



Public Safety Strategies Summer 2021

DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS COMMISSION

DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGIES

AUGUST 2021

BACKGROUND

The COVID disruption created a vacuum in Downtown, replacing normal nighttime vibrancy and activation with empty streets and venues. Since restrictions have been relaxed, and with the recent change to a more “open” status, Downtown Memphis has experienced a noticeable increase in the number of reported Public Safety concerns. This post-COVID scenario is not something wholly unique to our Downtown area; these observations and heightened concerns are, in fact, aligned with those of nearly every other Downtown area across the globe. The vacuum created by COVID has been filled with behaviors and practices that simply are not accepted as sustainable as we return to our next normal. And so, to thoroughly address these concerns, **Downtown Memphis Commission (DMC)** hosted a series of six (6) focus group conversations with Downtown partners and stakeholders, briefly detailed below:

FOCUS GROUP	MEETING DATE + TIME
Tourism	Tuesday, June 8 – 11:00 am
Restaurants	Tuesday, June 8 – 3:00 pm
Beale Street	Wednesday, June 9 – 10:00 am
Government + ‘Catch All’	Thursday, June 10 – 9:00 am
Large Employers	Thursday, June 10 – 10:00 am
Residential	Thursday, June 10 – 2:00 pm

(See **Attachment A** for full invite + attendee lists)

FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS RESULTS

All of the hour-long focus group meeting conversations were robust, engaging, sometimes heated, and in every instance informative. Each group was posed with the same baseline questions:

1. What are the most critical or pressing challenges relative to safety downtown?
2. What are potential solutions?
3. What are the actions needed towards reaching those solutions?
4. Who are the owners or implementers of those actions?

The challenges noted were plentiful and included loud music being played by horse carriage operators, lack of security or monitoring at parking garages/lots, drag racing and reckless driving, traffic and cruising, and much more. The list of solutions leaned heavily on increasing security and police presence but also yielded some non-police or law enforcement suggestions, including digital traffic signs, increased lighting, bringing back Beale Street Bucks, youth outreach efforts, a marketing campaign to reshape the Downtown Memphis brand, etc.

The following grid gives both a summary and snapshot of how the challenges tallied as priorities:

DOWNTOWN MEMPHIS COMMISSION SAFETY RESEARCH FOCUS GROUPS TALLY							
CHALLENGE/STAKEHOLDER GROUP	TOUR	FOOD	BEALE	GOV	WORK	LIVE	TALLY
Carriages	x		x			x	3
Coordinated Stakeholder Strategy					x		1
Foot Traffic				x			1
Gunfire	x		x				2
July 1 - Gun Carry Issue	x						1
No-chase Policy (Police)				x			1
Noise	x				x	x	3
Overcrowding			x				1
Panhandling					x		1
Parking Lots/Garages (Security)	x		x	x			3
Perception/Media/Social Media			x		x		2
Police Presence/Staffing		x		x			2
Scooters	x			x			2
Speeding Cars/Reckless Driving/Tailgating	x	x	x	x		x	5
Theft (Carjacking, Tires, Etc.)	x				x	x	3
Traffic	x			x			2
Youth Loitering		x	x	x			3

Tally + Consolidation of Top Priorities (random order):

- Carriages
- Parking Lots + Garages (Security)
- Scooters
- Speeding Cars + Reckless Driving + Traffic
- Youth
- Special Priority: Beale Street

(See **Attachment A** for details + results of Focus Group Meetings)

Mining the results from the focus group meetings, we were able to compile a list of recommendations that inform the actionable strategies below and make up this **Downtown Public Safety Strategies** document.

DOWNTOWN PUBLIC SAFETY STRATEGIES

RECOMMENDATION - CARRIAGES/PEDAL PUBS

Problem Description: In their current operating models, horse-driven carriages and pedal pubs pose noise and nuisance problems, specific to that business. As a marketing tactic to draw greater patronage, operators often blast loud music, which is used to bolster bigger entertainment value for occupant riders and draw crowds of prospective riders. Whether moving or standing still, the loud music creates a party-like atmosphere which often becomes problematic in a Downtown setting.

