

ADDRESSED TO THE:

Honorable Mayor Victor G. Carstarphen Jr.

&

The Members of Camden City Council

Angel Fuentes, Councilman At-Large President

Sheila Davis, Councilwoman At-Large Vice-President

Arthur Barclay, Councilman 1st Ward

Christopher Collins, Councilman 2nd Ward

Falio Leyba-Martinez, Councilman 3rd Ward

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Nohemi G. Soria-Perez, Councilwoman At-Large

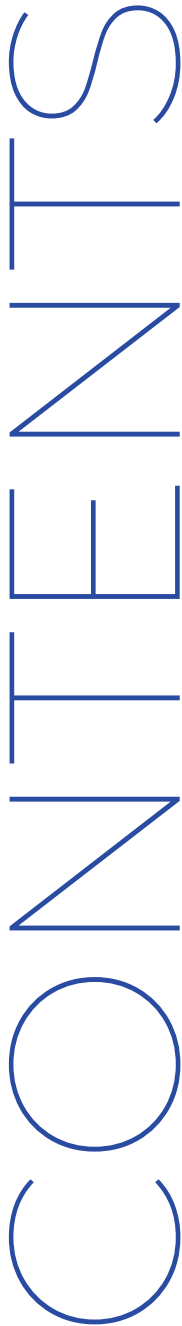
Liquor License Pilot Program Proposal

Presented By:

Camden City ABC AD HOC Committee

Tuesday, August 6, 2024

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This report presents a proposal for a Liquor License Pilot Program aimed at enhancing economic activity and nightlife in Camden’s key business corridors. The program focuses on regulatory adjustments and support mechanisms to promote growth and community engagement.

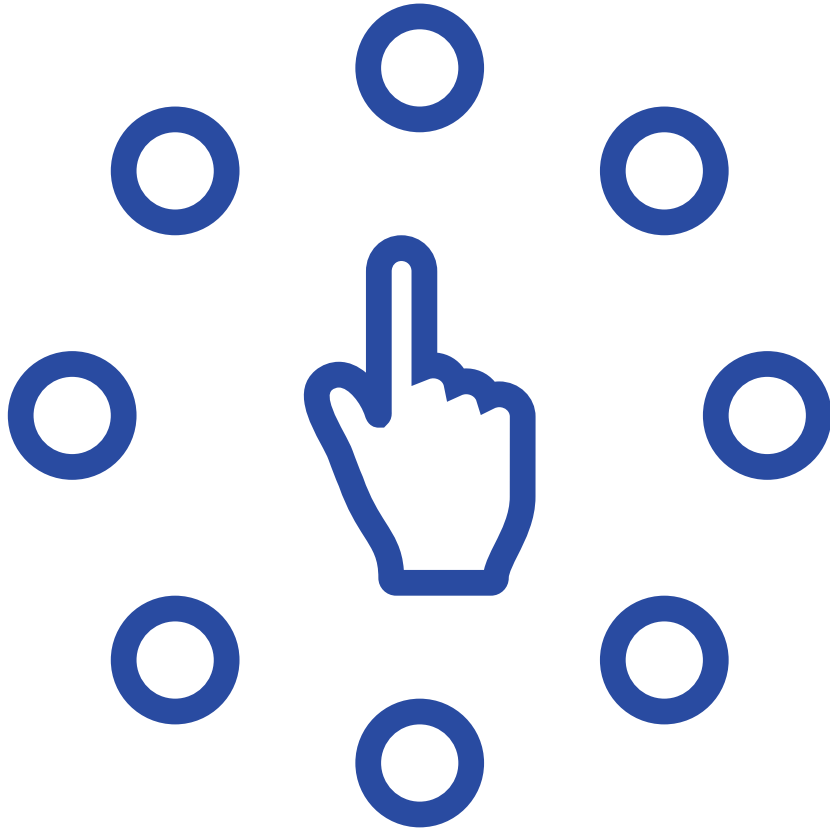
Summary of Current Camden City Ordinance
Current Ordinance Overview:

ABC Ordinance Section 187-7 governs the issuance of liquor licenses and includes specific regulations regarding the distance between liquor establishments covered by “retail consumption licenses” [bars and restaurant].

