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Coalition's Report Finds Alcohol-Serving Businesses 'Saturate' Los Angeles

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A coalition of organizations that track the city's vices reported Tuesday that Los Angeles is exceeding its alcohol-serving business density, based on regulations set by the California Alcohol Beverage Control.

The Los Angeles Drug and Alcohol Policy Alliance said information gathered by the independent research firm Harder and Company found at least 80% of the city's census tracts, an area with an average of 4,000 residents, exceed the guidelines set by ABC, sometimes by as much as 300% of the allowable usage.

"For far too long the alcohol density problem in Los Angeles has gone unaddressed," said Mayra Jimenez, an advocacy manager at Alcohol Justice. "This new data demonstrates both the challenges and pathway to building an environment that accesses public health and safety and acts on it."

The nonprofit organization argues that under the California Business Code, alcohol licenses should be limited based on a ratio of population per census tract in order to protect public health and safety. However, the new Harder and Company data show all 15 City Council Districts have tracts that exceed the ABC guidelines.

The Alcohol Restricted Use Subdistrict Ordinance, a proposed ordinance introduced by Los Angeles Councilman David Ryu and supported by DAPA, would grant communities experiencing "high crime" and alcohol abundance the ability to buffer themselves against such establishments, particularly in sensitive areas close to schools, parks and churches, DAPA stated.

"South Los Angeles, Council Districts 8, 9 and 10, has the highest percentage of communities that severely exceed ABC guidelines and have above-average crime rates," said Randal Henry, the CEO of Community Intelligence in South Los Angeles. "(The ordinance would) give South Los Angeles the option to create zones where no new alcohol licenses can be issued."

In 2017, Ryu proposed studying the city's areas and whether they have been affected by alcohol establishments, but it hasn't had any city council action since then and the proposal expires at the end of January.

"Too many communities in Los Angeles have been saturated with liquor stores and alcohol establishments while losing out on other community resources," Ryu said.

"Every neighborhood should have the chance to build a vibrant local economy, a safe place to live and opportunities for children and families. This ordinance will mean that these neighborhoods can say 'no' to new alcohol establishments and 'yes' to the kind of community that they deserve."

L.A.DAPA said Harder and Company examined LAPD Part 1 and Part 2 crime data from 2015 as well as data from the California ABC and the community alcohol outlet portal, PourSafe, to compare alcohol density with crime rates in each census tract.

The study found correlations between an increase in alcohol density and higher crime rates, and in areas where the alcohol density meets ABC guidelines, the crime rate is at or below average for that area.

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