Bars lose curb appeal

City may limit permits for downtown

Claire Taylor
citycouncil@theadvertiser.com

LAFAYETTE — A year ago, Rob Robison and his family lived in a loft apartment above an upscale restaurant and bar in downtown Lafayette. The noise was too much for the Robisons, so they moved into another home in a quieter downtown neighborhood.

Robison, who owns Jefferson Street Market, still thinks Lafayette is a great place to live and work. But the Robisons’ plight underscores a problem for the area, which is beginning to thrive again after years of decline: Does the new mix of downtown businesses include too many bars?

Twenty-one downtown businesses, mostly along Jefferson Street, are licensed to sell alcohol. Some of the bars generate complaints. Patrons leave bars carrying glass bottles that are discarded or broken on sidewalks. Some bar patrons urinate in public places. Noise is sometimes a problem.

The Downtown Development Authority has asked the city to consider looking at zoning and permitting requirements as a way to control the number of nightclubs. City-parish officials are also considering a temporary moratorium on downtown bars while they study the matter, he said.

Others worry that limiting the number of bars or liquor licenses might discourage development that would otherwise be possible.

Kori Fletcher serves drinks recently at Marley’s, one of the newest bars on Jefferson Street. A number of new bars have opened in downtown Lafayette, and the Downtown Development Authority has asked the city to consider looking at zoning and permitting requirements as a way to control the number of nightclubs.

Current downtown office tower occupancy rates as of June 2002:

- Versailles Center — 100 percent
- Jefferson Towers — 100 percent
- St. John Place — 100 percent
- LBA tower — 97 percent
- FNB towers — 92 percent
- Gordon Square — 85 percent

SOURCE: Downtown Development Authority

1. Grant Street Dance Hall, 113 W. Grant St.
2. The Sound Factory, 209 Jefferson St.
4. Smokin’ Joe’s, 309 Jefferson St.
5. Tauremi Sushi, 412 Jefferson St.
7. The Ballroom, Catering Company, 417 Jefferson St.
10. Mango’s Downtown, 524 Jefferson St.
11. Amanda Scott’s Downtown, 524 Jefferson St.
13. Raymond’s at Antler’s, 555 Jefferson St.
14. City Club of Lafayette, 600 Jefferson St.
15. Chris’ Po’ Boys, 631 E. Vermilion St.
16. The Filling Station, 900 Jefferson St.
17. The Sidebar, 100 E. Vermilion St.
18. Pat’s Downtown, 107 E. Vermilion St.
19. Pinnacle of Lafayette Bar & Grill, 115 E. Vermilion St.
20. Don’s Seafood and Steakhouse, 301 Jefferson St.
21. Backstreet, 110 Polk St.

MIAMI (AP) — The satellite photograph showed the spherical storm barreling into the coast, its red, yellow and blue hues indicating it was packing deadly winds, soaking rain and destructive tornadoes.

That abstract image of Hurricane Andrew’s fury on Aug. 24, 1992, was quickly replaced by company images all too real — homes flattened, trees reduced to toothpicks and dazed residents walking through neighborhoods that looked like war zones.

“I know what it’s like to think that you’re going to die, and for God to spare you,” said John Cosgrove, a former state representative who huddled with his wife and children in the closet as his home fell apart around them.

“We lost everything.”

Andrew’s winds, a 140-mph storm surge, heavy rains and spinoff tornadoes blasted through Homestead, Florida City and other small cities south of Miami. That city and Port Lauderdale were spared.

Forty-three deaths were blamed on Andrew. See ANDREW on Page 4A
BARS

Welcome.

"I would not want us to lose a great New Orleans restaurant that wanted to have a presence here — like a Brennan's — because they couldn't get a liquor license," Robison said.

Business picks up

In the 1950s, downtown Lafayette was a vibrant retail and government center. In the 1960s and '70s, as residents moved to the suburbs, shopping malls and small businesses away from downtown.

The Downtown Development Authority was created in 1983 to revitalize the area. Unfortunately, it came at a time when the oil boom that fed the community was waning. "I think it would be unfair," said Joe Alexander, manager of Smokin' Joe's, a downtown bar.

