

STRONGER CRITERIA FOR LICENSING GROCERY STORE A & B ALCOHOL SALES

BY

BOB GREENE, MERRILL PARK NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

December 11, 2008

Being a Resident of the Merrill Park Neighborhood for 50 Plus years and a member of the Neighborhood Association for 25 of those years, I have had the unique opportunity to witness firsthand the changes in State Statutes and Local Licensing Ordinances that have contributed to the decline in the Quality of Life of our neighborhoods throughout the City.

To see a neighborhood where once SEVEN different grocery stores operated profitably and NONE sold any type of alcohol. We had ONE Liquor Store – Stapleton's B&B Beer Depot.

Then came the seventies and eighties where Large Box Grocery Stores began to proliferate and State Law and Local Ordinances were changed to allow Grocery Stores to sell beer and Spirits also, as a convenience to shoppers using these larger format stores. This applied to all stores selling food.

Smaller, neighborhood stores could not compete with the volume pricing that bigger stores could enjoy by buying in larger quantities. With Beer having a high profit margin, these smaller stores began selling more beer and convenience items to the point that groceries became a smaller sales percentage than the beer and convenience items. In effect, these grocery stores became Convenience Stores.

Crack and Gangs became an ever increasing presence in the city and these "Convenience Stores started to focus on drug paraphernalia, chips and beer as their main items to sell. The Gangs and Drug dealers began to claim the areas around these stores as their "Turf" to sell drugs and recruit area youths to become soldiers to expand their Turf.

Drug Houses and Prostitution began to locate around these stores for Users to go and smoke their weed or crack and to also be close to their source. Rival Gangs began fighting for the "Choice Stores where high volume sales were happening. We even had an applicant apply for a Beer License for a Candy Store he was trying to open in a former Barber Shop at 234 N. 35th St.

I could go on in more detail, but I believe that I am telling you what you are probably already aware of, and I want to underscore this Statute change that I like most feel was the cause of many of the problems that our communities face.

I ask that you consider the following suggestions in strengthening the parameter in which to receive a Liquor license

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- **Beer/Alcohol cannot be more than 25% of store sales**
- **Citizen testimony given a greater weight in determining approval/disapproval of License**
- **Criminal incidents from prior year(s) and prior owners to new applicant and (renewal) current owners be held more accountable for citations/Police Calls in and around their sphere (store perimeter) of influence.**
- **More diligent of the Health Inspection process in determining License viability to proceed.**