

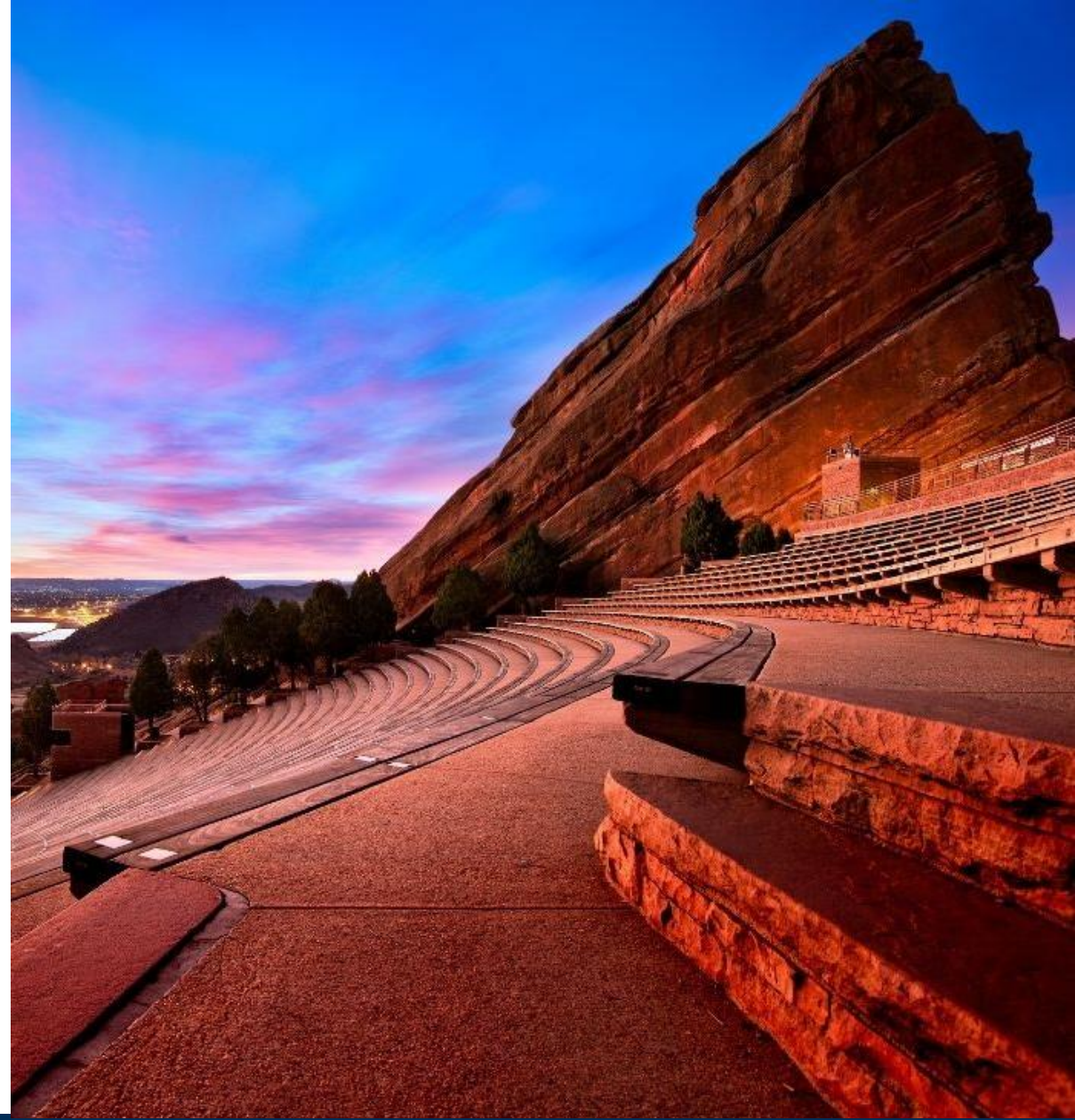


Entertainment Licensing Proposal

Presented by the Department of Licensing & Consumer Protection (DLCP)
Finance and Business Committee
June 23, 2026

Denver's Live Entertainment Scene

- 8th largest concert market in the U.S.
- 2nd most per capita entertainment spending among U.S. cities
- 37.6 million visitors in 2025 with \$10.5 billion in visitor spending