Recommended Strategies: DMC has already started vetting several solutions for the problem, with the following being top priority:

- Regular or recurring convenings of all operators to discuss topline issues for the sector
- The issuance of citations for noise ordinance violations
- Removal of visible AV equipment

- Establishing an acceptable decibel level for volume based on Downtown location
- Creation of placard stating volume and non-smoking requirements for carriage passengers

Action 1: Host quarterly convening or meetings for FY22 (September, December, March, June).

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: August 2021

Action 2: Revisit noise citation policy and create a map of acceptable decibel levels by zones

Owner: DMC and City of Memphis

Due Date/Timeline: September 2021

Action 3: Provide operators with approved signage noting rules and regulations for passengers

Owner: DMC and City of Memphis

Due Date/Timeline: August 2021

RECOMMENDATION - PARKING LOTS + GARAGES (SECURITY)

Problem Description: A primary issue in many downtown parking lots and garages not run by DMC is the lack of security. Problems stemming from this issue include people congregating in “unsecured” lots for impromptu parties, unauthorized meet-ups and hangouts, and incidents of theft and vandalism.

Recommended Strategies: DMC controls only about 8% of all Downtown Memphis parking, which leaves the Commission with limited oversight or authority for helping to fix the problem. Still, taking the lead in regularly convening lot and garage owners or reps for pointed and action-oriented discussions around the issue may prove the most efficient solution.

Action 1: Convene parking lot and garage owners to a series of meetings to coordinate comprehensive solutions.

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: August 2021

Action 2: Strengthen security at DMC managed lots in partnership with the management company

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: August 2021

RECOMMENDATION - SCOOTERS

Problem Description: Expressed problems with rentable electric scooters, located throughout the city and downtown, are relatively common amongst Downtown Memphis stakeholders. Complaints include general noise and nuisance from riders congregating and showing off creative rider skills, riders operating the scooters recklessly, riders weaving dangerously in and out of auto and pedestrian traffic, and riders being able to operate the scooters well past a reasonable hour into the night – adding to the perceived general uptick in noise and recklessness Downtown.

Recommended Strategies: DMC supports electric scooters as part of efforts to include more diverse, accessible, and sustainable modes of transportation in the Downtown streets mix while recognizing the need for exploring safer and more efficient scooter usage. Recommendations include:

- Creating a scooter curfew and enforcing no-ride zones
- In collaboration with the City, exploring the options to find a designated area for ‘scooter play’ – similar to skate parks.

Action 1: Issue a scooter curfew, nightly at 11:00 pm
Owner: City of Memphis
Due Date/Timeline: September 2021

Action 2: Identify and explore Scooter Ride Park.
Owner: DMC, MRPP, and City of Memphis
Due Date/Timeline: DMC will introduce to specific City division heads (Engineering, Parks, Planning, etc.) to decide where the matter should ultimately be housed. Meeting and further details TBD.

RECOMMENDATION - SPEEDING + RECKLESS DRIVING + TRAFFIC

Problem Description: Reckless and dangerous driving pose threats to our efforts to support a walkable Downtown. The issues include cruising, drag racing, loud music blasting from cars, muscle cars with loud mufflers, drivers turning ‘donuts,’ gridlock that hinders a smooth flow of traffic as well as access and exit to and from businesses.

The bulk of the solutions lie with the Memphis Police Department (MPD) and their enforcement of noise ordinances, vehicle ordinances, traffic violations, etc. MPD is very much aware of the need for immediate solutions. MPD has a No-Chase Policy – meaning MPD officers are not allowed to chase or pursue speeding or reckless drivers once they’ve left the area of the offense. This policy is necessary to maintain the safety of the general public. However, perpetrators are knowledgeable of this policy and have begun to use it to their advantage.

