UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN
Population Health Institute
Translating Research for Policy and Practice

LIMITING RETAIL ALCOHOL OUTLETS IN THE GREENBUSH-VILAS NEIGHBORHOOD, MADISON, WISCONSIN

A Health Impact Assessment

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Study Purpose

To address the consequences of high-risk drinking, particularly in the downtown area, the Madison Common Council adopted the Alcohol Licensing Density Ordinance (ALDO) in 2007, which places a limit on new alcohol licenses in the Capitol Square and State St. areas of Madison. This ordinance is set to expire at the end of 2013 and Common Council will consider an alternative set of recommendations to change the way that liquor licenses are managed downtown.

Downtown, however, is not the only area of concern in the city regarding alcohol consumption and its consequences. High-risk drinking patterns are also evident on the Regent Street corridor, where Camp Randall Football Stadium is located and in parts of the surrounding Greenbush-Vilas neighborhoods (GBVN), particularly on game days. Game days provide a "play hard" outlet to counteract the "work hard" academic and work week. Before the University banned alcohol sales at the stadium, UW ranked number one in the Big Ten for alcohol sales at the stadium during home games.[1] But even for those who don't have a ticket to the game, the tailgates, pre-game parties, and drinking games that occupy the entire day often add up to hefty alcohol consumption.

This HIA was conducted as part of a Master's level service-learning course taught in the UW Department of Population Health Sciences to consider the potential health impacts of applying a policy tool such as an ALDO to limit alcohol licenses on the Regent Street corridor. The HIA was conducted between May and August 2013. It was conducted in partnership with the Greenbush-Vilas Neighborhood Revitalization Committee and Public Health Madison & Dane County and serves as an addendum to the PHMDC ALDO HIA. It was funding by the Morgridge Foundation and the Wisconsin Center for Public Health Education and Training (WiCPHET). The full report can be accessed at: provide link.

Scope and Method

There are twenty-seven Class A and Class B alcohol outlets in the Greenbush-Vilas Neighborhoods (GBVN). This creates an alcohol outlet density of 176 people per outlet. In comparison, the City of Madison has a density of 403 people per outlet. There are also additional sites with conditional use approvals for "game day beer gardens". In 2012 there 15 such sites. Although not each site holds events every week, and three of them do not permit alcohol, the combined capacity of these sites is nearly 10,000 people. Private parties and tailgating brings the party out into the street and expands capacity even further.

What is a HIA?

Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a means of assessing the health impacts of policies, plans and projects in diverse economic sectors using quantitative, qualitative and participatory techniques. It also considers differential impacts within populations.

HIA helps decision-makers make choices about alternatives and improvements to prevent disease/injury and to actively promote health.

Source: World Health Organization

Excessive drinking affects various health determinants, factors that contribute – directly or indirectly to a person's current state of health. These may be biological, socioeconomic, psychosocial, behavioral or social. The health determinants selected for analysis in this HIA are:

- Neighborhood Conditions and Residential Stability
- Drunk Driving
- Alcohol-related Violent Crime
- Alcohol-related Injuries and Death
- Risky Sexual Behavior
- Alcohol-related chronic diseases
- Academic & Work Performance

The team identified undergraduate students as a vulnerable population in the neighborhood that is disproportionately impacted by excessive drinking. Students often do not see or experience alcohol use as a potential problem, often reporting that excessive drinking is part of the culture of Wisconsin and of the college experience. Nonetheless, research clearly indicates their special vulnerability. Studies suggest that alcohol availability, particularly low-cost alcohol, is particularly likely to affect those with a predisposition to heavy drinking, which includes underage drinkers.[2] Moreover, the beginning of the school year, which coincides with the football season, is a particularly vulnerable time for students, and for new students especially.

The overall research questions were:

1) What kinds of health effects would there be (if any) if the city limited the number of alcohol-selling establishments in the Greenbush-Vilas neighborhoods?
2) What are the estimated magnitude and / or severity of these impacts?
3) Would the health impacts of such a policy change disproportionately affect some populations?