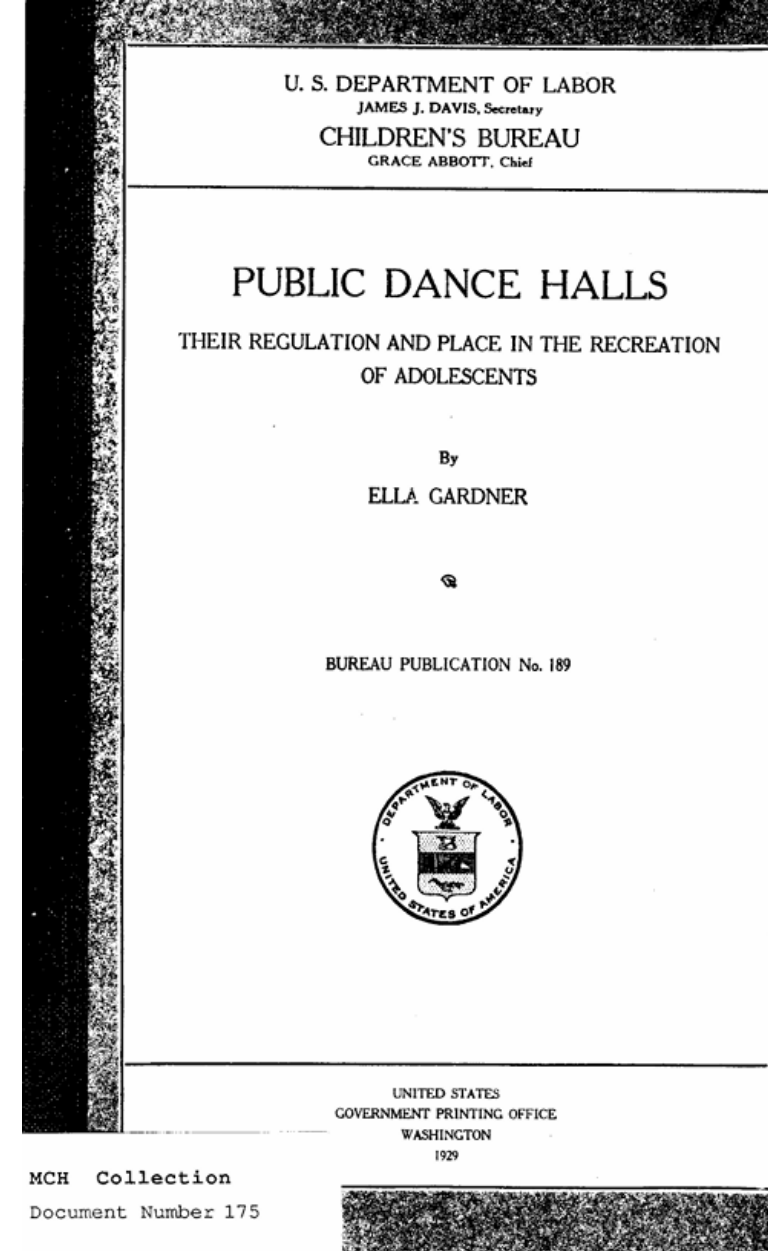


Impetus for Update

The cabaret, amusement, social room, and dance hall license codes have not been comprehensively updated in decades and contain **outdated provisions and licenses** (like the dance hall license).

The current code **over-regulates entertainment** by requiring a license (or more than one license) for many types of low-impact, low-risk entertainment.

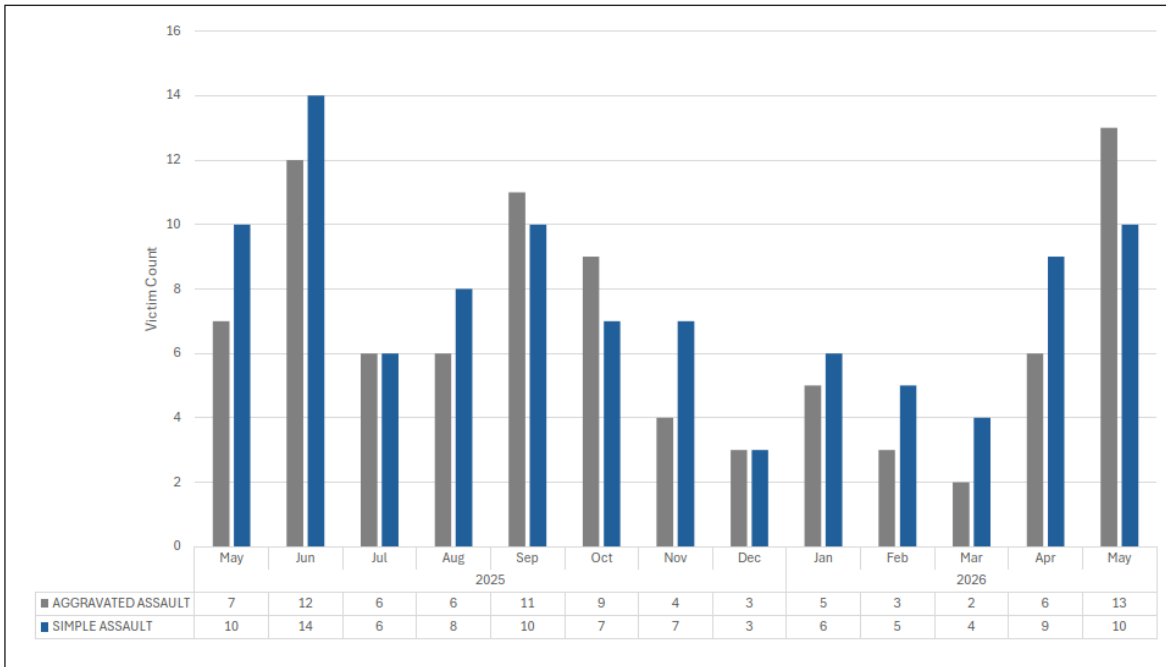
The current code **under-regulates nightlife entertainment venues**, lacking specific safety and security requirements to prevent violence and disorderly conduct in nightlife spaces.



