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SURVEY SHOWS CHULA VISTA BUSINESS OWNERS, EMPLOYEES CONCERNED ABOUT CRIME, SAFETY ALONG BROADWAY

Regulations, inspections for high-risk businesses seen as solution

Owners and employees of businesses along the Broadway corridor in Chula Vista are concerned about public safety in their neighborhood, according to survey results released Thursday. A majority of those polled say one solution could be more restrictions and inspections of high-risk businesses.

High-risk businesses are typically defined as liquor stores, massage parlors, hotels, smoke shops, vape lounges, tattoo parlors and cocktail bars, among others. The connection between alcohol businesses and community harm is well documented. Research shows that neighborhoods with more alcohol outlets have more public drunkenness, DUIs and calls for police service.

In contrast, other studies have found that when alcohol availability goes down, so do these problems. A strong link between alcohol sales and violent crime has also been established. A landmark study in the City of Los Angeles found an annual increase of 2.5 violent crimes each year for every additional alcohol outlet. Even domestic violence and sexual assaults are shown to rise as the number of liquor stores increases in a neighborhood.

A business safety perception survey was conducted in Chula Vista along Broadway from C St. to Main St. during September through November 2018 in which more than 160 samples were taken

“There was a murder in the tattoo shop a couple of months ago,” one of the respondents said in the comment section of the survey. “The guy was there for three days before someone found him dead.”

The survey focused on the responders’ perception of crime in the area, feelings about their personal safety at night versus the daytime, problems in the area and possible solutions.

“The biggest issue is transients wandering around day and night, sometimes drunk or on drugs,” according to a comment. “You never know how they’ll react toward you.”

Another comment focused on child sex trafficking on the streets and in nearby hotels and motels.

“I see too many young girls on the streets and I watch old men come up to them and solicit them,” the respondent said. “It’s sad.”

Almost 9,000 children fall victim to the sex trade in San Diego County each year, according to a recent study by the University of San Diego. The study also highlighted the criminal gang element connected to child sex trafficking and the correlation to other crimes like drug dealing and assaults.

When it came to crime in the business area over the past 12 months, 33 percent said they felt that crime had increased. Only 18 percent said they felt very safe walking to their car at night. When asked about what the biggest cause of problems in the neighborhood was, 93 percent said homeless transients, while 71 to 73 percent listed graffiti, vandalism, litter and marijuana use.

“We need more police patrolling on our area,” one of the respondents said. “Businesses don’t have tools to prevent crime.”

More than 70 percent strongly support placing operating conditions on high-risk businesses and holding them accountable for creating harm to public health and safety to the neighborhood. Operating conditions could include prohibited products; no pay telephones; graffiti removal; no loitering; exterior lighting; security cameras; hours of operation; advertising restrictions; use of sound walls; trash receptacles; no public drinking near establishment; and the requirement of retailer training programs.

When it comes to allowing regular inspection by police and requiring a police permit to operate such businesses, more than 70 percent responded that they would strongly support such measures.

The Institute for Public Strategies released results of the business safety perception survey at a business gathering in Chula Vista on April 11, 2019.

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