It is important to note that a policy to limit alcohol licenses would not immediately reduce the number of licensed establishments. Placing a moratorium on any new licenses would maintain the status quo, any reduction would only come over time with attrition. Depending upon rules involving resale of businesses possessing alcohol licenses, such a policy might not reduce alcohol density at all. The question is really, "what are the health effects of not allowing more density in the area."

The team used multiple research methods to address these questions. Methods included:

- a rapid literature review
- analysis of neighborhood crime data (both calls-for-service and offense data)
- a survey of neighborhood residents
- analysis of publically available data

Key Findings

LITERATURE REVIEW:

Heavy alcohol consumption is a known and significant contributor to the burden of disease. Many studies hypothesize that the easy availability of alcohol increases heavy alcohol consumption. Yet, there are only a few studies that *directly* assess the effects of controlling alcohol outlet density.[3,4] Studies on alcohol density are mostly cross-sectional, comparing communities with different outlet density levels. These local level studies show mixed results of effectiveness. The impacts of alcohol outlet density seem quite context specific. Findings have been most positive in situations with very low alcohol availability, and more mixed in areas with high alcohol availability.

The exception is the literature on college students which consistently shows a significant link between outlet densities around colleges and rates of binge-drinking and drinking related problems.[5-7]

- Total alcohol density in college communities are associated with increased crime and with numerous secondhand effects of heavy alcohol use such as noise and disturbances, [8] vandalism, drunkenness, vomiting and urination.[6]
- College students and ticket holders also report higher drinking on game days[9] with crimes such as assaults, vandalism, and arrests for disorderly conduct and alcohol-related offenses increased sharply on college campuses studied during division I-A football games.[10]

In summary, the CDC appointed, independent Taskforce on Community Preventive Services **"found sufficient evidence of a positive association between outlet density and excessive alcohol consumption and related harms to recommend limiting alcohol outlet density through the use of regulatory authority (e.g., licensing and zoning) as a means of reducing or controlling excessive alcohol consumption and related harms."**[11]

NEIGHBORHOOD SURVEYS: Members of the neighborhood were surveyed, either by face-to-face interview or on-line survey, about their opinions regarding alcohol use and any related problems it created in the neighborhood. Ninety-one responses were recorded.

Identifying a problem:

- Home owners viewed excessive drinking as a problem in the community far more frequently (75%) than renters (50%).
- Older respondents more often saw excessive drinking as a problem. The majority of those under 35 (61%) said drinking was not a problem, while the majority of those over 35 (75%) did think that excessive drinking was a problem.

- Respondents agreed that drinking was heaviest and problems spiked considerably on football Saturdays. Many, however, thought that excessive drinking was also more generalized to weekends or sporting events during the school year and to certain holidays such as Labor Day, and Graduation weekends.
- Many felt that problems associated with excessive drinking weren't pervasive throughout the neighborhood, but rather occurred primarily in certain rental home areas and identified the problem with undergraduates.

Resident concerns about heavy drinking:

- Across all age groups "Property crime and nuisances" was the most frequently selected. Not surprisingly, more people over 35 (77%) than younger (50%) choose this answer. Similarly, more homeowners (78%) than renters (61%) choose this answer.
- Alcohol-related injuries and deaths and perceived safety were nearly tied for the second two most frequently selected health factors (29 and 31 respondents respectively).
- Respondents complained that excessive drinking impacted the general "quality of life" in the neighborhood, via traffic, concern about hitting drunk pedestrians, excessive noise, vandalism, public urination, vomiting, trash, and inebriated people wandering the neighborhood.
- A frequent response to the excessive drinking is avoidance: Many respondents said they either left the neighborhood or stayed inside their home during game days. Others said they avoided the areas where house parties are frequent.

- Generally, while alcohol-related issues presented challenges and were annoying, most respondents did not indicate that they personally experienced the problems associated with alcohol as severe.