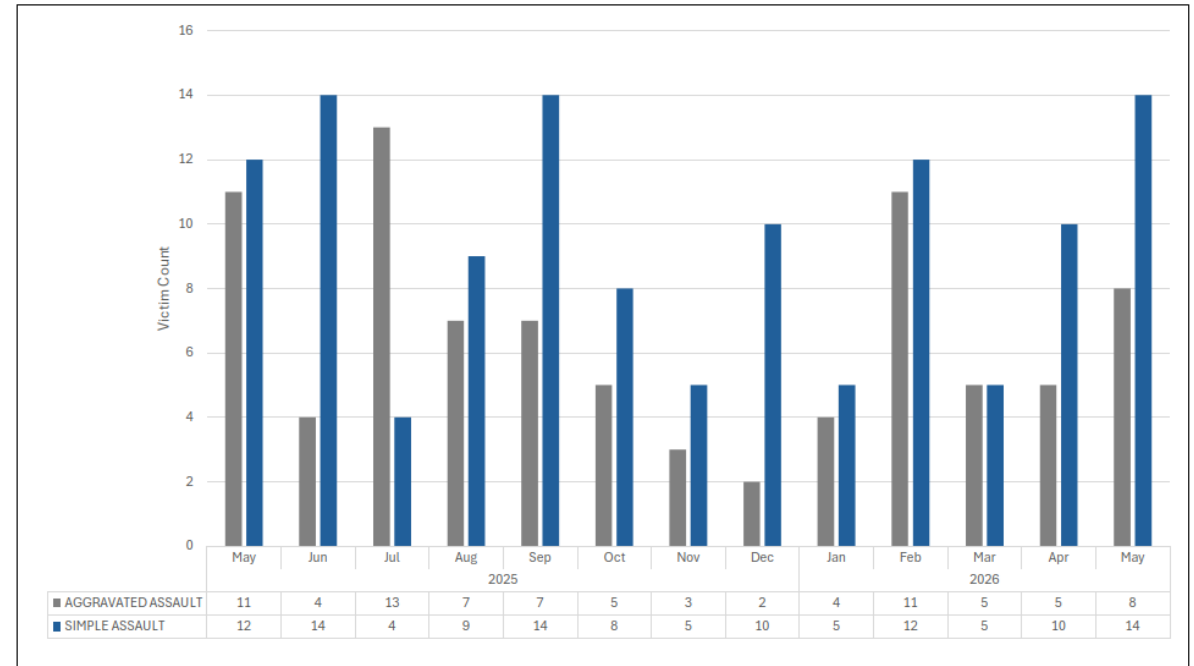
MCH Collection
Document Number 175

Safety Issues in Nightlife Spaces

Non-Residential Aggravated and Simple Assaults in the Ballpark GID Area between 9PM and 4AM for the months of May 2025 through May 2026