Permit values for downtown Lafayette:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Permit Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1996-2001</td>
<td>$23.5 million (approximate)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-present</td>
<td>$17.3 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"I think the bars are developing downtown more than anything. Five or six years ago, downtown was mostly empty buildings," Randy Templet agreed. He is a co-owner with Leslie Wilson of The Pinna Bar and Grill and Rerto Dance Hall, which opened about 10 months ago in a renovated Masonic Hall. "This is America, and I don't think we should limit bars," he said.

"There are always going to be conflicts between two users," said Mike Hanmer, chairman of the Downtown Development Authority board. "The question that's been asked today is, what is the best interest that this not become a club district in the long term?"

Some people downtown agree that upscale restaurants and clubs catering to urban professionals are welcomed. Others, however, think the bars are part of the nightlife economy and need to be monitored.

Downtown's revitalization was sparked in part by Friday night party-type events, particularly Downtown Alive, which is essentially a block party.

"Now, it's expanded beyond that as a viable alternative to the (McKinley Street) Strip," UL Lafayette's Ehrhardt said. "We'll lose everything we've worked for if we don't stop development when it's beginning to create a negative to some.

The need for balance surfaced in most discussions about downtown revitalization. The opening of the natural history museum, the community arts center and downtown parks will create a better balance between nightclubs and other entertainment venues, said Douglas Menefee, who owns Menefee Gift Shoppe and Menefee and Sons.

"We want the activity. We don't want the negatives," Menefee said. "I don't think the clubs want the negatives. I think we're both of the same mind. We can live with the positives and not become a club area.

Downtown's revitalization was sparked in part by Friday night party-type events, particularly Downtown Alive, which is essentially a block party.

"Now, it's expanded beyond that as a viable alternative to the (McKinley Street) Strip," UL Lafayette's Ehrhardt said. "We'll lose everything we've worked for if we don't stop development when it's beginning to create a negative to some.

The need for balance surfaced in most discussions about downtown revitalization. The opening of the natural history museum, the community arts center and downtown parks will create a better balance between nightclubs and other entertainment venues, said Douglas Menefee, who owns Menefee Gift Shoppe and Menefee and Sons.

"We want the activity. We don't want the negatives," Menefee said. "I don't think the clubs want the negatives. I think we're both of the same mind. We can live with the positives and not become a club area.

Downtown's revitalization was sparked in part by Friday night party-type events, particularly Downtown Alive, which is essentially a block party.

"Now, it's expanded beyond that as a viable alternative to the (McKinley Street) Strip," UL Lafayette's Ehrhardt said. "We'll lose everything we've worked for if we don't stop development when it's beginning to create a negative to some.

The need for balance surfaced in most discussions about downtown revitalization. The opening of the natural history museum, the community arts center and downtown parks will create a better balance between nightclubs and other entertainment venues, said Douglas Menefee, who owns Menefee Gift Shoppe and Menefee and Sons.

"We want the activity. We don't want the negatives," Menefee said. "I don't think the clubs want the negatives. I think we're both of the same mind. We can live with the positives and not become a club area.

Downtown's revitalization was sparked in part by Friday night party-type events, particularly Downtown Alive, which is essentially a block party.

"Now, it's expanded beyond that as a viable alternative to the (McKinley Street) Strip," UL Lafayette's Ehrhardt said. "We'll lose everything we've worked for if we don't stop development when it's beginning to create a negative to some.

The need for balance surfaced in most discussions about downtown revitalization. The opening of the natural history museum, the community arts center and downtown parks will create a better balance between nightclubs and other entertainment venues, said Douglas Menefee, who owns Menefee Gift Shoppe and Menefee and Sons.

"We want the activity. We don't want the negatives," Menefee said. "I don't think the clubs want the negatives. I think we're both of the same mind. We can live with the positives and not become a club area.

Downtown's revitalization was sparked in part by Friday night party-type events, particularly Downtown Alive, which is essentially a block party.

"Now, it's expanded beyond that as a viable alternative to the (McKinley Street) Strip," UL Lafayette's Ehrhardt said. "We'll lose everything we've worked for if we don't stop development when it's beginning to create a negative to some.

The need for balance surfaced in most discussions about downtown revitalization. The opening of the natural history museum, the community arts center and downtown parks will create a better balance between nightclubs and other entertainment venues, said Douglas Menefee, who owns Menefee Gift Shoppe and Menefee and Sons.

"We want the activity. We don't want the negatives," Menefee said. "I don't think the clubs want the negatives. I think we're both of the same mind. We can live with the positives and not become a club area.