Limiting alcohol outlet density as a policy solution*:*

- Few people surveyed (< 10%) thought that extending the ALDO to the Regent Street Corridor would be either a "very effective" or "effective" method of limiting excessive drinking in the community.
- However, 29% thought it might be "somewhat effective."
- The majority (62%) felt that ALDO, or similar regulation to limit alcohol outlet density, would be ineffective ("ineffective", "somewhat ineffective" or "very ineffective").

CRIME DATA: The City of Madison Police Department provided the HIA team with both Calls for Service (CFS) and offense data for the Greenbush and Vilas neighborhoods.

- Seasonally, incidents in all categories -- except for violent crime -- are more likely to occur in the fall. These differences are significant in all categories, except for injury.

Looking specifically at the high-incident fall season:

- In absolute numbers, a majority of incidents in several categories highly associated with excessive drinking occur on the weekends. This includes: disorderly conduct and disturbance, conveyance to detox, violence and alcohol specific crimes.
- However, separating the football weekends from regular weekends tells a different story. The seven football weekends each year alone account for a very high proportion of these neighborhood incidents:
    - 53% of all disorderly conduct and disturbance
    - 50% of all conveyance to detox
    - 85% of all alcohol specific crimes

Key findings:
Incidents associated with excessive drinking do occur throughout the year, but are significantly clustered in the fall (and are much lower in the winter). While proportionately more incidents occur on weekends than during the week, non-football weekend Incidents are significantly overshadowed by the volume of incidents that occur during football weekends. Football weekends are disproportionately responsible for the crime and nuisance that occurs in the neighborhood.