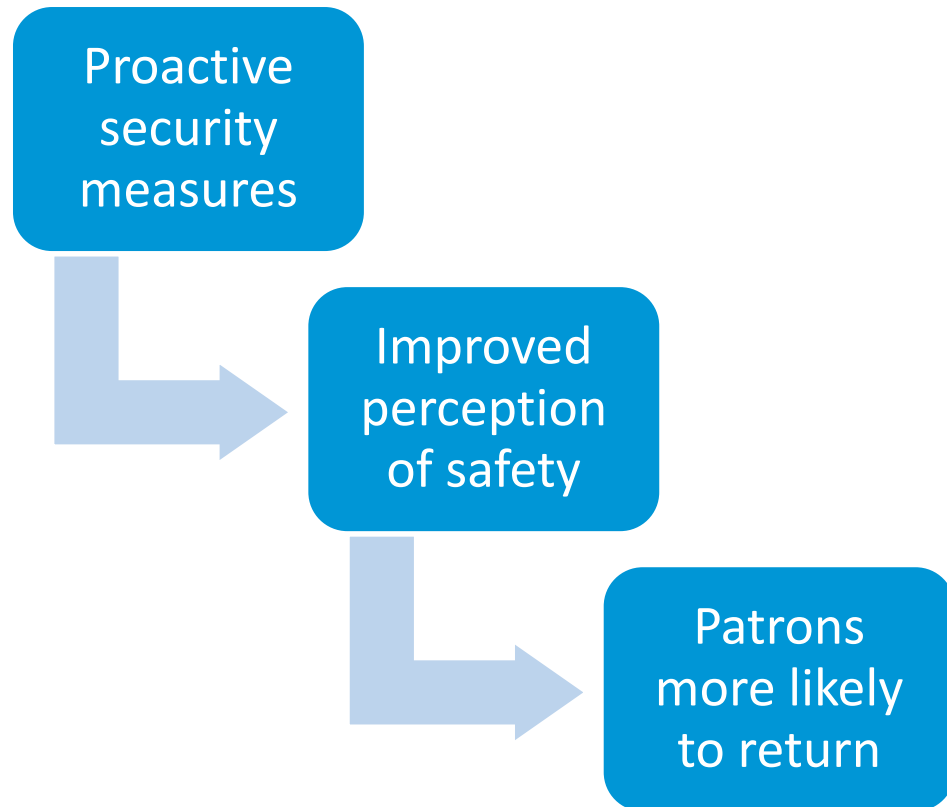


Non-Residential Aggravated and Simple Assaults in the LoDo Area between 9PM and 4AM for the months of May 2025 through May 2026



- Data, incident reports, and anecdotal evidence demonstrate heightened safety issues associated with nightlife spaces.
- These safety issues negatively impact neighborhoods and businesses and strain DPD resources.

Safety Contributes to a Thriving Nightlife Economy



Night club patrons who feel safe will return: Evidence to encourage management to address club violence

Mark B. Johnson¹, Robert Voas¹, Brenda A. Miller², Hilary Byrnes², and Beth Bourdeau²

¹Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, Prevention Research Center, 11720 Beltsville Drive Suite 900, Calverton, MD 20705-3111

²Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, Prevention Research Center, 180 Grand Avenue, Suite 1200, Oakland, CA 9461

Abstract

Introduction—There is substantial evidence that heavy drinking is associated with aggression and violence. Most managers of drinking establishments are required to maintain a security staff to deal with disruptive patrons who threaten an organization’s business or legal status. However, managers may focus little on minor instances of aggression even though these may escalate into more serious events. We hypothesize that proactive security efforts may positively affect patron’s perceptions of nighttime safety and influence their decisions to return to the club, thereby affecting the club’s bottom line.

Method—Data for this study were collected from entry and exit surveys with 1,714 attendees at 70 electronic music dance events at 10 clubs in the San Francisco Bay Area (2010–2012). Participants were asked to report on observations and experiences with aggressive behavior while in the club, their overall perception of club safety, and their plans to return to the same club in the next 30 days. Mediation multiple regression analysis was used to relate observations of club security to perceptions of personal safety and plans to return to the club.

Results—Reported observations of an active club security staff were positively related to perceptions of personal safety. Safety perceptions, in turn, were significantly related to plans to return to the club. The indirect path between perceptions of security and plans to return was significant as well.

Conclusions—The results suggest that an active security presence inside clubs can encourage club attendance by providing an environment where minor altercations are minimized, contributing to the perception of club safety.

Practical Applications—Evidence that proactive security efforts appear to increase return customers might motivate managers to implement better security policies.

Objectives



Improve safety in Denver's nightlife economy

Reduce over-regulation of entertainment



A Denver Entertainment and Nightlife scene that is:




Vibrant



Safe



Thriving



How are we reducing over-regulation of entertainment?

Three Key Improvements



Streamlining license categories and types



Simplifying license fees



Shifting to discretionary hearing process



Current Licensing Framework

Cabarets Ch. 6, Article III

- 1 Standard
- 2 Dance
- 3 Special dance
- 4 Adult
- 5 Acoustic
- 6 Event center
- 7 Special event

Amusements Ch. 7, Article II

- 1 Permanent
- 2 Temporary
- 3 Billiards

Dance Halls Ch. 7, Article III

- 1 Dance Hall

Social Rooms Ch. 7, Article IV

- 1 Standard
- 2 After hours
- 3 After hours restaurant

This framework includes:

- **4** license categories
- **14** license types
- Almost **100** different code sections across **two** chapters of the Municipal Code

There are currently:

- **445** cabaret licenses
- **55** permanent amusement licenses
- **1** social room license
- **0** dance hall licenses

Proposed Licensing Framework

Entertainment Licenses Ch. 7, Article I

1

Limited

- **Live entertainment** includes live music, live performances (like a DJ!), or a dance floor
- **Adult entertainment** includes performances by adult entertainers

- A business that offers **live entertainment**
- May offer live entertainment until **midnight**
- May offer entertainment until **2 a.m.** up to 12x per year

2

Nightlife

- A business that offers **live entertainment** past midnight
- May offer live entertainment until **4 a.m.**
- Subject to **enhanced safety requirements**

3

Adult

- A business that offers **adult entertainment**
- May offer adult entertainment until **4 a.m.**
- Subject to **enhanced safety requirements**

Proposed Licensing Framework

Entertainment Licenses Ch. 7, Article I

- 1 Adult
- 2 Nightlife
- 3 Limited

Many businesses that currently need an amusement or cabaret license will **no longer need a license** to offer certain types of low-impact entertainment:

