

healthier and safer community and a more prosperous business climate.

- **Create a binational development zone along the entire U.S.-Mexico Border Region.** Within such a zone, changes to the alcohol environment could be made to promote public health and safety, and incentives could be established for U.S. and Mexican companies to invest more money in the Border Region.
- **Restrict the number of alcohol outlets and problem businesses while cleaning up existing ones.** In the U.S. there is evidence that when more alcohol outlets are established in a community, crime and alcohol-related problems increase. In addition, problem alcohol outlets that repeatedly violate state and local laws and attract problems cause communities to deteriorate. Restricting or removing these problem businesses will encourage new businesses that provide needed services and healthy tourist activities to locate in the communities.
- **Promote public safety.** In an environment that places a high value on public safety, business development and quality of life will flourish. In San Juan, Puerto Rico, businesses and residents of the historic colonial section of the city had problems with an over-concentration of bars. The once-quiet tourist attraction swelled with violence, vandalism and crime. Tourists stopped visiting the area, and residents' quality of life deteriorated. In 1997, the mayor of San Juan, community residents and merchants in the area implemented a series of public safety policies designed to limit the amount of alcohol served and the hours of operation, as well as promote police enforcement. Crime rates were reduced by half and litter and noise diminished.

Tijuana is the gateway to Mexico for most Southern Californians. The entire region is affected by problems linked to drinking. Policies should be put in place to make the lives of residents in this binational community safer, healthier and stronger.

Changing the image of Baja California and the entire border region will take strong binational leadership. Stronger

enforcement and policy implementation in the U.S. is needed to prevent American youths from engaging in risky drinking behavior. Economic development projects in the U.S., as in San Ysidro, should adopt alcohol-control policies such as limiting the number of alcohol outlets and providing sufficient law enforcement.

In Mexico, businesses catering to a "negative economy" should be discouraged. These include business environments that support a high density of alcohol outlets and lawless operations. An alternative emphasis should be placed on businesses that attract family-oriented tourists, improve the image of the region and provide needed services to the community.

References

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Alcohol and Economic Impact in the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region

The Border Project • January 2007

With more than 54 million crossers annually, the San Diego-Tijuana border is the most heavily traveled port in the world.² Communities along the U.S.- Mexico border are closely connected in many ways, including through factors that influence quality of life in both countries.

Problems related to alcohol such as violence, crime, neighborhood deterioration and economic stagnation have become a significant barrier to economic development in the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region. But emerging binational and localized collaborations are presenting opportunities for residents to reduce and prevent these problems. By proactively advancing sound policies on both sides of the border, individuals and organizations in the region are improving their quality of life.

This issue briefing describes the ways in which inadequate control policies and a lack of enforcement of alcohol policies are inhibiting economic development in border communities. The briefing also proposes solutions that can be implemented to create a healthier environment for both economic growth and public safety. With support from local, state and federal governments, the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region continues to build on its success as a national model for U.S.-Mexico alcohol policy development.

A Barrier to Health and Safety

The effect of alcohol outlets on public health and safety is regional, impacting not only the patrons visiting the bars and night clubs along Avenida Revolución in Tijuana, but also residents from Baja California to San Diego County and beyond. Tijuana attracts underage and young adults from the United States seeking a lower drinking age, cheap alcohol and an all-night party atmosphere. Problems stemming from this cross-border binge-drinking culture include crime, violence and car crashes that result in



numerous deaths, injuries and economic costs to communities on both sides of the border.

Studies conducted at the San Ysidro Port of Entry found that, on an average weekend, 1,500 people are intoxicated and return to San Diego



County with a blood alcohol concentration or BAC level above .08¹, the legal limit for driving under the influence in California. Nearly one in three of those people will drive drunk⁴.

