

## **ALCOHOL OUTLET DENSITY - OMAHA**

### **What is outlet density?**

Outlet density is defined as the number of liquor licenses existing within an established geographic area. How do we set those parameters locally or statewide? While there is no magic number or formula, discussion about guidelines for these types of businesses needs to begin at both a local and state level.

### **Will a density reduction solve Omaha's crime and other alcohol-related problems?**

While no single strategy will eliminate all the problems we face in our neighborhoods, addressing alcohol outlet density is part of a multi-faceted approach to prevent alcohol-related problems. Limiting the density of alcohol outlets is one proven strategy recommended by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism to address problem drinking behaviors. Communities can and should regulate the availability of alcohol as part of a comprehensive public health and safety policy as well as a way to address crime in areas oversaturated with alcohol outlets.

### **Why is reducing alcohol retail outlet density a good environmental strategy?**

Reducing density makes sense from a law enforcement and crime prevention perspective. Many national and local research studies demonstrate the relationship between alcohol outlet density and alcohol-related crimes, violence and other disturbances ("Evaluating the Impact of Outlet Density on Crime" by the Institute for Public Strategies and "An Assessment of the Effects of Liquor-Serving Establishments on Crime Focusing on Blocks with Bars, Blocks behind Bars and Blocks around Bars" by Rebecca K. Murray, Ph.D.).

A key item in the review of new or expanded liquor license applications is the density of licenses and serving capacity in the surrounding area. Increasing the number of businesses with the majority of their sales coming from alcohol (as opposed to food) and that intend to stay open past midnight will increase violence, littering and graffiti in those areas.

### **What other social problems are related to alcohol outlet density?**

Outlet density impacts drinking by making low-cost or volume discounted alcohol available to persons predisposed to drinking heavily (Gruenewald et al., 1996).

Outlet density has been correlated with heavy drinking, frequent drinking and drinking-related problems, particularly among women, underage students and student who began drinking in college (Weitzman et al., 2003).

**If the goal is to reduce outlet density, why would we still allow new licensees for restaurants?**

Studies have shown that licensed establishments where alcohol comprises the majority of sales generate the highest number of police calls (“Alcohol Outlet Density” University of Nebraska-Lincoln). Restaurants whose food sales exceed alcohol sales are rarely responsible for alcohol related problems and generate few police calls.

**Will a density ordinance hurt economic interests?**

A density plan will protect the safety, security and economic interests of the many people who live, work and run businesses in neighborhood retail areas. A balance of various types of businesses can create a vibrant economy without the negative problems associated with an over saturation of alcohol outlets.

**Some suggest that many businesses are already established in neighborhood business areas and these problems are part of the inner-city urban environment that residents just need to learn to live with.**

The primary purpose of government is to help promote the health, safety and security of all citizens regardless of where they live. All citizens should be able to expect a high quality of life regardless of the neighborhood in which they live.

If crime, violence and disturbances continue in certain areas in Omaha, we will continue to see a cycle of fright, flight and blight. This will devastate the economic viability and reputation of the neighborhoods as well as the entire city.