



License Hearing Office

CITY OF SAINT PAUL
OFFICES OF THE CITY COUNCIL

15 West Kellogg Boulevard, 310 City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1615
Email: LH-Licensing@ci.stpaul.mn.us
Tel: 651-266-8512 | Fax: 651-266-8574

April 3, 2026

Ms. Stephanie Shimp, President
Clairview Holdings LLC, d/b/a Groveland Tap
1834 St Clair Avenue
Saint Paul, MN 55105

VIA EMAIL: stephanie@blueplateco.com

RE: Recommendation to the City Council for Approval with Imposition of Conditions

Dear Ms. Shimp:

The License Hearing Office has completed its review of your application requesting the addition of a Gambling Location license and Upgrade to a full Liquor On Sale, and Liquor On Sale Sunday license from an existing *Wine On Sale and Malt On Sale (Strong) license (which included Sunday service)*. *The establishment will continue to have an existing Liquor Outdoor Area (Patio) license.*

Notification was mailed on February 13, 2026, to all properties within 350 feet of the licensed establishment. The 15-day notification period concluded on February 28, 2026, at 4:30 p.m., during which twenty-one (21) letters and emails in opposition were received, triggering a hearing. In addition, one hundred and eighty (180) letters and emails in support of the application were submitted, including support from the Macalester-Groveland Community Council.

A hearing was held on March 5, 2026. At the hearing, licensing and zoning staff from the Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) reviewed and evaluated your request, presented a staff report, and recommended approval with conditions. You were provided the opportunity to speak on your own behalf, present evidence, submit supporting documentation, and respond to and question the DSI report. As previously communicated, the final decision on your application rests with the Saint Paul City Council.

During the hearing, several issues were raised that require additional research and consideration:

- Whether the conditions imposed on your license in 2023 or proposed prior to 2026 License Hearings are consistent with those applied to Estelle, the nearest similarly licensed establishment.
- Whether the removal of your previously agreed-upon conditions is justified on the grounds that your agreement was made under duress, particularly in light of the alleged undue and lengthy delays caused by the City during its processing of Groveland Tap's 2023 patio application.
- Whether greater weight should be given to the concerns of residents who share the alley and live in close proximity to 1834 St. Clair Avenue, as compared to members of the general public or residents living farther away.

What follows are my findings and recommendation for you to consider before the City Council vote on the matter.



FINDINGS:

Whether the conditions imposed on your license in 2023 or proposed prior to 2026 License Hearings are consistent with those applied to Estelle, the nearest similarly licensed establishment, depends on the specific facts and circumstances of each case. The imposition of liquor license conditions in the City is not fully standardized and is typically determined on a case-by-case basis, particularly in relation to the notification process, which requires notice to be sent to all affected parties within 350 feet of the proposed licensed establishment. Under Saint Paul Legislative Code Section 310.04(c), any conditions or restrictions imposed on a license must be reasonable and supported by a rational basis. The section further outlines the types of findings that may justify such conditions and the nature of permissible restrictions.

In the 2023 and 2026 License Hearings for Groveland Tap, objections were raised regarding parking, odor, noise, garbage, lighting, gambling, and safety. By contrast, Estelle did not receive objections during its notification period. As a result, DSI recommended for Estelle standardized conditions (See, RES 19-1638) consistent with its licenses for Liquor On Sale (100 seats or fewer), Liquor On Sale (Sunday), Liquor–Outdoor Service Area (Sidewalk), and Liquor Catering.

With respect to Groveland Tap, DSI’s recommended conditions are generally consistent with standard requirements, particularly those relating to operation as a restaurant and midnight closing pursuant to Saint Paul Legislative Code section 409.02 (defining “restaurant”), as well as noise and outdoor service restrictions. In addition to these standard conditions, further conditions were developed in response to concerns uniquely raised by nearby residents and were tailored to address those specific issues.

Following the March 5, 2026 hearing, I considered (1) your request to remove all existing license conditions, (2) your willingness to accept only the two newly recommended DSI conditions, and (3) the ongoing impacts on nearby neighbors. Based on these considerations, the recommended conditions—retained with modification (see pages 3 and 4 of this letter)—are consistent with the concerns raised and the standards set forth in Section 310.04(c). These conditions are intended to promote public health, safety, and welfare; support public peace; eliminate nuisances or activities that detract from the peaceful enjoyment of urban life; and enhance security and safety in nearby neighborhoods.

Whether the removal of your previously agreed-upon conditions is justified on the grounds that your agreement was made under duress, particularly in light of the alleged undue and lengthy delays caused by the City during its processing of Groveland Tap’s 2023 patio application. This request for the complete removal of previously agreed-upon conditions was first introduced at the March 5, 2026 hearing and was not included in the February 13, 2026 notice. As a result, neither City staff nor affected parties within 350 feet were aware of this intent during the notification period and were not adequately prepared to review or comment on it.

You asserted that the conditions are unfair compared to those imposed on other businesses, that you agreed to them under duress due to alleged City delays in processing your 2023 patio application, and that they are unnecessary given the absence of complaints since 2023.

Following the hearing, staff reviewed the application history. In 2012, a similar application was withdrawn (See, SR 12-49). In 2023, after receiving multiple objections, a hearing (See, SR 23-64) resulted in approval with nine (9) conditions, adopted by the City Council (See, RES 23-536). As a result of this review, staff determined that delays in processing were primarily due to unresolved site plan and compliance issues involving the proposed expansion, including changes that affected the requirement for a compact and contiguous licensed premises, which required temporary cessation of alcohol service until compliance was achieved.

