



**INSPIRED LEADERS
SHAPING CITIES**

Nighttime Economy

A 2018 TOP ISSUES COUNCIL EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After decades of decline and flight from center city districts and neighborhoods in North America, many of these cities' central cores are enjoying a modern-day renaissance. Throughout this transition, placemaking management organizations have employed a variety of strategies to attract investment and increase opportunities for the surrounding community. In recent years, organizations have come to understand the importance of a healthy nighttime economy in continuing to draw investment and increase consumer confidence in the area as a viable place to live, work, and play. However, whereas in a district's early, emerging days, a healthy nighttime economy may have constituted a couple of new restaurant and bar options, if a district wants to continue to grow and evolve, planning efforts that support the organic growth of a variety of nighttime entertainment and employment options—including retail, cultural, entertainment, convention, dining, late-night and outdoor public gathering place options—are vital.

Place management organizations need to think of an area's nighttime economy as an overall ecosystem made up of several factors that support it. To help communities build and support a strong nighttime economy, the contributors to this report offer a variety of strategies and best practices utilized by not only their home-based downtowns and districts, but communities across North America that have had success in various stages of nighttime economy development. Downtowns are revitalized at different paces, but generally fit within one of three stages of development: established, growing, or emerging. Numerous factors, such as average growth in downtown employment, density, population growth, live-work quotients, job density, and assessed value, play a role in determining the stage of a downtown and can be studied to help better understand overall trends. It is important to note that downtown geography and demographics served as the sole basis for the development stages and that a sample this small requires any generalizations to be made conservatively.

The table below defines the three stages of development of nighttime economies, based on research completed for IDA's *Value of U.S. Downtowns and Center Cities Study*.

DEFINING FEATURES OF NIGHTTIME ECONOMIES

Established

The downtown has a diverse range of 18-hour activities including bars/restaurants, theaters, plays, concert halls, clubs, etc.

Growing

Nighttime amenities, transit, and partnerships are expanding and well on their way to filling in the existing gaps.

Emerging

The need for a more robust, diverse nighttime economy is apparent.

Cities are now working to provide a variety of options for a wide range of users over the span of an 18-hour day. Areas with strong nighttime economies are able to make a seamless transition from the office/work day uses into the nighttime options for area users. An integrated network of amenities and transit systems keeps people within the center city and encourages visitors to linger in well-planned and connected hospitality zones. Within these ecosystems, entertainment venues and places to congregate are recognized as the most important components that connect people to their community.

A healthy nighttime economy encourages visitors to spend money downtown without fear of being a victim of crime, provides social outlets and gathering places for area youth, reduces the burden on local law enforcement, and is seen as a community benefit even by those who only occasionally partake in nightlife. Thus, it is important that healthy nighttime economies “ . . . appeal to a wide range of age and social groups, ensuring provision is made where appropriate for a range of leisure, cultural and tourism activities, such as cinema, theaters, restaurants, public houses, bars, nightclubs and cafes.”

This report examines how nighttime economies experiencing different stages of development intersect on four main topics: nighttime infrastructure, social safety/community safety, activation and engagement, and quality of life issues.

Infrastructure: A Solid Foundation for the Nighttime Economy

This section offers a checklist and guide on the topic of infrastructure for those with an emerging nighttime economy. The associated case study looks at the 16th Street Mall in downtown Denver, CO, and recent public image issues stakeholders have been addressing for the over-35-year-old destination that is Colorado’s most-visited tourist attraction. The checklist enumerates the various items that make a place feel welcoming and safe. The section looks at how a place management organization can take its district from being an eclectic place with occasional events that promote a burgeoning scene, and transform it into a true economic driver with well-planned connections that encourage visitors to linger throughout the night as they visit a variety of entertainment options.

Identifying and Mitigating Social and Community Safety Threats

Downtowns are heavily impacted by social issues, many of which are exacerbated in the nighttime. This section shares best practices and insight into how clean and safe teams, environmental design, and new forms of outreach can help to improve outcomes for all downtown users and to ensure the continued success of your nighttime economy.

Activating and Engaging the Nighttime Economy

Activation with the local community is the way in which an emerging downtown begins to identify its gaps and starts to fill them with temporary and thematic programming. This section offers creative and homegrown strategies for activating and engaging a downtown nighttime economy, along with suggestions for how to move forward together with stakeholders through this critical process of catalyzing a downtown’s nightlife.

A Tale of Two Nightlives: Assessing Quality of Life Building Blocks

This section dissects two downtowns on several dimensions that help build up the nightlife economy profile of an area. It provides a guide for you to compare and contrast your own downtown with downtown Santa Ana in California and Delray Beach in Florida.

Recognizing a healthy nighttime economy as its own unique ecosystem means that place management organizations must understand its ebbs and flows and develop programs today that can adapt to constant changes and future challenges. Each of the stages of development identified in this report must not only be planned early on, but they must also be constantly reviewed and renewed in order to achieve the goal of a successful, well-rounded, 18-hour, economically vibrant destination. The intent of this report is not to provide a single-use checklist, but rather to be a guide that place management organizations can regularly reference as they face and address challenges related to supporting a nighttime economy.