

Comments received by St Paul City Council Ward 6 regarding Ordinance 20-29, amending Chapter 409 of the Legislative Code pertaining to the distance restriction between liquor license locations, to reduce the location radius for off-sale wine only license locations.

12/9/2020

I'm writing to encourage you to vote for the wine license ordinance change tonight. We've talked about this inside our associations, with our liquor stores and with our council members and district councils. The most profound argument for it is just how out of step St. Paul is from our surrounding communities. Maplewood, North Saint Paul, Oakdale, Minneapolis,... all of them are ahead of us on this one.

I hope we can see eye to eye. This change has no significant downside. The process has been more than adequately fulfilled in terms of vetting. This one seems like a clear chance for St. Paul to catch up and send a clear message to those small businesses we talk about valuing so much: "the City of St. Paul is a good home for your venture, this council and this mayor stand with businesses as they try to find their way through, creatively. We will catch up and improve systems and work with you."

A vote against doesn't make any sense. It sends the opposite message. Is St. Paul really Open for Business? I hope you think we are and I hope you'll vote yes for this.

-p

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12/8/2020

Hello council member this is Nick with 1st Grand Avenue Liquors. I am just writing you to make sure that I have exhausted my breath on this issue so I know I did all I could. It seems that most, if not all, council members have made up their minds. I am asking you to please step back and take one more look at this issue. There has been no outcry for more wine shops in St Paul except Yoerg Brewing. Please believe me when I say all this will do is make the pieces of pie smaller in St Paul. Under the current law we have to start paying \$15 hour soon and liquor prices are not going up because of the big box and grocery that are moving in.. I have been down this road with my Woodbury store (R.I.P). Less than a 1/4 mile from 1st Grand Lunds is looking to put up a development and of course they will put in a wine shop. Again the pie gets smaller. Is it better to have a number of struggling businesses that have a hard time paying the bills or a smaller number of healthy businesses that are able to soak up the added stress that that state has already put on us. This is the reason we have the 1/2 mile rule in the 1st place. Adding access to alcohol is not going to make the city more money other than a few pennies on licensing fees again at expense of the current upstanding businesses. A large percentage of police calls to businesses are to alcohol retail stores. Will this put extra strain on police? I don't know but I know from but running a liquor store during the past year it has been about once a month we have had to call the police. The times are changing and most of the time the police were to busy to come. These are all things to think

about. The local businesses need your help to stay profitable and strong and adding any new licenses will hurt them. 1st Grand Ave. Liquors and staff thank you for taking one more look at this before making your final vote.

Nick Nadeau

1st Grand Avenue Liquors

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City Council Members of St.Paul,

I own a small independent liquor store in St. Paul and I strongly oppose the proposed change to the distance requirements between stores. I have had the opportunity to speak to a couple of you to express my feelings in regards to these changes. Most of the assumptions that have been made is that it won't effect my business, but it will. Just as other changes that have been made in the city of St. Paul has effected my business. The main reason I purchased my business in the city of St. Paul is because of requirements that the city provided to protect small businesses. Again, those requirements were put in place to protect small businesses. This is not the way to provide another revenue stream for the city, nor is it upholding the intent to protect the small business community.

I strongly oppose this change and respectfully ask you to vote against it. If you wish to further discuss this with me please contact me at 320-493-4261 (my cell) or at the store, 651-699-7070.

Thank you,

Lucas Gulbranson

Liquor Village

12/7/2020

Dear Councilmembers Thao and Prince,

I am writing to register my strong objections to a plan to make an exception, to allow one particular east side brewery to add a "fine wine" shop, and skirt the old rules we have on the books about radius distance. If I want "fine wine," I can still get it at most liquor stores in the city or my east side. In fact, as an east side resident, I feel like my neighborhood is already flooded with liquor stores (and many of them have great wine selections).

I urge you to look at this issue not just through a business perspective but through social impact and equity lenses. The policies you change or make set a tone for who we are and what we value. I used to live 3 blocks east of Yoerg as a boy. When my family came to St. Paul from Fresno 22 years ago in 1998, we lived in a duplex on Freemont and Mendota. Yoerg is already in busy company. It's a straight shot down 7th and Kellogg to the downtown bars. There are liquor stores in the area by Lafayette bridge, up by Arcade and at Mounds blvd. that area is not poor of liquor and wine.

One in four Minnesotans has a DUI/DWI. Read that again please. It is not a typo. One in four Minnesotans have a DUI. What tone and tenor does our city council set if we change the law to further flood our communities with liquor and wine?

I currently live at Margaret and White Bear. I am literally surrounded by liquor stores as it is as an east side resident. It's embarrassing. Four blocks north on White Bear is 7 Bears Liquor. A few blocks east of me at McKnight and Minnehaha is Sarracks Liquor. Just south of me past 94 and before Suburban, by the Target, is an MGM Liquor. I haven't even mentioned the Cub Foods Liquor at Sun Ray. I can get "fine wine" at almost all of these places as it is. If I was a Woodbury resident or an Apple Valley resident, would my government tolerate that much flooding of vice into our neighborhoods?

In a global 100 year pandemic, when many people turn inwards and to their vices, with social anxiety and depression climbing, some people have sadly turned to drinking. What short and long term impact will this social pandemic do to our social compact as a city? It sends the wrong message for our resilience as a community, as a city.