Recommended Strategies: Mindful of MPD’s primary role, DMC is committed to leading efforts around solutions – particularly:

- Working with MPD and City Engineering to determine type and placement for speed bumps, planters, and other road diet elements that help better control traffic and traffic flow.
- Working with MPD, specifically via the Blue Suede Brigade, to help monitor and record general traffic problems or violations and manage traffic interventions – during both high traffic time-periods and also when roads are emptier and even more conducive for reckless behaviors
- In conjunction with Downtown stakeholders, conduct a Downtown Memphis Traffic Study that takes into account both efficiencies and challenges. Shelby County Government, through Commissioner Mickell Lowery, has already allocated resources to support such a study.
- In conjunction with MPD, Division of Planning & Development, and City Traffic Dept., develop a Downtown Traffic Plan that outlines traffic interventions and various scenarios for high traffic areas times of year and for when streets are emptier.

Action 1: Meet with MPD Police Chief to discuss both challenges and suggested solutions.
Owner: DMC – Paul Young
Due Date/Timeline: September 2021

Action 2: Plan and meet with stakeholders around Downtown Memphis Traffic Study
Owner: DMC
Due Date/Timeline: October 2021

RECOMMENDATION - YOUTH

Problem Description: For years, there have been complaints and requests to identify lasting solutions to address engagement of young people – especially during the summer and times of the year when school is not in session. This past year and a half with COVID-19 mandates and restrictions left many children in unstable and uncertain situations. And that likely compounded the existing problem of underage youth seeking Downtown Memphis as an accessible, no-cost entertainment outlet and just, generally, something to do.

Recommended Strategies: DMC remains committed to serving all user groups to the downtown corridor – including youth. In line with that, DMC will:

- Work with the City of Memphis Office of Youth, and other youth-serving organizations, to help identify places and outlets for youth engagement and activities.
- Convene and further work with local organizations that serve youth in exploring solutions.
- Host a focus-group event with youth as the user audience to mine info and data on how they would like to be better users of Downtown Memphis.

Action 1: Meet with Office of Youth to discuss a plan and partnership for Downtown Memphis Youth Engagement.

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: October 2021

Action 2: Convene local youth-serving organizations around ideas for solutions

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: October 2021

Action 3: Host 'Youth Users' Event

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: October 2021

RECOMMENDATION - SPECIAL PRIORITY: BEALE STREET

Problem Description: Beale Street is Memphis' crown jewel, the hub of our entertainment district, and our most visited destination. When most people think of downtown, the picture in their minds is of Beale Street.

The priority topic for the exchange with the Beale Street Merchants Association (BSMA) was finding a way to add a voucher program into the Beale Street Security Fee program. Recognizing that the original Beale Street Bucks program had challenges, BSMA members were steadfast in voicing their support. Many shared how bringing back some iteration of the program would help to remedy most, if not all, of the current problems/issues on Beale (overcrowding, stampedes, fighting, etc.).

Recommended Strategies: DMC is committed to convening or leading the efforts related to Beale. The BSMA is a major and valued stakeholder to Downtown. Here are some of the proposed solutions:

- Explore options related to Beale Street Bucks.
- Have MPD officers patrol in groups of 2-4 along the Beale Street corridor.
- Continue to utilize strategies that have resulted in reduced crowd sizes on Beale.

Action 1: Engage City administration and City Council in discussions around Beale Street fee/voucher program

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: January 2022

Action 2: Meet with MPD to discuss type and frequency of patrol

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: August 2021

Action 3: Continue to monitor Beale Street crowd sizes and implement strategies to maintain safe levels

