



Sip and Stroll Trendspotting Forum

February 11, 2025

SUMMARY

A growing trend among cities aiming to emulate the vibrant atmosphere of iconic spots like New Orleans' Bourbon Street is the establishment of designated outdoor areas where people can carry and enjoy open, to-go containers of alcoholic beverages. This initiative fosters a laid-back environment for sipping drinks while exploring local attractions, dining, or shopping. These spaces go by various names, such as "Sip n' Stroll" in Raleigh, NC, and "Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area" (DORA) in Ohio. While some critics express concerns about public safety and noise levels, successful implementation tackle these issues through clear regulations and collaboration among local governments, businesses, and communities.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

STATES/CITIES WITH OPEN CONTAINER ALLOWANCE

There are a growing number of cities who have local and state approval to create "Sip n Stroll" locations.

They include:

- New Orleans, LA
- Charlotte and Raleigh, North Carolina
- San Francisco, CA
- Edmonton, Alberta, CAN
- Memphis, TN

THERE IS DOCUMENTED ECONOMIC BENEFIT

Cities that have “Sip n Stroll” areas report economic benefit for their venues and overall social economy.

- Allowing patrons to purchase a beverage (alcoholic or not) and move around a social district improves the overall experience of people and businesses in the area. Use of “the street as a venue” concept here is important.
- Activation of the social district, with music and artisans, etc, brings more people to that area to discover its assets and stay longer.
- Allowing drinks to leave a venue allows people to “take one for the road”, which is most beneficial to locals who can walk home or visitors to hotels and vacation rentals.

HOURS OF OPERATION ARE IMPORTANT

Most cities with “Sip n Stroll” have ending time hours before 10pm, except for New Orleans.

- Ending by or before 10pm seems to practically remove the concerns regarding underage drinking in these areas.
- Ending by or before 10pm also seems to support regular dining hours and is supported by law enforcement.
- Concerns have been expressed regarding the equity of this practice, as it doesn’t allow employees who work through these hours to partake in the benefits.

STRATEGIES AND PROMISING PRACTICES

LOCAL REGULATORY REFORM NEEDED TO ENSURE SAFETY

While states can authorize “Sip n Stroll,” local governments need to make changes to ordinances and compliance regimes that work for their cities.

- Rules and regulations regarding entry and exit to the area, hours of operation, security requirements, ID checks, etc should be promulgated with community standards in mind.
- Rules and regulations should be written in partnership with the industry, law enforcement, and community included.
- Consideration should be given as to ask/require venues to mark to-go containers with time and venue name as a method of insuring best practices, though some venues report this is burdensome during business hours.

INCLUSIVITY IS KEY

Using “Sip n Stroll” areas to create a more inclusive social district is an important goal. Allowing beverages to leave venues allows patrons to explore more assets, including other venues but also outdoor parks and other retail.

- New Orleans is the only city with later than 10pm hours, and as such, employees of the industry can participate when they are done working.
- “Sip n Stroll” areas can enhance any corporate activations (Superbowl, Olympics, etc), allowing people to move from the activation itself to other local venues and parts of a social district or city.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED

“Sip n Stroll” areas can generate more outdoor waste (drink containers) than other areas. Therefore, some consideration should be given to recycling and trash management.

- Some cities have created programs with re-usable cups that can be sold and re-used during an evening or season. They can carry educational or other marketing messages.
- Cities can and do partner with non-profit organizations to assist with clean-up of the social district.

SUMMARY

Overall, “Sip n Stroll” areas have positive economic impact in a district and are a vehicle to include other retail businesses and street activations in a lively, unique way. However, environmental and safety impacts should be managed via robust stakeholder engagement and thoughtful government policy.