

## Zoning and Liquor Outlet Density

TransForm Baltimore, Baltimore City's zoning code rewrite, can improve the health, safety and quality of our neighborhoods.

Zoning is a planning tool that enables communities to shape their future by determining how private land can be used. One feature zoning regulates is where alcohol outlets can be placed.

**Zoning codes dictate which zoning districts allow or prohibit alcohol sales** (while the liquor license itself is

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[www.baltimorecitycouncil.com/members.htm](http://www.baltimorecitycouncil.com/members.htm)

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## TransForm Baltimore and Liquor Outlet Density

How Baltimore's zoning rewrite is building healthier communities

**CPHA** | Citizens  
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Association

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**“Where we live, and by extension, what is present in our physical surroundings, is a critical factor in determining our health.”<sup>7</sup>**



## Alcohol Outlets & Baltimore

- In Baltimore, researchers found that liquor stores are disproportionately located in predominantly African-American census tracts.<sup>1</sup>
- Baltimore children who live in close proximity to alcohol outlets are at increased risk of seeing people selling drugs.<sup>2</sup>
- An estimated 54.8 percent of Baltimore City Public School children have at least one liquor store within a quarter mile of their home, while only 13.1 percent have a grocery store within a quarter mile.<sup>3</sup>
- Across the US, higher alcohol outlet density has consistently been found to be associated with higher rates of violent crime, such as homicide, aggravated assault, rape, robbery and burglary. Studies have also found that the density of stores selling alcohol for off-site consumption is associated with even higher levels of violence.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

## Excessive Liquor Presence

**The Standard:** 1 liquor license for every 1,000 residents, or a total of about 625 licenses (according to the Baltimore City Liquor Licensing Board Standard)

**The Reality:** Currently 1,330 licenses in Baltimore, **about twice the number Baltimore should have.** Some are operating in residential areas.

**42** years since Baltimore's last zoning rewrite

- **In 1971, Baltimore recognized the excessive presence of liquor outlets.**
- **Baltimore used zoning to moderate the impact on residential areas.**

Baltimore City deemed Class A “packaged good” stores as “nonconforming uses” if they were located in residential zoned areas

**As a result,** they were no longer considered an appropriate use for a primarily residential area. Existing stores were allowed to stay, but no *new* businesses wishing to sell alcohol could establish in those districts. The hope was that **the remaining stores** would close over time because of their “nonconforming” status. Instead, many benefited from near monopoly conditions and **still exist today.**

## Reduce Alcohol Outlet Density

### STEP 1: Phase Out of Residential Liquor Stores

#### *License Type: Class A*

- There are roughly 100 nonconforming liquor stores operating in residential areas
- Commonly referred to as packaged good stores where alcohol is consumed off-premise only.
- Within 2 years of adoption, nonconforming Class A licenses must end sales of alcohol or transfer their license to a properly-zoned location in a business district.
- Business owners may request a hardship waiver, receiving an additional 2 years to adhere to the law, but must cease alcohol sales during that time.

### STEP 2: Compliance with Tavern Definition

#### *License Type: Class BD-7*

- Commonly referred to as taverns.
- BD-7 liquor licenses are permitted to sell alcoholic beverages for consumption on-and-off-site from 6 a.m. to 2 a.m. seven days a week.
- The new code requires that all taverns dedicate at least 50% of their sales and floor to on-site consumption to ensure they operate as a true tavern and not merely a packaged good store.

### STEP 3: Set Distance Standards

- In the proposed zoning code, new liquor stores will not be permitted within 300 feet of existing liquor stores with the exception of downtown.
- Current law already prohibits alcohol outlets within 300 feet of a church or school

For more information, or to view references, visit [www.cphabaltimore.org](http://www.cphabaltimore.org)