- Currently need a cabaret license
- Music from a playlist at a restaurant
 - Unamplified acoustic guitar at a wine bar
 - Trivia at a brewery
 - Stand-up comedy at a bar
 - Events with alcohol
- Currently need an amusement or social room license
- Slam poetry at a coffee shop
 - Readings at a bookstore
 - Movie theaters
 - Ice rinks, bowling alleys, and mini golf
 - Gyms
 - Arcades and billiards
 - Events without alcohol

Current Fee Framework

Cabaret Fees – Sec. 32-47 and Sec. 32-47.5							
Fee Type	Standard	Acoustic	Dance	Special Dance	Events Center	Adult	Special Event
Application fee	\$500	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$2,000	\$0
Annual license fee	\$750	\$750	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$1,500	\$3,000	\$50/day
Underage patrons application fee	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	N/A
Underage patrons annual fee	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	N/A

Amusement Fees – Sec. 32-48.5; Sec. 32-67; and Sec. 32-109							
Fee Type	Permanent Amusements	Temporary Amusements	Dance Halls	Dance Hall Events	Standard Social Room	After Hours Social Rooms	After Hours Restaurant
Application fee	\$250	\$100	\$500	\$50	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,000
Annual license fee	\$100	\$75/event	\$600	\$100/day	\$750	\$1,500	\$1,500
Underage patrons application fee	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	\$200	N/A
Underage patrons annual fee	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	\$750	N/A

Proposed Fee Framework

Fee Type	Limited Entertainment	Nightlife Entertainment	Adult Entertainment
Application fee	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,000
Annual license fee	\$500	\$1,500	\$1,500
Annual underage patrons endorsement	\$500	\$500	N/A

Current Application Process: Hearing Required

Most applications are uncontested at the time of hearing, meaning **over 95% of hearings** are attended only by the applicant

The typical cost for an applicant to have legal representation at a hearing is between **\$5,000-\$10,000**

Mandatory Hearings

Community members and groups **only have 30 days** between the notice and hearing

The Department **cannot vacate** a mandatory hearing, even if the application has community support.

Proposed: Discretionary Hearings

- The ordinance would implement a **discretionary** hearing process for all entertainment licenses going forward, starting with cabarets, dance halls, and social rooms upon passage.
- The director must grant a hearing upon receipt of **relevant and substantial** requests.
- Hearings **could be vacated** if the requesting party withdraws the request.

Impact



Drastically reduce processing time



Encourage neighborhood support and input



Efficient use of city resources



Save applicants on legal fees

Community Accessibility Within the Discretionary Hearing Process

Evidence of community support required from residents of neighborhood

Extended time frame to allow RNOs more time to consider applications

Public dashboard for applications and scheduled hearings

Individual resident notice option

Accessible Hearing Requests Form

GNA Guidance for RNOs

Business License Hearing Fund for community members

Coming soon!
Public GNA dashboard



How are we improving safety in Denver's nightlife economy?

Prevention of Disorderly Conduct

Nightlife entertainment businesses must make reasonable efforts to:

- Minimize disorderly and unlawful conduct on the premises
- Cause the orderly admission and dispersal of patrons
- Prevent disorderly congregation within 25 feet of ingress and egress points

Impact



Prevent violent incidents associated with disorderly crowding



Address neighborhood concerns about late-night activity



Set an expectation that safety is a community responsibility

Security Requirements

- **Nightlife and adult entertainment businesses must comply with heightened security requirements.**
- **The department will make rules detailing these requirements in coordination with stakeholders and experts.**

Weapons prohibited

- Businesses must take reasonable measures to prevent weapons on the premises.

Security plan required

- Businesses must adopt and adhere to an approved security plan pursuant to department rule.

Video surveillance

- Businesses must be equipped with video surveillance pursuant to department rule.

Books and records

- Business must maintain books and records pursuant to department rule.

Manager Registration

- **Nightlife** and **adult** entertainment businesses must register at least one manager with DLCP who must submit to a fingerprint background check.
- At least one owner or manager must be **available for response** during business hours.
- It is unlawful to act as a manager without being approved by DLCP.
- It is unlawful for **third-party promoters** to assume operational control of the business or perform the duties of an entertainment business manager.

Impact



Clear point of contact for law enforcement



Visibility and access to those with day-to-day control of the premises



Address issues with promoters that exercise control over the premises without accountability

Entertainment until 4 a.m.

- Under this proposal, **nightlife & adult** entertainment businesses can continue to offer entertainment until **4 a.m.**
- Alcohol service and consumption would continue to end at **2 a.m.** pursuant to state law.

Impact



Help steady the flow of patrons leaving nightlife businesses



Reduce violent incidents associated with crowds leaving bars at 2 a.m.



Allow businesses to satisfy demand for late-night entertainment options

Underage Patrons Endorsement

- **Limited** and **nightlife** entertainment businesses that serve adult products and admit individuals under 21 after 10 p.m. must obtain an underage patrons endorsement.
 - Not required for limited entertainment businesses that require individuals under 21 to be accompanied by a parent or guardian.
- Businesses must have procedures to **prevent underage patrons from possessing adult products** and require underage patrons to wear a hand stamp or other identifier.