On both sides of the border, dealing with alcohol-related problems strains government coffers and places an undue burden on public

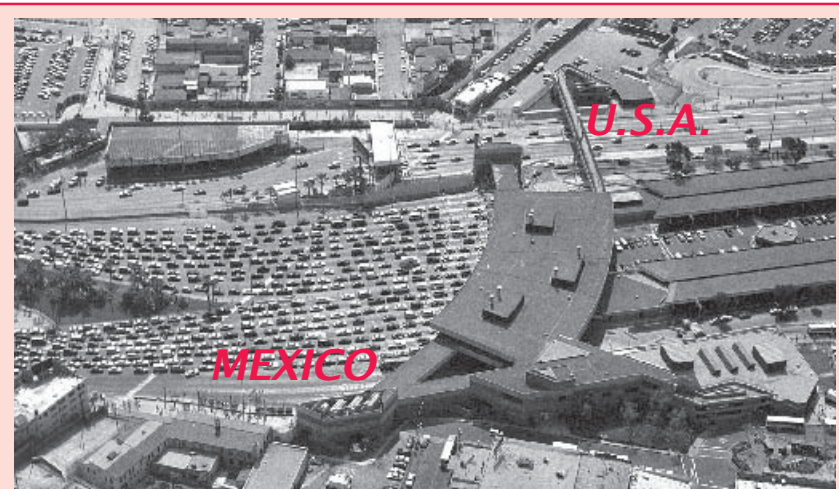
health and safety resources, including law enforcement, the judicial system and emergency medical services. In the state of Baja California, valuable government resources are stressed further in order to deal with the influx of underage youth and young adults from San Diego and beyond who go to Tijuana and Rosarito for the chief purpose of consuming alcohol.

Inadequate alcohol policies influence tourism as well. Government-sponsored tourism campaigns spend large amounts of time, energy and capital attracting family-oriented tourists to the restaurants, beaches, boating, natural

splendor, hiking and Mexican culture. However, their campaigns struggle to compete with the images and aggressive tactics of bars that intensely market the all-night drinking scene. As a result, the image of Baja California is largely defined as a party zone for underage and young Americans.

That image is further affected when the partiers are involved in alcohol-related car crashes, assaults and other crimes - often as the victims. The alcohol poisoning death of a young woman at a Tijuana bar and the death

of a California Highway Patrol Officer by a drunken driver leaving Tijuana made headlines in the United States in recent years. When devastating consequences from excessive alcohol consumption in Baja California hit the headlines, tourism suffers overall.



San Diego-Tijuana busiest border crossing in the world

Hospitality and tourism are the third largest industry in San Diego County. In 2005, 15.9 million overnight visitors spent \$5.8 billion in San Diego². The same visitors can easily venture to Tijuana to shop, eat and spend more money. However, many tourists say friends and family living in San Diego advise against going to Tijuana. Money that

could support Tijuana's economy is lost because of the negative image associated with alcohol use and crime in Baja California. This disproportionately hinders business on both sides of the border, including those that do not sell alcohol.

The Binational Response

In 1997, the Institute for Public Strategies (IPS) launched the San Diego-Tijuana Border Project to reduce underage and binge drinking in the Border Region. The project uses an environmental approach to prevention that includes the following components: applied data and research, intentional organizing, media advocacy, policy advocacy and enforcement. In the same year, IPS and the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE) began collecting data to frame the problem and solutions. Together with a coalition of community groups, law enforcement agencies and other partners, the project began implementing environmentally-based changes, including:

- **Operation Safe Crossing.** A binational, multi-agency law-enforcement and community effort designed to prevent minors under 18 from crossing into Mexico to drink and then return to the United States. In Tijuana, law enforcement officials stepped up their presence to maintain public order and safety in the streets.
- **Responsible Beverage Sales and Service (RBSS).** The Responsible Hospitality Coalition and IPS, in collaboration with the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC), Tijuana Office of Reglamentos (equivalent to ABC), Secretary of Tourism of Baja California and Tijuana Police conducted a series of courses in Tijuana. The courses helped bar managers, bartenders and service staff identify fake U.S. ID cards and ways to serve alcohol responsibly. Tijuana law enforcement officials, in turn, trained San Diego Police officers in how to detect fake Mexican IDs. The RBSS program also operates in San Diego County.

