

Study: Houston smoking ban had no effect on bar business

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By Lee McGuire / 11 News

HOUSTON -- Lighting up to country music at an Irish pub was something Scottie Nelson thought he'd have to abandon with the smoking ban. "I was concerned at first because I wondered where we go," said Nelson. "But it didn't really end up changing anything."

Two years ago, Houston expanded its smoking ban to include almost all public spaces. To see if the ban affected bars and restaurants, the city of Houston spent \$12,000 on a study. They learned that the ordinance did not have a discernable impact for either improving business or reducing it.

"It's reassuring that we did the right thing. We protected workers who often don't have a say in where they can work," said Houston Mayor Bill White. There are a lot of factors that can effect business sales. They range from the economy to the time of the year.

"I would say that in the first year we experienced a slight drop in sales, but we are back to where we were before the smoking ban. We're probably just surpassing that as far as sales," said Jill Schoeffler, who works at Brian O'Neill's Irish Pub.

Brian O'Neill's Irish Pub built a patio, which has made smokers like Nelson happy. "We sit out there and enjoy a fine cigar and a pint of the good stuff," said Nelson.