Distance Requirements:

Standard Distance Limitations: Currently, Camden’s ordinance mandates a minimum distance of 500 feet between liquor establishments covered by “retail consumption licenses” [bars and restaurant].

Selection of Business Corridors



SELECTION OF BUSINESS CORRIDORS

The pilot program will focus on the following strategic business corridors:

Camden's Waterfront

Overview:

The Waterfront corridor is a key asset for Camden, featuring scenic views along the Delaware River and proximity to major landmarks like the Adventure Aquarium and the Battleship New Jersey. This area has substantial potential for tourism and recreational activities.

Current State:

The Waterfront is currently underutilized in terms of nightlife and dining options. While it hosts a few restaurants and bars, the area lacks a critical mass of venues that could attract both locals and tourists.

Strategic Goals:

- **Expand Nightlife Options:** Introduce new bars and entertainment venues to capitalize on the waterfront's appeal.
- **Support for Development:** Provide incentives for businesses to open or transition to liquor establishments covered by "retail consumption licenses" [bars and restaurant]. in this prime location.
- **Enhance Tourism:** Leverage the area's natural beauty to attract more visitors with vibrant nightlife and dining options.
- **Increase foot traffic and tourism.**
- **Develop a thriving nightlife scene that complements existing attractions.**

Camden's Waterfront Line

(3rd Street from Pearl to Federal Street)



SELECTION OF BUSINESS CORRIDORS CONTINUED...

Federal Street

Overview:

Federal Street is a major commercial corridor and a melting pot of ethnic and cultural diversity. This area plays a vital role in Camden's efforts to rejuvenate its downtown and attract new businesses and residents.

Current State:

Federal Street is characterized by a mix of new and historic developments, with a rich array of businesses representing various cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The corridor hosts a variety of international restaurants, specialty shops, and community-focused businesses, reflecting the diverse population of Camden.

Strategic Goals:

- **Attract New Businesses:** Encourage new bars and dining establishments that can further enrich the cultural tapestry of the corridor by offering incentives and streamlining the licensing process.
- **Support Revitalization:** Use the introduction of more nightlife options to boost economic activity and attract additional visitors while respecting and enhancing the cultural diversity of the area.
- **Create a vibrant, inclusive environment** that reflects the corridor's rich cultural heritage and attracts a diverse clientele.

Federal Street Corridor

(Cross streets 19th to 27th Street)



SELECTION OF BUSINESS CORRIDORS CONTINUED...

Haddon Avenue

Overview:

Haddon Avenue is a diverse corridor known for its eclectic mix of businesses, including shops, restaurants, and cultural venues. It serves as a community hub with a rich variety of existing commercial activities.

Current State:

The avenue currently has a range of dining options but fewer bars and nightlife venues. This presents an opportunity to enhance the area's social scene and offer more varied experiences to both residents and visitors.

Strategic Goals:

- Enhance Social Spaces: Encourage the development of new bars and entertainment venues that complement the existing restaurant scene.
- Support Business Transition: Provide financial incentives for existing businesses to integrate liquor-serving options.
- Enrich the social and cultural fabric of Haddon Avenue.
- Create a more dynamic and engaging environment for residents and visitors.

Haddon Avenue

(Cross streets Liberty and Wildwood)



Modification of Distance Requirements



MODIFICATION OF DISTANCE REQUIREMENTS

To maximize the potential for vibrant business activity within these corridors, it is proposed to:

Eliminate Distance Limitations: Remove the current distance requirement of 500 feet between liquor establishments covered by “retail consumption licenses” [bars and restaurant]. within the selected corridors.

This change aims to provide greater flexibility and encourage a concentration of nightlife and entertainment venues.

CAMDEN'S LOCAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE

Camden's current local business landscape is diverse, encompassing a variety of sectors and reflecting the city's rich cultural heritage. The following provides an overview of the current business environment in Camden:

Bars and Nightlife

Bars: Camden currently has approximately 20-30 bars. These establishments range from traditional pubs to modern lounges, offering a variety of atmospheres and entertainment options.