- **A community agreement** between Tijuana City Hall, the Tijuana Law and Regulations Department (Reglamentos), the Secretary of Tourism, bar owners and other business owners designed to jointly improve the quality of service at bars and night clubs along Avenida Revolución. Similar agreements exist in Rosarito and Puerto Nuevo.
- **A ban on all-you-can-drink and "ladies night" specials** that promote excessive alcohol consumption for a flat fee was enacted by the Tijuana City Council. In addition, Tijuana city officials removed alcohol advertisements, promotions, banners and signs from Avenida Revolución. They also limited the area in which "barkers" from bars can operate. The state of California adopted a bill to prohibit alcohol advertisements geared toward those under age 21.

Coupled with a strong media component, the above measures resulted in a 51-percent reduction in the number of underage drinking pedestrians. In addition, the number of late-night partiers crossing decreased by more than 25 percent, and BAC levels higher than .08 declined by one-third.¹

Long-Term Solutions

Significant reductions in alcohol-related problems have been made along the border due to policy advancement. Now, it is imperative that existing policies be enforced and

new policies be implemented in order to continue to reduce alcohol-related problems for both U.S. and Mexican citizens. This will improve public health and safety in the border region and increase the potential for a diverse cross-border tourist economy. New environmentally-based solutions include:

"Supported by local, state and federal governments, the San Diego-Tijuana border region has become a national model for U.S.-Mexico alcohol policy development."

- **Eliminating permits for extra hours of alcohol sale in Tijuana.** Limiting the hours of operation will reduce the amount of alcohol consumed and reduce related problems, especially those occurring during the early morning.

Mexican cities along the border that do not allow extra hours, have seen significant reductions in alcohol-related problems. For example, Ciudad Juarez, south of El Paso, Texas, experienced an 89% reduction in people returning to the U.S. legally intoxicated¹. In addition, a recently released state poll shows 79% of Baja California residents support eliminating the extra hours; in Tijuana the support is 83%; in Ensenada 70%; while Mexicali

The Binational Policy Council

Several years ago, the San Diego-Tijuana Border Project formed the Binational Policy Council (BPC). The BPC is composed of community organizations, government, law enforcement and businesses from both sides of the border. Its purpose is to make policy recommendations on alcohol issues, as well a variety of public health and safety issues that arise throughout the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region. Specific recommendations of this group include:

In California.

1. Increased DUI checkpoints and roving DUI patrols in the San Diego-Tijuana Border Region.
2. Proactive police intervention with intoxicated pedestrians.
3. Enforcement of ban on alcohol advertising that targets minors.
4. Mandatory trainings for sellers and servers of alcohol.

In Baja California

1. The elimination of permits which allow entertainment venues extended hours of operation with "extra hours" for alcohol sales.
2. As mandated by the Baja California State Congress, the implementation of an advisory council in each municipality comprised of a majority of members/groups from the community to make recommendations on alcohol related problems.
3. Mandatory trainings for sellers and servers of alcohol.

showed a remarkable 91% support for the elimination of extra hours³. These data should not surprise anyone; these communities are tired of the burden of alcohol-related problems. Eliminating extra hours not only reduces crime, violence and DUIs, but also saves lives on both sides of the border.

- **Include public health and safety considerations in economic development projects.** A stronger public health and safety infrastructure should be created between the U.S. and Mexico. As the Border Region develops, so will tourism - which can either cater to young people looking to engage in risky drinking behavior in Tijuana, such as it has along Avenida Revolución and in Rosarito, or to adults with families from around the world seeking safe, comfortable and diverse tourism opportunities across the Baja California region. Carefully planned alcohol policy can create a