA. With promotion and consistency, patrons throughout LoDo would know they always have an egress transportation option within a few blocks.