

The West Dupont Moratorium

Opinions of Dupont Residents

Pro

Fifteen years is a long time to continue a temporary moratorium - but it's worth it. The West Dupont Moratorium came into being in 1996 and it should continue.

Several benefits stand out. The most important feature of the moratorium is its limitation on the number and type of liquor licenses. This is important in an area that thrives on a mix of residences and businesses, but has seen an increase in establishments selling or serving alcoholic beverages. There are now 34 - the maximum allowed by the current moratorium - in our little area, almost all of them clustered on or near P Street from 20th to 22nd Street.

Moratoriums help promote retail diversity. Liquor sales are often viewed as a high-profit business. Liquor outlets have the ability to push out less profitable establishments. We welcome a mix of stores that provide convenient, close-by services and supplies to grateful residents.

Moratoriums were enacted to allay resident fears on several fronts. Without one, we would be concerned about the establishment of a mono-culture of liquor-dispensing outlets. In addition, once established, there is nearly non-stop pressure to expand the liquor sales in ways that maximize the profit of the owners and negatively impact residential quality of life. We see this at nearly every ANC meeting: requests to extend hours past midnight; increase seating; or add roof top decks or patios. The liquor outlets will allege they need the extra space or hours to survive. We see morphing of benign standard-hours restaurants into late night haunts that may contribute to noise, crime and sanitation problems.

Moreover, for a variety of political and economic reasons, liquor establishments seem favored by the DC government agency that oversees their regulation. Once licensed, an establishment must commit repeated serious violations over a long period of time for its license to be suspended or revoked. Seeing the extraordinary effort that must be expended if an establishment commits breaches of good neighborhood manners, residents rightfully consider it better to erect a barrier to entry in the first place.

We recognize that the moratorium does not prevent the occasional bad consequences of unruly behavior - late-night noise, automobile congestion, or poor sanitation. Effective voluntary agreements, police and ABRA enforcement, and oversight by the ANC, community groups like DCCA, and residents need to combine and support one another for a neighborhood's quality of life to be preserved.

DC has five moratorium zones. Once enacted, none has ever lapsed. Residents find them comforting, effective and a valuable resource, among others, to support their desire for an active urban lifestyle in an exciting but safe neighborhood. Let's keep Dupont Circle that way.

Bob Oaks, President, Dupont West Condominium Board of Directors

Con

We're rightly proud of our freedoms in this country, yet we seem to be willing to accept a million petty restrictions on them. The West Dupont liquor license moratorium represents an unreasonable and outdated restriction on those who wish to create new and lively businesses in our neighborhood.

My home is close to the corner of 21st and O, at the heart of the moratorium zone. I moved here 13 years ago, attracted by the diversity of life in these few blocks and by the abundant foot traffic that keeps these blocks fun, safe and walkable day and night.

The moratorium is an outdated and unreasonable accommodation to the demands of a small but vocal minority. This tiresome story is played out again and again across our city, and we've seen it most recently in the absurd hysteria over the expansion of Hank's Oyster bar - a well-managed and much-loved neighborhood treasure just a few blocks away.

The moratorium contains an implicit message that any new bar, restaurant, club or license holder will be assigned an almost genetic bent towards bad behavior. On the rare occasions when an establishment becomes troublesome, there are effective remedies available to neighbors. The raft of regulations is strong, and DC's Alcoholic Beverage Regulation Administration has become a nationally-awarded enforcer.

The moratorium also relies upon an outdated view of retail, stifling creativity on a commercial corridor. This moratorium was adopted to preserve a hardware store, a florist, and other businesses which have simply moved on. Market forces--from the increase in rents to the shift of dry-goods retail to the Internet--are a reality beyond this moratorium, and beyond the control of its small but vocal set of supporters.

We will all enjoy a more vibrant and interesting neighborhood when businesses are free to innovate. The West Dupont liquor license moratorium belongs to the past. DC is evolving into a place that people find highly desirable and attractive to live in on its own merits as a world-class city.

The moratorium should be allowed to expire.
David Gleave, 13-year Resident of the Moratorium Zone. No business relationship to any local bar, restaurant or club other than as a patron.



Please send additional comments to Kevin O'Connor, Commissioner Dupont ANC2B02
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The West Dupont Moratorium Expires March 23rd

The current moratorium expires March 23, 2011. ANC2B seeks public input about whether the Moratorium should be:

- 1) Allowed to expire or
- 2) Extended for 3 or 5 years.

The West Dupont Moratorium extends 600 feet in all directions from P Street (map above) with a mandated number and type of Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) establishments.

Section 307.1 - Lists total number of licenses: 34 licenses within the Moratorium zone.

Section 307.2 - West side of 1500 block of Connecticut Avenue is exempted in order to allow revitalization of that block.

Section 307.3 - Exempts hotels.

Section 307.4 - Allows transfer of ownership of licenses.

Section 307.5 - Allows the transfer of one license in one location to another location within the zone.

Section 307.6 - Transfer of a license previously granted outside the Moratorium zone will not be permitted unless it meets the totals in Section 307.1.

Section 307.7 - Allows for the filing of an application and protest of any license change or transfer.

Section 307.8 - Prevents CR/DR (restaurant licenses) from changing class to CT/DT (tavern) or CN/DN (nightclub).

Section 307.9 - Spells out specific criteria required for expansion within the Moratorium zone.