Figure 4-d. Calls for Service during fall seasons 2009-2012

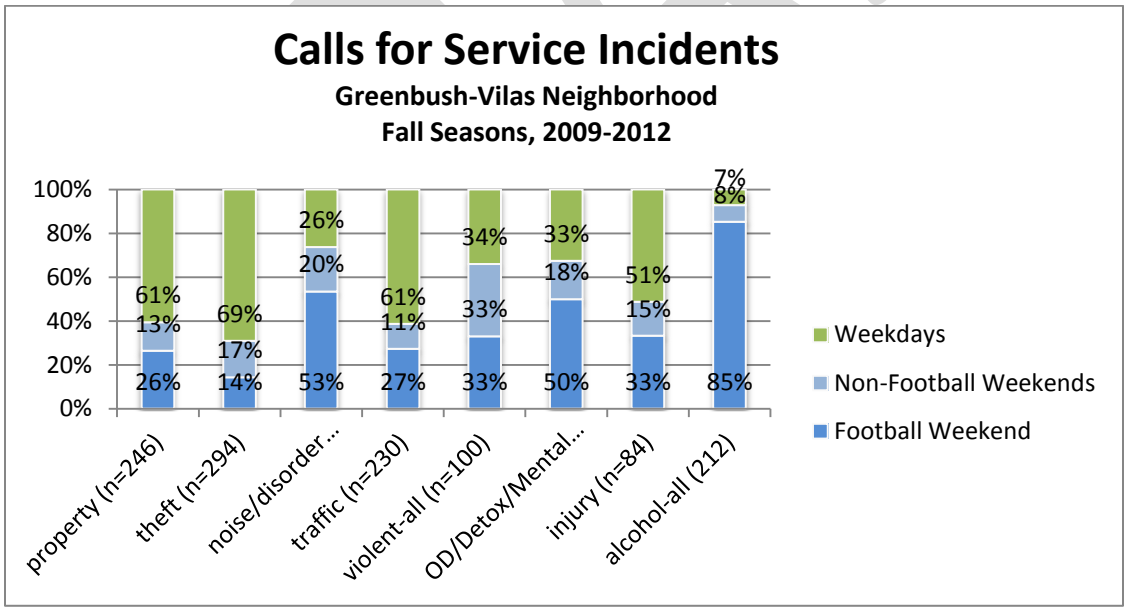
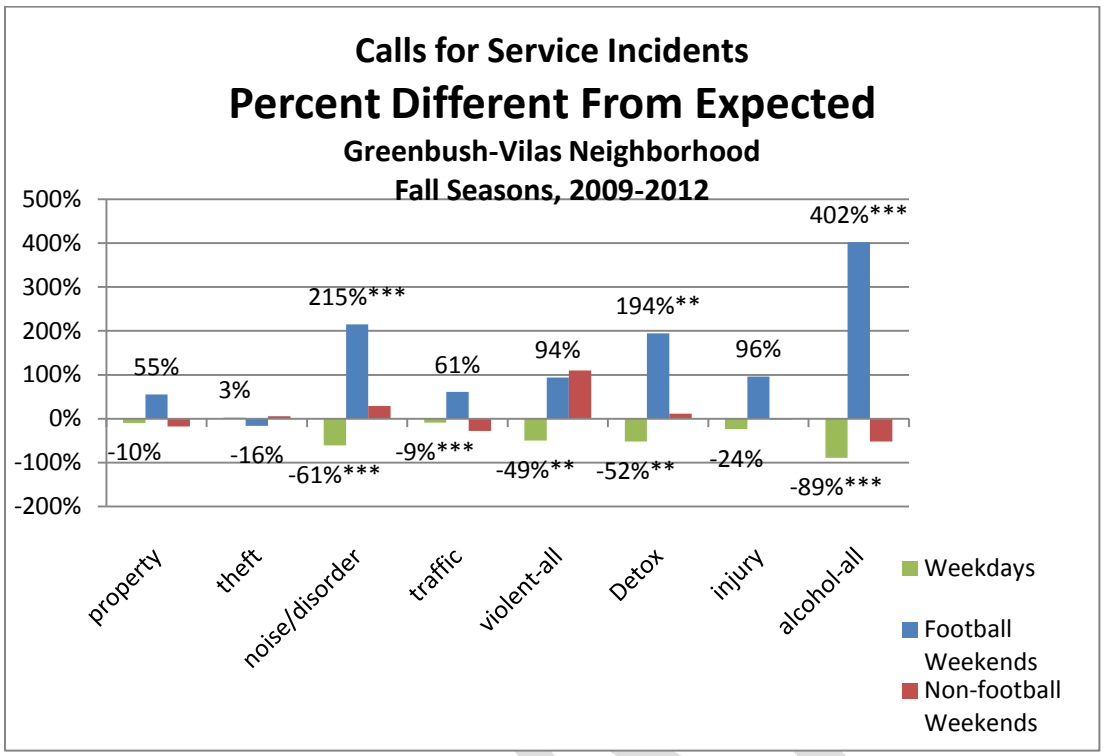


Figure 4-d shows actual values and so, as startling as some of the findings may be, they do not reflect the full effect of weekends and football weekends especially. Figure 4-e adjusts the data to show the percentage difference (above or below) from the expected value at which incidents would occur if the types of days were evenly distributed.

Figure 4-e. Calls for Service Incidents: Percent Different from Expected 2009-2012



- In all categories except for theft incidents occur on football weekends at rates far higher than would be expected. Some of these percentages are quite large:
    - Alcohol specific incidents occur 400% more frequently than expected,
    - Detox transports occur 194% more frequently than expected,
    - Noise and disorder complaints occur 215% more frequently than expected.
- Only noise/disorder and violence occur on regular weekends at rates higher than expected.
- Alcohol specific incidents actually occur on non-football weekends at percentages lower than expected.
- All incidents occur on weekdays at rates lower than expected.