Owner: DMC

Due Date/Timeline: ongoing

CALENDAR + TIMELINE OF ACTIONS

ACTION ITEM/DUE DATE	Q321	Q421	Q122	ONGOING	TBA/AS NEEDED
Set calendar, agenda, invite list, communication for carriage operators quarterly convening/meetings for FY22.	x			x	x
Revisit noise citation policy.	x				
Provide Operators with approved signage noting rules and regulations for passengers	x				
Set calendar, agenda, invite list, communication for parking lot and garage owners meetings for FY22	x				
Strengthen security at DMC managed lots in partnership with management company	x			x	
Issue a scooter shutoff mandate for 11:00 pm	x				
Identify and explore Scooter Ride Park.					x
Meet with incoming MPD Police Director to formally discuss both challenges and suggested solutions.	x				x
Plan and meet with stakeholders around Downtown Memphis Traffic Study					x
Meet with Office of Youth to discuss the plan and partnership for Downtown Memphis Youth Engagement.		x			
Convene local youth-serving organizations around ideas for solutions		x			x
Host 'Youth Users' Event		x			x
Engage City administration and City Council in discussions around security fee/voucher program			x		x
Meet with MPD to discuss type and frequency of patrol on Beale St.	x				x
Continue to monitor Beale Street crowd sizes and implement strategies to maintain safe levels				x	x

LOOKING FORWARD: NEXT IMMEDIATE STEPS

The DMC team will coordinate with all parties related to the strategies defined here. In addition, more detailed public safety and traffic plans will be developed utilizing resources provided by DMC, City of Memphis, and Shelby County.

ATTACHMENT A

DMC SAFETY RESEARCH FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS INVITEES + ATTENDEES FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS RESULTS

Public Safety Stakeholder Discussion - Tourism/Hospitality Group June 8, 2021

Regena	Bearden	Memphis Tourism
Ron	Belz	Belz
Doug	Browne	Peabody
Chance	Carlisle	Carlisle

Problems Identified

There is significant loud noise in Downtown Memphis, particularly late at night
Hotel patrons get stuck in garages during high traffic moments, causing frustration
Speeding through Downtown
Main & Peabody often has challenges
Theft in garages
Surface parking lots and top floor of garages have become party hangouts
July 1st gun laws being enacted will make Downtown even scarier
Need an incentive to keep businesses on Beale thriving

Solutions Proposed

Make Beale Street bucks a voucher again, so people spend money on the street.
Identify a maximum capacity to Beale Street and treat it as a venue to prevent overcrowding
Establish a curfew for teenagers
Shut down scooters at 10 or 11 PM
Eliminate on-street parking
Presence of officers Downtown, augmenting the off duty guards in all of Downtown
Clearly define what infractions will be enforced (marijuana, loud cars, etc.)
Engage TN Highway Patrol, MPD and Sheriff's Dept. to address the reckless driving in a meaningful way
Develop a Downtown No Gun Sign for all businesses (Declare Downtown as a No Gun Zone)
Add speed humps in key locations
Cleaning up Downtown is a public safety strategy
Cater specific solutions for the specific problem days (i.e. Saturdays)
Explore Manhattan strategies for guns and see what applies
Replace Downtown street lights with LEDs
Eliminate amplified sound on horse carriages
Have MPD establish checkpoints in order to discourage those with bad intentions from coming down.

Public Safety Stakeholder Discussion - Restaurant Group June 8, 2021

Felicia	Willett	Felicia Suzanne's
Anna	Blair	Rendezvous
Jeanette	Comas	Blind Bear
Aldo	Dean	Slider/Aldo's
Jobeth	Graves	Grecian Gourmet
Kevin	Keough	Cafe Keough
Seamus	Loftus	Brass Door
Deni	Reilly	Majestic

Problems Identified

Lack of visible police presence, even in the daytime
In the past, MPD walked the streets Downtown. Now with data driven approaches, less officers are Downtown and they are not visible when they are here
Need to strengthen enforcement of the noise ordinance, particularly with carriages and pedal pubs
When Downtown was empty during the pandemic, the void was filled with negative activity
Need to have more alternatives for people under 21 to do things, as they tend to crowd Downtown.
The former Jolly Royal property needs a stronger security plan during pre-construction

Solutions Proposed

Dedicated police force for Downtown
Blue Suede Brigade staff has been helpful and greatly appreciated
Enforce rules for their licenses w/pedal pubs and carriages
Need night time manager to resolve complaints
Institute a curfew for young people
Police engagement with businesses
Police should do more enforcement, not just direct traffic
Tailgating should not be allowed in parking lots
Can the DMC have authorization to issue permits for carriages Downtown
Public Service Announcements w/positive messages

