

Outlet Density

- “Wetter” neighborhoods have higher levels of drinking, accidents and violence.”

Source: Scribner, Richard: Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research, February 2000.

- There is a 15-16% difference in individuals’ drinking attitudes and 11% difference in individuals’ alcohol consumption attributable to density of alcohol outlets in their neighborhoods.^{ibid}

- The number of alcohol outlets is related to violent assaults. A study done in 1995 in Los Angeles showed that each additional alcohol outlet was associated with 3.4 additional assaults per year.

Source: Scribner, R., Mackinnon, D. & Dwyer, J.: “The Risk of Assaultive Violence and Alcohol Availability in Los Angeles County.” American Journal of Public Health (85) 3: 335-340. 1995.

- Alcohol outlet density in Newark, N.J. was the single most important environmental factor explaining why violent crime rates are higher in certain areas of the city than in others. Alcohol outlet density was much more important in determining crime rates than other factors, including employment rate and median household income.

Source: LaBouvie, E. & Ontkush, M.: “Violent Crime and Alcohol Availability: Relationships in an Urban Community.” Journal of Public Health Policy 19(3):303-318. 1998.

- According to a study done in Los Angeles, there is a greater number of alcohol-related injury crashes in cities with higher outlet densities. A 1% increase in outlet density means a .54% increase in alcohol-related crashes. Thus, a city of 50,000 residents with 100 alcohol outlets would experience an additional 2.7 crashes for each new outlet opened.

Source: Scribner, R., Mackinnon, D. & Dwyer, J.: “Alcohol Outlet Density and Motor Vehicle Crashes in Los Angeles County cities.” Journal of Studies on Alcohol (44): 447-453, July 1994.

- A study done in Cleveland showed that blocks that have more bars have higher crime rates for murder, rape, assault, robbery, burglary, grand theft and auto theft. Adding one bar to a block would result in 3.38 crimes committed on that block in a year. It would increase the risk of murder taking place on that block by 5%, and increase the risk of having a violent crime of any type by 17.6%. Authors postulate that increased bar density changes the character and environment of the neighborhood and the routine activities of those living or visiting that block.

Source: Runcek, D. & Maier, P. “Bars, Blocks and Crimes revisited: Linking the Theory of Routine Activities to the Empiricism of ‘Hot Spots.’” Criminology (29) 4: 725-753. 1991.

- The level of drinking, drinking participation, and participation in binge drinking are all significantly higher among all college students when a greater number of outlets licensed to sell alcoholic beverages exist near campus. This is particularly true for underage drinking.

Source: Chaloupka, F. & Wechsler, H. “Binge Drinking in College: the Impact of Price, Availability and Alcohol Control Policies.” Contemporary Economic Policy, vol xiv, October 1996.

COMMUNITY ACTION KITS

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- Over-concentration of alcohol outlets is part of neighborhood economic and social disintegration. The area's economic base loses its diversity and becomes less attractive to both residents and potential retail customers. The proliferation of alcohol outlets is thus both a symptom of economic decline and a factor that worsens the decline.

Source: Maxwell, A. & Immergluck, D. "Liquorlining: Liquor Store Concentration and Community Development in Lower-income Cook County (IL) neighborhoods." Chicago IL: Woodstock Institute, 1997.

- Studies have found that the complaints about alcohol outlets most often reported to city planners had to do with noise, traffic or loitering. Freedom from unwanted interruptions in one's house or place of business are fundamental legal rights. A basic tenet of law is the right to the "quiet enjoyment" of one's own property.

Source: Preventing Problems Related to Alcohol Availability: Environmental Approaches. U.S. DHHS Pub No. (SMA) 99-3298.

- The distribution of off-sale alcohol outlets in New Orleans is geographically related to homicides. The study, conducted in 1994-95, showed that neighborhoods with high densities of off-sale alcohol outlets also have high rates of homicide even after controlling for race, unemployment, age structure and social disintegration. A typical New Orleans census tract with two off-sale outlets has a homicide rate that is 24% higher than a census tract with one outlet.

Source: Scribner, R. et al.: "Alcohol Availability and Homicide in New Orleans: Conceptual Considerations for Small Area Analysis of the Effect of Alcohol Outlet Density." Journal of Studies on Alcohol, May 1999.

COMMUNITY ACTION KITS

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Suggestions for Limiting or Controlling Alcohol Outlet Density

To limit or control outlets at the local level, the following initial activities are helpful:

- Get the information about alcohol outlet ordinances, zoning and how alcohol licenses are currently regulated, permitted and granted.
- Find allies among community leaders, neighborhood groups, health organizations, chambers of commerce and others.
- Conduct an alcohol outlet survey. Find out how many outlets: where, what neighborhoods, near what (schools, churches, etc.), what size, what they sell, are they on premise or off premise?
- Write a report of your survey findings.
- Conduct a press conference. Include letter-writing campaigns, news coverage, endorsements and other activities.
- Petition city or county government for a moratorium on new alcohol outlets.
- Know your opposition. The alcohol industry is well-funded and experienced in fighting these efforts.

Reference: Edward McMahon and Patricia Taylor, *Citizens' Action Handbook on Alcohol and Tobacco Billboard Advertising*. Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington DC and Scenic America, Washington, DC, 1990, pp. 6-9.