Conclusions

- Alcohol already has a significant impact on the Greenbush-Vilas neighborhood.
- Alcohol's impact is substantially greater on game weekends. The addition of temporary licenses on football weekends is associated with a significant increase in alcohol-related consequences.
- The literature suggests that in areas such as the Regent Street corridor, where alcohol density is already very dense, and where alcohol is easily accessible elsewhere, small changes in density are unlikely to affect overall consumption rates substantially, or have any impact on alcohol-related chronic, long-term health problems.[36]
- However, the literature also suggests that changes in outlet density could exacerbate existing short-term consequences by [36]:
    - Creating a more competitive alcohol market with lowered pricing which can significantly increase consumption, especially among students;

- Increase binge drinking;
- Increase alcohol-related injuries and violence;
- Create additional secondhand effects of heavy alcohol use in the neighborhoods noise disturbances, vandalism, drunkenness, vomiting and urination.

Recommendations

To Common Council:

1. **Limit or eliminate temporary liquor licenses**
   Respondents and crime data showed football weekends are the days of greatest concern. Alcohol density could be regulated on those days by limiting temporary licenses. Since some people in beer gardens may not have access to non-retail alcohol, such as house parties, this policy may reduce drinking by limiting party atmosphere of the neighborhood and decrease the attractiveness of coming into the area on game day.

2. **Improve regulation of house parties**
   Impacts have been calculated assuming there will not be a shift from bars to off-sight consumption. However, limiting bars could theoretically lead to more or bigger house parties leaving drinking levels unchanged, or even increase binge and underage drinking. Therefore, if actions are taken to reduce retail outlets, concurrent efforts to regulate house-parties are also advisable. Neighborhood residents' understanding of the problem suggests that regardless of any efforts to control alcohol outlets, additional measures to regulate house parties are warranted.

   City ordinance Chapter 25, "Offenses Against Public Safety," section 25.10 lays out circumstances of a "nuisance party" and methods by which police may intervene to protect public safety.
   - This ordinance should be enforced more aggressively
   - The ordinance should be reviewed to ascertain whether it is adequate for effective enforcement of state drinking laws (particularly underage drinking) and mitigation of secondary neighborhood impacts of excessive alcohol use.

3. **Police secondary alcohol effects in the neighborhood**
   - Enforce noise and other "quality of life" ordinances
   - Increase police presence in neighborhood on weekends and game days, particularly at bar-closing time; ticket more aggressively
   - Increase frequency of bar and liquor store compliance checks especially on football Saturdays

4. **Create an *Alcohol Disorder Zone* along the Regent Street Corridor**
   Alcohol outlets within the zone would be taxed to provide the resources necessary to counter alcohol-related disorders that result from an expansion in the drinking population during game days. This is done in Britain.[77]

5. **Stagger closing times**. Rotate early closing among bars for equity.

6. **New and improved data collection**
   A major weakness of this study, and much of the alcohol density literature, is the assumption that all alcohol outlets within the same license classification, or regardless of size have an equal impact. City staff should collect data that would provide a more nuanced understanding of the contributors to alcohol-related harms and disturbances. Specifically, staff should:
   1. Collect data relating to the amount and type of alcohol sold by individual premises;
   2. Link alcohol-related harm data to specific premises. Analyze this data by type and size of establishments.
   3. The closing of the Stadium Bar provides a natural experiment for studying the impact of alcohol density in the GBVN. The Stadium Bar had a capacity of 2,416 and operated one of the largest game-day beer gardens on Regent Street. Its absence has certainly reduced density in the area. Repeating the incident analysis done in this report for the 2013 season may offer some insight into whether reduced density results in reduced alcohol-related incidents and secondary effects.

7. **Overall density in the neighborhood**
   Although this report is not currently recommending a ban on further alcohol outlets, it is recommended that ALRC proceed with great caution before licensing further outlets, particularly taverns and other large establishments oriented to game day clientele.

<u>For Bars</u>:

8. Assure that all bartending staff server-compliance training
9. Provide information/assistance with safe rides, taxis, etc.
10. Provide condoms in bathrooms

<u>For the University</u>:

11. Create a campus and neighborhood coalition to identify ways in which University game-day policies at Camp Randall and elsewhere contributes to binge drinking in the neighborhood. Plan and implement strategies that the University can undertake to reduce binge drinking.

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