Although no violations of license conditions have been reported, a July 2025 digital security incident limited access to historical records. Enforcement is carried out through the City’s complaint-based system, which prioritizes education and voluntary compliance before escalating to formal enforcement

actions. The City also conducts at least one annual proactive compliance check, during which law enforcement uses an individual under the age of 21 to attempt to purchase alcohol; any such sale constitutes a violation and is addressed in accordance with the established penalty matrix.

In the absence of complaints, investigations are generally not initiated; however, a lack of complaints alone does not necessarily indicate that a business is operating in full harmony with the surrounding community.

Overall, you did not provide substantive evidence to support removal of the existing conditions. Moreover, the absence of complaints and/or accessible historical records does not, by itself, demonstrate responsible operation. The existing conditions serve to promote accountability and address ongoing concerns raised by nearby residents. Accordingly, the conditions will remain in effect, with certain modifications.

Whether greater weight should be given to the concerns of residents who share the alley and live in close proximity to 1834 St. Clair Avenue, as compared to members of the general public or residents living farther away, depends on how directly each group is affected. While twenty-one (21) letters and emails in opposition were received compared to one hundred and eighty (180) in support, several of the opposing neighbors share the alley with Groveland Tap and reside immediately behind the licensed establishments specifically at 1837, 1841, 1846, and 1849 Berkeley Avenue. In total, nine (9) properties share the alley with the establishment.

You are commended for your contributions to neighboring residents, particularly your commitment not to extend business hours and to maintain a closing time of either midnight or 1:00 a.m. Although not required, you have also provided parking options—including a parking lot and shared parking agreements with nearby businesses—and have voluntarily cleared snow from the alley during winter months to improve access.

The alley is used by you for trash collection and deliveries of food and alcohol as well as by neighboring residents. While you have made efforts to arrange for smaller delivery vehicles, you cannot control the size of trucks used by vendors, which may include large box trucks or 18-wheel semitrailers. These vehicles can at times obstruct traffic in the alley, preventing neighbors from leaving their homes.

Parking in an urban setting is inherently limited and generally operates on a first-come, first-served basis. Nevertheless, you should continue to make reasonable efforts to minimize use of the alley. This may include reminding staff and patrons to use St. Clair Avenue rather than the alley whenever feasible.

Given their close proximity, these residents are more directly affected by issues such as noise, odors, traffic, light pollution, loitering, and safety concerns, as noted both at the current hearing and at the prior hearing in 2023. Although other surrounding community members expressed support for the application, the immediate and ongoing impacts of the establishment's operations are more acutely experienced by those living adjacent to the property. Accordingly, their concerns may warrant greater consideration.

RECOMMENDATION:

My recommendation to the Saint Paul City Council is that your application for a Gambling Location license and Upgrade to a full Liquor On Sale, and Liquor On Sale Sunday license from an existing Wine On Sale and Malt On Sale (Strong) license (which included Sunday service) and a continuation of the existing Liquor Outdoor Area (Patio) license, be approved with the imposition of modified conditions. They are as follows:

1. On a daily basis, the Licensee will pick up all the trash directly in front of, behind, and around the building, including in the alley and the Licensee's parking lot.
2. All patrons must enter and exit the establishment through the front door facing St. Clair Avenue, except those who are unable to use the front door, wish to sit on the patio, and have

been given permission by the Licensee to enter and exit the licensed premises via the outdoor patio area.

3. Staff must use rear points of access from the licensed premises to the alley, including the outdoor patio area, only when removing garbage or facilitating deliveries.
4. The patio service, including consumption of food and liquor as defined in Chapter 409, will end at 9:00 p.m. on Sunday through Thursday nights with the area being cleared no later than 9:30 p.m., and at 10:00 p.m. on Friday and Saturday nights with the area being cleared no later than 10:30 p.m. Patrons may relocate to a space inside the building.
5. The Licensee will diligently monitor and control all noise emanating from the establishment to prohibit neighborhood disturbance. All activity and noise taking place on the exterior of the property, including the patio area, must comply with applicable state and local rules and regulations, including but not limited to Saint Paul Legislative Code Chapter 293 – Noise.
6. Signage shall be prominently posted at all exits that states, “You are exiting into a residential neighborhood—please leave quietly.” Signage shall also be posted prominently within the patio area to remind patrons that when they are on the patio, they are in a residential neighborhood and should keep their noise down to show respect and consideration for the neighbors.
7. The Licensee agrees to operate the business in compliance with the definition of “Restaurant” as defined in Saint Paul Legislative Code section 409.02.
8. The Licensee agrees to close the establishment at 12:00 a.m., midnight. All patrons shall vacate the premises by 12:30 a.m. each day of the week as required by Saint Paul Legislative Code section 409.02.

You have until April 10, 2026, to respond. If you agree to the recommended conditions, please sign and return the Conditions Affidavit. Upon receipt of your signed conditions affidavit, the matter will be placed on the next available City Council’s Consent Agenda.

You may submit the signed Conditions Affidavit by emailing a legible scanned copy to LH-Licensing@ci.stpaul.mn.us, or by mailing it to:

15 West Kellogg Boulevard
310 City Hall
Saint Paul, MN 55102-1615

Your questions should be directed to Legislative Hearing Coordinator Greg Weiner at 651-266-8512.

Sincerely,

/s/

Nhia Vang
Legislative Hearing Officer

cc: Stephanie Shimp VIA EMAIL: stephanie@blueplateco.com
Department of Safety and Inspections (DSI) Licensing and Zoning Staff: Eric Hudak, YaYa Diatta, Tom Ferrara, LaTiffany Porter, and Grace Wagner
City Attorney’s Office: Monica Shaffer
Ward 3
Hearing Folder

ATTACHMENTS:

Conditions Affidavit

[Chapter 310](#) and [Chapter 409](#)

Council Files [RES 19-1638](#), [RES 23-536](#) and [RES 26-35](#)

License Hearing Files [SR 12-49](#) and [SR 23-64](#)