**Public Safety Stakeholder Discussion - Beale Street
June 9, 2021**

James	Clark	Beale Merchants
Jim	Losapio	Beale Merchants
Sandy	Robertson	Beale Merchants
Jon	Shivers	Beale Street
Joellyn	Sullivan	Beale Merchants

Problems Identified

Perception of crime & public safety - Media needs to reframe the notion that things are unsafe
Challenges are beyond Beale and we have not seen this volume of problems - Gunshots - Drag Racing - Parking Lot Parties
Traffic on Union & Second Lines to get down is too backed up. - People are dancing in the streets, pedal pubs are exacerbating the problem
Overcrowding late on Beale is a problem, and no one is looking to spend money. Bringing on weed & alcohol
Potential for problems happen w/ or without businesses being open
Young people (minors) are everywhere (foot traffic & cruising
Currently turn music off at 12:30 a, but people on street still stay
Carriages with music is adding to the chaos
Can't lose our competitive edge on Beale by being perceived as unsafe
Not enough staff for late night

Solutions Proposed

Memorial Day plans for Beale seemed to work well
Utilize Downtown cameras actively
Need places for teenage youth to go. We really need to identify places for them specifically
Beale Street bucks need to be brought back. Dollars go back into the City coffers through taxes. Slowed down the problems. Attracted clientele that wanted to spend money and kept away the troublemakers. Expand to other parts of Downtown . . . Make it good for two weeks
Redemption Program . . . NOT a cover charge.
Start with Council members to demonstrate whys bucks are needed
Clear off the young people at a certain time
Start cover earlier

Allow drag racing at the Speedway in Millington

**Public Safety Stakeholder Discussion - Government Group
June 9, 2021**

Floyd	Bonner	SC Sheriff
Mike	Ryall	MPD

Problems Identified

Vehicles doing donuts under Convention Center
Panhandling has been a bit more aggressive
Staffing is a challenge for Police
Streets are not designed for this type of traffic
Young people know that they will not be chased

Solutions Proposed

Can we get scooters to work in isolated areas on weekend nights?
Every big venue should pay for security on their lots and close them at a certain time
MPD has numerous traffic plans that they can refer to
Traffic Diversion could be a strategy
Strategic road closures during peak periods
PST's could control the lights
Under Convention Center viaduct, street markers or potterry to calm traffic
MPD to share slow down to closure sites weekly
signage in garages saying not to block drive
Message boards can be helpful as people come into the Downtown area.
NO GUN signs must state TCA code to be a specific size

**Public Safety Stakeholder Discussion - Large Employers
June 10, 2021**

Bo	Allen	First Horizon
David	Dart	Terminix
Emily	Greer	ALSAC/St. Jude
Udo	Lange	FedEx
David	McKinney	AutoZone
Beverly	Robertson	Memphis Chamber
James	Robinson	Terminix
Bobby	White	Memphis Chamber

Problems Identified

The general increase in crime
Donuts and speeding
The loud, boisterous activity is damaging hotel credibility
Carjacking at hotels
Proliferation of homelessness and aggressive panhandling
General sense of unsafety
MPD officers need to be able to demonstrate that they are working in concert with businesses
Safety is being used as an excuse to not returning back to the office

Solutions Proposed

Can technology be used to identify issues as they are arising in real time? Traffic, violence, etc.

Technology can be used to quickly identify and communicate problems
MPD cannot monitor social media, but a private entity can and share that info with MDP
Weekly meeting with Downtown Security reps from every entity
Lighting (Identify dark spots to address
Standard document that outlines how to handle panhandling, particularly aggressive ones
Change the narrative for Downtown
Can we engage some that participate in the young people who might be a part of the problem? - Ask Alicia at
BTW
We need to be proactively telling the story of positivity in Downtown
Create a campaign for Downtown and communicate the messages
Leverage Memphis Celebrities