Your august body once led communities on things such as banning indoor smoking and limiting access to menthol cigarettes. If you make exceptions for liquor stores to proliferate in poor and low wealth communities of color, it is a step back.

I urge you to recall what happens when you sometimes give special treatment to certain industries and businesses. Once upon a time we changed the law for Surly. How did such an ungrateful business pay back us taxpayers? In the guise of pandemic losses, they fired staff who attempted to unionize. I am going to sound harsh, but I mean it, and it must be said. Sometimes, when make exceptions to some people/industries, we get taken advantage, and I mean we as a taxpaying base/city, and you as policymakers. It is like being in an unhealthy/abusive relationship. We are the abused. We give the abuser an inch, and he takes a yard. We give him a foot and he takes a mile.

Please hold the line.

Please do not flood our communities with more wine and liquor.

Remember,

One in four Minnesotans has a DUI. And we know the scourge of addiction and dependency amplifies so many more other vices, such as domestic violence and other hard crimes.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Chai Lee

12/4/2020

Hello Councilmembers,

I have emailed my Ward councilmember but wanted to forward the message to all as your decisions effect everyone in St. Paul.

My name is Kyle DeHaven and I live in St. Paul's Mac Groveland neighborhood.

I work in Highland Park. I received my bachelors degree from a St. Paul institution.

I take much pride in living in St. Paul. Therefore I have to speak up about a current proposal impacting our business community and local residents.

It has come to my attention that the city is proposing a decrease in the minimum distance between liquor stores. With this proposal to reduce the distance for "wine only sales", from the current half mile radius to an originally proposed 300 ft and now a quarter mile, we are looking at a radical change in the business makeup of St. Paul. The change is a nearly a 9 fold multiplier on how close these businesses can be. The current 2640ft is already more than generous and St. Paul is nowhere near pushing capacity.

I would be very curious if any of the council members have had a single request for more liquor stores from constituents or if this entire proposal is a sweetheart deal for a select few business owners.

Currently we have around 50 liquor stores and an area of just over 50 square miles. A rough estimate puts us at just under 1 liquor store per square mile. The current regulation already allows for half a mile between stores which we are nowhere near that density.

Changing the rules now seems extremely redundant and will just further spread the sales between stores. **Adding additional locations will not increase sales or tax revenue as the market sees no need for additional liquor stores. There is already room for more stores and stores are available to purchase.**

You can almost say that St. Paul is well saturated with liquor stores. If there was a demand for more liquor stores these locations would sell very quickly and not sit on the market idle.

Now to the real problem. If we add more liquor stores it will not only kick the door open for corporate megaliths like Total Wine to come in and destroy local small businesses, as they are the biggest killer of small businesses in the liquor industry, it would be detrimental to real homegrown businesses that have been in St. Paul for generations. It will have many negative impacts on tight knit communities of St. Paul.

Studies show that increasing liquor stores in an area not only increase violent crimes in the area but have an impact on youth and their ability to access alcohol. Liquor store employees are public servants in that they are the ones who can cut people off if they are too intoxicated and should not be drinking and regulate that youth do not get access to it. If we add more locations this just furthers the problem and allows more opportunity for abuse.

Generally associations with many liquor stores in an area are not good and seen as "bad areas". While liquor stores are just another retail establishment, crime is definitely more prevalent, again adding more problems with more locations of access.

St. Paul prides itself on the tight knit wards within the city limits and an increase of liquor stores, and the problems that come with them, goes directly against the public image many residents have come to take pride in.

I strongly urge you to vote against decreasing the distance between liquor stores with this "wine only" proposal from council member Jane Prince.

I have included some links to studies showing that more liquor stores will not only hurt the home grown businesses here in St. Paul but have detrimental effects on the community as a whole.

Changing the rules for one individual is a slap in the face to the hundreds of people employed in the liquor industry who have for decades played by the rules. There are even examples of "grandfathered" stores being closer than the current 1/2 mile rule (see Haskell's and Liquor Village approx 1/4 mile from each other) so in some examples we are already beyond the 1/2 mile regulations.

There is no demand for more liquor stores and if there were, the current regulations are more than accommodating. Pretending that adding another liquor store location would somehow increase tax revenue is an absolute farce and makes no logical sense. It will further divide the current pie.

To the comments of spreading out the increased revenues from Covid restrictions, the same could be said about the flavored tobacco ban as it has also drastically increased our tobacco sales. I do not see any councilmembers trying to change those laws for fear of regulation based increase in profits. So it seems a bit disingenuous to even comment on the increase in sales due to covid restrictions.

<https://www.recoveryanswers.org/research-post/adolescents-growing-up-in-neighborhoods-with-more-liquor-stores-are-more-likely-to-drink/>

<https://drugfree.org/drug-and-alcohol-news/study-finds-link-between-number-of-neighborhood-liquor-stores-and-youth-homicides/>

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing back from you. I will be informing other constituents of the proposal and have them reach out to you and other councilmembers before the final vote.

Kyle D. DeHaven

12/1/2020

We are opposed to changing the distance between liquor licenses

Jack Farrell
Chairman & CEO
Haskell's Wines and Spirits