Impact



Modernizes current underage patrons license requirement by extending to all 21+ products



Provides visibility to law enforcement to venues that admit individuals under 21



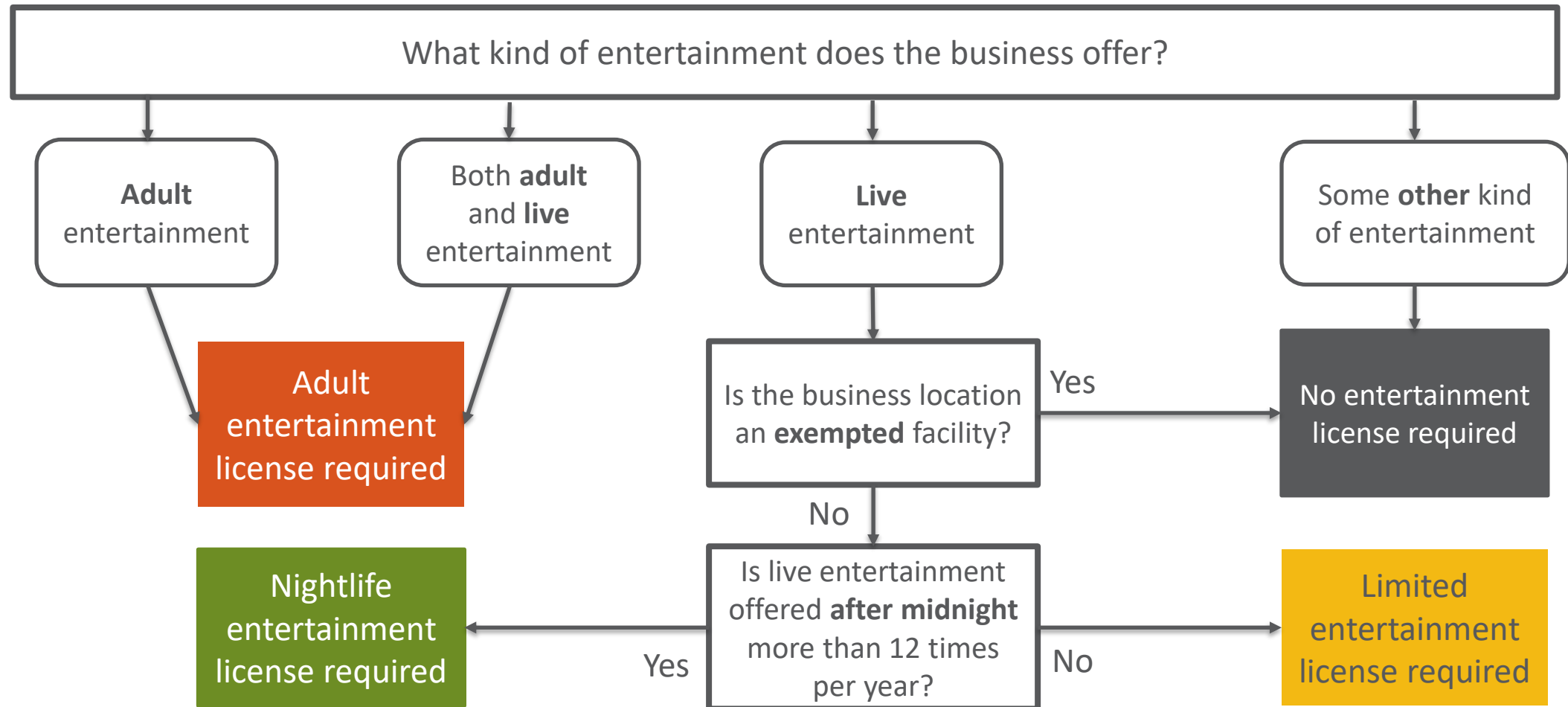
Allows businesses flexibility to host patrons under 21 within certain guardrails



Notes on Implementation

(Our most frequently asked questions)

Q: Who would need an entertainment license?



Q: How will existing licensees transition to a new license?

Preventing a lapse in licensure

- Current licensees can operate under their existing license through its expiration date.
- Licensees can apply for the applicable entertainment license prior to expiration to prevent a lapse in licensure.

Evidence of community support

- The Department will accept a past public hearing as evidence of community support for current cabaret licensees.

Discretionary hearing process

- Notice of the application will still be shared and posted.
- The Department will bypass the hearing process for current licensees in good standing unless there are relevant and substantial requests for a hearing.

Conditions

- Legal and enforceable conditions on existing licenses will transfer to the new type of entertainment license.

Q: What are all these other changes in the bill draft?

Ticketing Provisions

- Chapter 7 currently contains **outdated provisions** relating to ticket requirements that we've **removed** in this bill.
- Consumer protection laws regarding ticket sales and resales for events are governed by **state and federal law**.

Shooting Ranges

- Shooting ranges are **currently** required to obtain an amusement license. We propose **no change to this requirement**.
- With the reorganization of Chapter 7, the requirements for shooting ranges have been **written in their own article**, separate from the requirements for entertainment businesses.

