

Inappropriate new location for a Liquor Store along Huffman Road?

The Wine House Owner, Talbot Chang, is seeking a Conditional Use Permit, CUP, in order to open a package liquor store along Huffman Rd, located in the old Baskin Robbins space. To open a liquor establishment, an owner must have two permits. The State of Alaska regulates the sale of liquor licenses and the Municipality, approves or denies a liquor store location through the Conditional Use Permit process (CUP). This is based on municipal standards, 21.50.020. The Anchorage Assembly has the final approval.

21.50.020 General standards for conditional use approval.

The authority hearing a conditional use application may approve the application only if it finds that the conditional use:

- A. Furthers the goals and policies of the comprehensive development plan and conforms to the comprehensive development plan in the manner required by Chapter;*
- B. Conforms to the standards for that use in this title and regulations promulgated under this title;*
- C. Will be compatible with existing and planned land uses in the surrounding neighborhood and with the intent of its use district; and*
- D. Will not have a permanent negative impact on the items listed in this subsection substantially greater than that anticipated from permitted development:*
 - 1. Pedestrian and vehicular traffic circulation and safety.*
 - 2. The demand for and availability of public services and facilities.*
 - 3. Noise, air, water or other forms of environmental pollution.*
 - 4. The maintenance of compatible and efficient development patterns and land use intensities.*

Based on these conditions, it is not in the best interests of public health and safety for the Hillside community to add a new package store license (liquor store) in the Huffman Road area. Presently there are five other liquor stores within a mile of this location: Holiday located at Old Seward Hwy and O'Malley Road; Wine Styles on Old Seward Hwy across from Lowes; Value Liquor at Old Seward Hwy and Klatt Road; Oaken Keg, in the Carrs/Safeway mall; and the Tesoro, across Huffman from Carrs. If approved, there would be three liquor stores on the short stretch of Huffman Road. What is most important to the area is that once a location is permitted to sell alcohol, the location will never be anything else. For this reason, most Community Councils in Anchorage have put a moratorium on any additional liquor stores in their boundaries.

Studies have shown that violence and crime increase with alcohol availability. Both Service High and South High students drive to this area every lunch. It has been shown that with a high density of liquor stores in one area, there is a tendency to lower prices to sell more alcohol. Teenagers are price sensitive and the potential to sell to minors is a concern. Reducing neighborhood crime, as well as preventing an increase in minor consumption should be the goal. With the liquor store potentially open until 2 am, there is the added concern for increased drinking and driving, especially when Huffman Rd is one of the last places to buy alcohol before Girdwood.

There are other public safety concerns with this location. The strip mall does not have enough parking for the number of retail stores. The owner is grandfathered because the building was built before planning and zoning established parking standards. The former Tap Root establishment was forced to move this last spring because of the lack of parking. At the same time, Huffman Road is scheduled to have two more roundabouts built at the Carr's entrance and at the new Seward Hwy. The effect on merchants will be significant especially one that has to compete with established liquor merchants.

The entire Hillside community uses the small commercial area at Huffman road. It is a family oriented neighborhood. It is believed that the new location for the Wine House is incompatible with surrounding uses and the CUP should be denied.

Joan Diamond
Co Chair, Rabbit Creek Community Council