Nightlife Venues: The city has a modest number of nightlife venues, including music clubs and late-night restaurants, which cater to both locals and visitors. However, there is room for growth in this sector to create a more vibrant nightlife scene.

CAMDEN'S LOCAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE CONTINUED...

Restaurants and Dining

Restaurants: There are around 70-100 restaurants in Camden, offering a wide range of cuisines that reflect the city's diverse population. This includes everything from upscale dining establishments to casual eateries and food trucks.

Diverse Culinary Scene: Camden's dining scene is characterized by its international diversity, with numerous restaurants serving cuisines from around the world, including Italian, Mexican, Asian, and more.

Challenges

Economic Development: Despite the presence of diverse businesses, Camden faces challenges in stimulating sustained economic growth and attracting new investments.

Regulatory Barriers: Existing regulations, such as the 500-foot distance requirement for liquor establishments covered by "retail consumption licenses" [bars and restaurant], can hinder the development of a vibrant nightlife and limit the expansion of businesses.

CAMDEN'S LOCAL BUSINESS LANDSCAPE CONTINUED...

Opportunities

Business Incentives: The proposed pilot program offers an opportunity to attract new businesses and support existing ones through various business development supports.

Community Engagement: Engaging with the community through educational resources can ensure that business development aligns with local needs and preferences.

Cultural Enrichment: Leveraging Camden's cultural diversity can enhance the appeal of business corridors, attracting visitors and fostering a unique, vibrant atmosphere.

CASE STUDIES: U.S. CITIES MODIFYING ABC ORDINANCES TO BOOST ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL LIFE

Several cities across the United States have successfully modified their Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) ordinances to stimulate economic growth and enhance social life.

Here are some notable examples:

1. Nashville, Tennessee

Modification: In 2017, Nashville passed an ordinance allowing for the expansion of its Downtown Entertainment District. The changes included relaxing restrictions on the number and type of liquor licenses available within the district

Impact:

Economic Growth: The new ordinance spurred significant investment in the downtown area, leading to a proliferation of new bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues.

Tourism Increase: Nashville's nightlife became a major draw for tourists, contributing to record numbers of visitors and boosting the local economy.

Community Benefits: The vibrant nightlife scene helped to revitalize the downtown area, making it a more attractive place to live and work.

2. Denver, Colorado

Modification: Denver revised its ABC ordinances in 2012 to create a more permissive environment for craft breweries, distilleries, and wineries. The changes included easing zoning restrictions and streamlining the licensing process

Impact:

Craft Beverage Boom: The modifications led to a surge in the number of craft breweries and distilleries, making Denver a hub for artisanal alcohol production.

Economic Benefits: The craft beverage industry became a significant contributor to the local economy, generating jobs and attracting tourists.

Cultural Impact: The proliferation of craft establishments fostered a sense of community and added to Denver's cultural vibrancy.

3. Atlanta, Georgia

Modification: In 2018, Atlanta relaxed its regulations on alcohol sales, allowing bars and restaurants to serve alcohol earlier on Sundays, a change popularly known as the "Brunch Bill."

Impact:

Increased Revenue: The extended hours for alcohol sales boosted revenues for local businesses, particularly in the food and beverage sector.

Enhanced Social Life: The ability to enjoy brunch with alcoholic beverages became a popular social activity, enhancing the city's weekend culture.

Business Growth: The change encouraged more establishments to open or expand their brunch offerings, contributing to economic growth.

By adopting a strategic and community-focused approach, Camden can leverage changes to ABC ordinances to stimulate economic growth, enhance social life, and create a vibrant and thriving business environment.

CASE STUDIES: SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY REGION

While specific case studies for Southern New Jersey might not be as widely documented as those in larger cities, there are a few examples of municipalities in our region implementing changes to their liquor laws to stimulate economic growth and enhance community life. Here are a few relevant examples that could be included in the liquor license pilot proposal for Camden:

1. Atlantic City, New Jersey

Modification: In recent years, Atlantic City has made various changes to its alcohol regulations to attract more businesses and tourism. One notable change was the expansion of areas where open containers are allowed, particularly in designated tourism zones.

