

Senate Committee on Federal and State Affairs

Re: House Bill No. 2059

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Executive Director
NOTO Arts and Entertainment District

The NOTO Arts and Entertainment District is an area in North Topeka that in the past dozen years has become the place to be for fun, colorful, unique, and engaging visitor experiences. This historic area of the city features art galleries, unique shops, activities, and one of a kind restaurants and bars. NOTO offers over fifty outdoor public art murals and sculptures, and regularly has music and other performance art at Redbud Park.

Geographically, NOTO is a relatively broad and inclusive area, though most activities are within a few blocks of one another. The current common consumption statute requires the blocking of motorized vehicles during times when alcohol is consumed. NOTO businesses are generally opposed to closing the streets except for very rare occasions. It is important to keep the streets open for several reasons. First, many of the shops do not have good access to the back so large items, such as furniture, cannot be easily loaded when front access is closed. Second, parking is a premium commodity in NOTO and closing the street removes approximately 180 parking spaces. Finally, visitors often will drive down the main strip either for the eternal search for that perfect parking place or simply for a quick cruise of the area.

Since NOTO does not generally support the closing of the street, common consumption as it is currently defined is not viable. Many details will need to be fleshed out to determine if common consumption, should the statute be revised, will be supported by the city and the NOTO district. But unless there is a statute revision, there is no point to even have the discussion.

As the community arts and entertainment district in a relatively defined geographic area, NOTO is a prime area for consideration. Assuming the statute is revised, we look forward to working with the city for consideration of possible implementation of the NOTO district as a common consumption area. Allowing visitors to get a drink from one of the seven establishments to enjoy while taking in all that NOTO has to offer would add to vibrancy of the district and would further lend to NOTO's vision to "become the region's premier arts and entertainment destination."