Tax Provisions

- References to **taxes** for entertainment businesses have been updated throughout the code to reflect the new name of the licenses.
- We propose **no change** to taxes for these businesses.

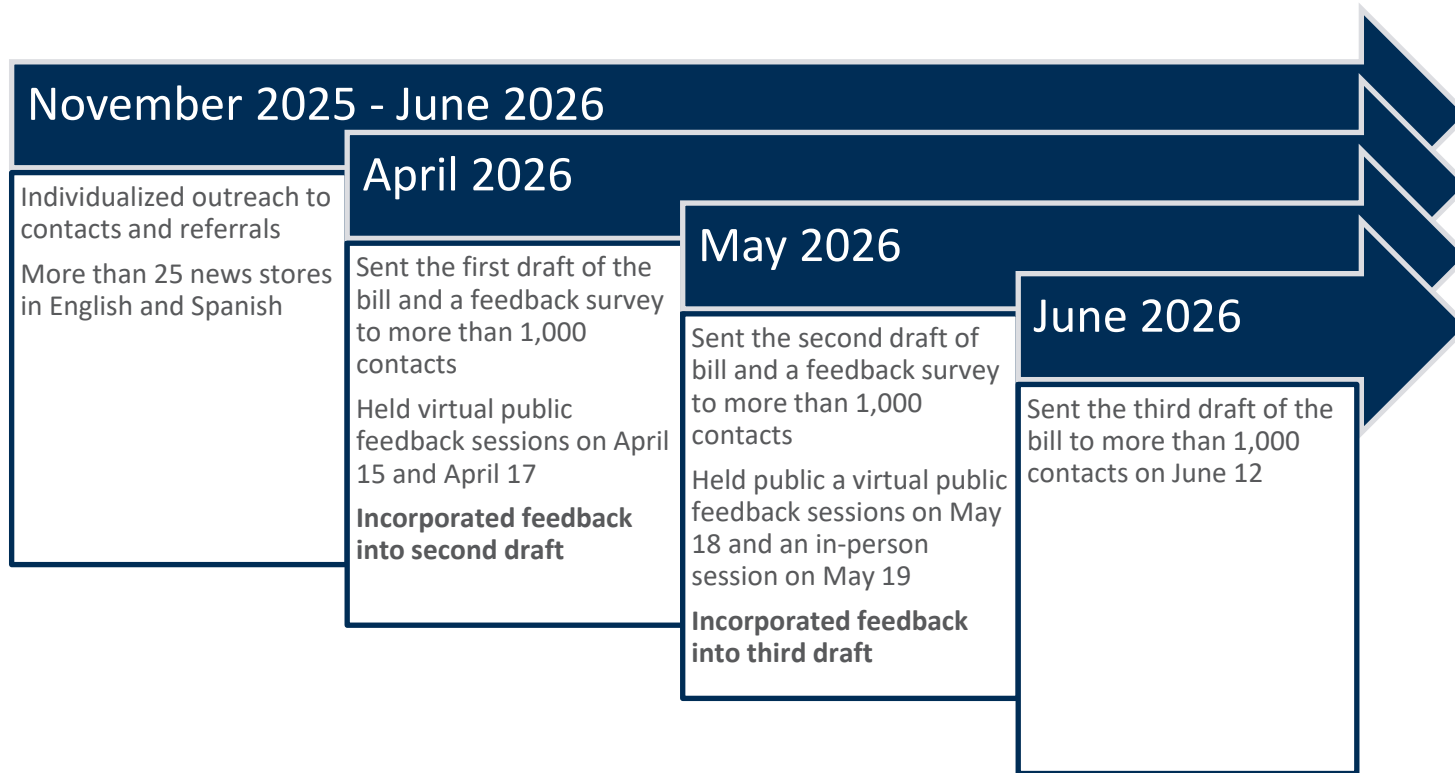
RNO Notifications

- References to **notifications** that the department must send have been updated in Chapter 12 to reflect the new names of the licenses.
- We propose **no change** to notification requirements for Registered Neighborhood Organizations.