Impact:

Economic Growth: The changes led to an increase in the number of new bars, restaurants, and entertainment venues in the tourism district.

Tourism Boost: The relaxed regulations attracted more tourists, contributing to a revitalized nightlife and increased economic activity.

Community Engagement: Local businesses reported higher foot traffic and sales, contributing to the overall economic health of the city.

2. Cape May, New Jersey

Modification: Cape May has a history of adjusting its liquor license policies to encourage tourism and business development. For instance, they have utilized seasonal liquor licenses to support the influx of tourists during peak seasons.

Impact:

Seasonal Revenue Increase: The introduction of seasonal licenses allowed more businesses to serve alcohol during the busy summer months, boosting local revenue.

Enhanced Visitor Experience: The availability of more dining and drinking options improved the overall visitor experience, making Cape May a more attractive destination.

Support for Local Economy: The increased business activity during peak seasons provided a significant boost to the local economy, supporting jobs and local vendors.

CASE STUDIES: SOUTHERN NEW JERSEY REGION CONTINUED...

3. Collingswood, New Jersey

Modification: Collingswood, a dry town, made a unique adjustment by allowing restaurants to operate under "bring your own bottle" (BYOB) policies, which have been in place for many years. Recently, the town has explored ways to support local businesses through events and festivals that feature temporary liquor licenses.

Impact:

Business Attraction: The BYOB policy, coupled with temporary liquor licenses for events, has made Collingswood an attractive location for new restaurants and cafes.

Community Events: The use of temporary liquor licenses for festivals and events has enhanced the town's cultural and social life, drawing visitors from neighboring areas.

Economic Benefits: Local businesses benefit from the increased patronage during events, contributing to the town's economic vitality.

4. Wildwood, New Jersey

Modification: Wildwood has adapted its liquor licensing to support its vibrant tourism industry, particularly by increasing the number of available licenses and allowing for more flexible use during peak tourism seasons.

Impact:

Increased Licenses: More businesses have been able to obtain liquor licenses, leading to a greater variety of bars and restaurants.

Tourism Support: The availability of more nightlife options has made Wildwood a more appealing destination for tourists, boosting the local economy.

Business Growth: Local entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the increased opportunities to open new establishments, contributing to economic growth.

Conclusion



Recommendations

The Camden City ABC AD HOC Committee is proposing to Camden City Council:

- *Consider the proposed Liquor License Pilot Program, including the elimination of distance limitations for liquor establishments covered by “retail consumption licenses” [bars and restaurant] within the designated business corridors.*
- *Initiate the recommended support measures and community engagement activities to ensure the successful implementation of the program.*
- *Develop and provide educational resources and support mechanisms to help businesses and the community understand and benefit from the program.*

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

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The proposed pilot program is expected to:

Stimulate Economic Growth:

Drive increased business activity and attract more visitors to the selected corridors.

Enhance Nightlife:

Foster a dynamic and engaging social environment through a higher concentration of nightlife venues.

Support Community Development:

Contribute to the overall revitalization and appeal of Camden's business corridors.

Educate and Engage the Community:

Ensure community members are well-informed and have opportunities to engage with and benefit from the program.

The Liquor License Pilot Program represents a strategic opportunity to invigorate Camden's selected business corridors by removing distance restrictions and providing targeted support for local businesses. This approach aims to enhance the city's economic vitality, foster a vibrant nightlife, and contribute to community development.

PROPOSED TIMELINE: ONE YEAR PILOT PROGRAM

Summary Timeline:

Phase 1: Planning and Approval -

(Aug 2024 - Oct 2024)

Phase 2: Implementation Preparation -

(Nov 2024 - Dec 2024)

Phase 3: Pilot Program Launch -

(Jan 2025 - Dec 2025)

Phase 4: Mid-Point Review -

(Jun 2025)

Phase 5: Program Completion and Final Review -

(Jan 2026 - Mar 2026)

Phase 6: Post-Program Actions -

(Apr 2026 - May 2026)

This timeline provides a structured approach to planning, implementing, and evaluating the pilot program, ensuring that it is carried out effectively and with ample opportunity for community involvement and feedback.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS