

BATESVILLE'S DOWNTOWN ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

Background: About three (3) years ago, the AR legislature passed a law allowing an Entertainment District to be created in a “dry” county (Independence). The City Council then passed an ordinance in Dec. 2021 to establish the Downtown Entertainment District (E. Dist.). AR law states that drinking alcohol in “public”, except in an E. Dist., is a Class 3 misdemeanor. The district allows alcohol to be purchased and consumed within specific daily hours, with detailed stipulations for the purchase and within a marked designated area. Purpose of the district is to increase attendance at events within it; thus, promoting hospitality and tourism for the area.

Private Club: The Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) organization sets the rules for alcoholic beverages in AR. After a detailed process, administered by ABC, a restaurant can become a “private club” with special rules and privileges that go beyond a “normal” restaurant. All alcohol in an E. Dist. must be purchased at a private club that is within the district. Rules for the E. Dist. must be posted at the club. Downtown has three (3) private clubs: Bigs, Las Playitas and Stella’s. They establish their own hours.

Define drinking in “public”: If you drink where you can be seen by someone (public) passing by walking or in a car; that defines the phrase. This applies to parks, sidewalks and private property.

Purchasing alcohol: Uniquely lettered plastic or paper cups with the district logo printed on them are used to dispense the beverage at the clubs. One can purchase one drink at a time and is allowed to walk in the district while consuming it. Cups are 16 oz. or less. Legal drinking age is 21.

District boundaries and hours: Main Street and College Ave. from 4th to State; 4th to Central for Harrison/Boswell; Maxfield Park is included as well. The sidewalks are marked to allow one to see when they either enter or depart the district. Local maps are available at the clubs. Hours are: Sunday through Friday from 4:30 p.m. to midnight and Saturdays and holidays from 10 a.m. until midnight. The mayor has the authority to modify these hours for special events only.

Q and A:

Q: Can I attend an event that is not in the “public’s view” such as the Loft where a private party has beverages that come with the price of admission? A: YES.

Q: Can a club ever set up a bar outside of their building? A: NO

Q: Can I request the mayor to increase the boundaries for a special event? A. NO, boundaries are firm.

Q: Can I consume my beverage inside the club in regular glasses? A: YES

Q: Can I take my cup into another business within the district? A: Only if the merchant allows it.

Q: Can I take my drink to my car or finish it in a car? A: NO

Q: Can I bring my own alcohol and put it in the designated cup? A: NO

Q: Where can I find the district hours of operation or the district’s boundaries? A: The private club has them posted’ or one can ask the manager.

Q: Do the clubs continue to serve food and non-alcoholic drinks? A: YES

Q: Do you pay membership “dues” to become a member of the private clubs? A: NO

Q: Can I pick up 2 cups to save time coming back? A: NO

Q: Can I obtain a copy from city hall of the ordinance establishing the district? A: YES