Outreach & Next Steps

Stakeholder Outreach

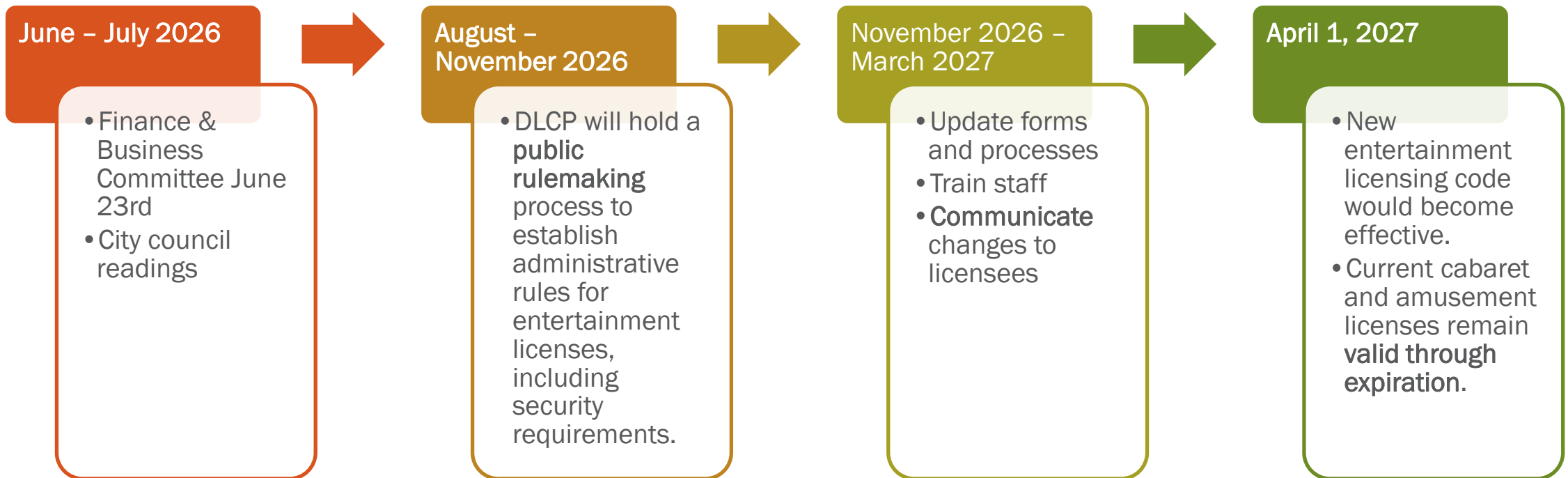


110 attendees across four public feedback sessions

33 responses to the feedback survey

More than 100 individual suggestions received and considered through various avenues

Next Steps



Stay Engaged



- Sign up for our [entertainment licensing bulletin](#) to stay informed about implementation and rulemaking.



- All information will also be on our [website](#).



- Sign up to [receive notifications](#) about license applications in your neighborhood or [find your local Registered Neighborhood Organization](#).



- Stay safe and [have fun out there!](#)



Questions?

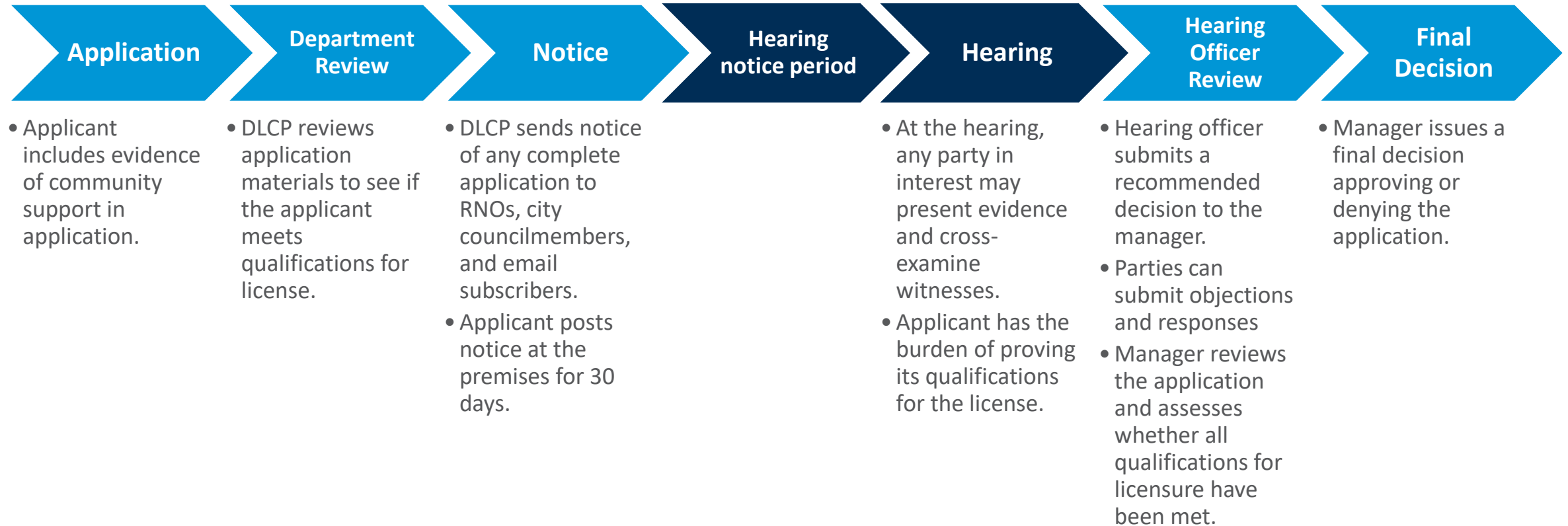
DLCPpolicy@denvergov.org



Appendix

Q: How would the discretionary hearings work?

Current Process



Proposed Application Process: Discretionary Hearing

