



The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms

Miles to Go: Police, Fire, & Building Concerns Fall on Deaf Ears at Grand Island City Council

Council approves "walk around" liquor license for State Fair

Despite opposition from the City of Grand Island's building, police, and fire departments, the [Grand Island City Council recently approved a "walk around" special designated liquor license \(SDL\)](#) for the 2022 Nebraska State Fair. The proposal was brought before the entire City Council for discussion given that multiple city departments opposed issuing the license. In previous years, the sale and consumption of alcohol at the fair was limited to a beer garden that allowed both the business and law enforcement to better observe patrons in that area to ensure underage drinking and over sales to intoxicated persons were not occurring.

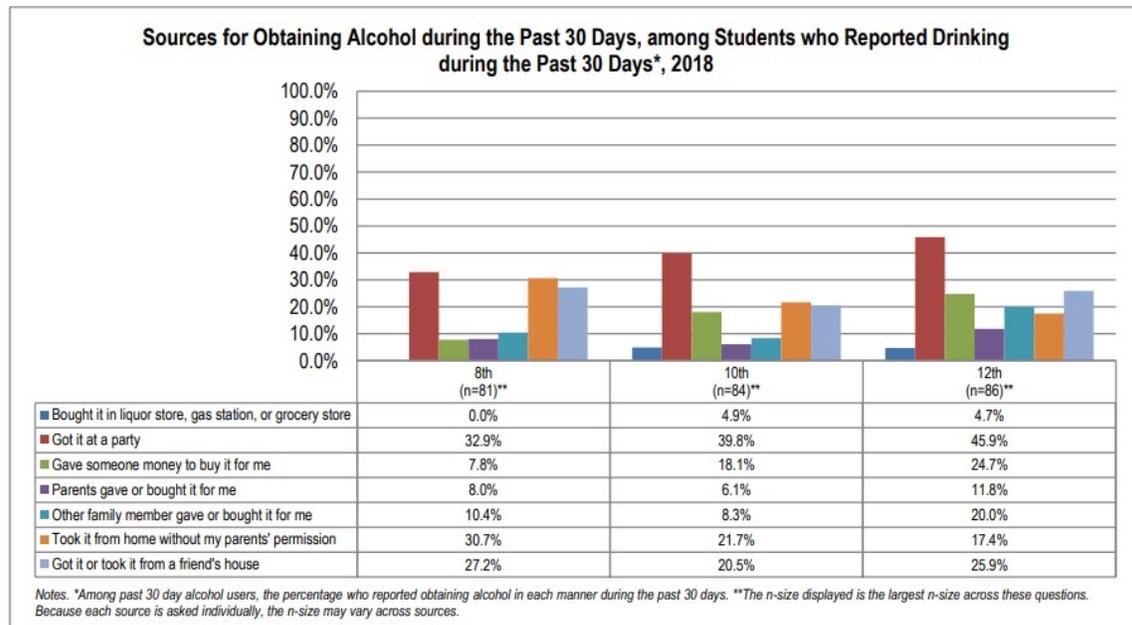
A "walk around" license – also commonly referred to as an entertainment district – allows customers to consume their alcohol anywhere in the licensed area – in this case, the entire fairgrounds. As such, it would be much easier for someone aged 21 years or older to purchase alcohol and then take it to a spot where alcohol retailers and law enforcement are not present to give it to an underage fairgoer, and it would be much easier for underage youth to find a quiet corner of the fairgrounds to consume that alcohol. Preventing underage drinking at events like these that mix adult and youth patrons has always been an area of emphasis for law enforcement. This type of license will only make it harder for law enforcement to keep both underage and adult fairgoers safe.

There have been shocking instances of violence at "walk around" licenses in other states. In Louisville, KY, a father punched his 2-year-old daughter and her mother in the face after she spilled her ice cream. Omaha's Capitol District has also seen its share of violence, including a [June 13, 2020 fatal shooting](#).

The Grand Island City Council should have held a public hearing with advanced public notice to let citizens weigh in on the proposed change just as they did when they considered extending the hours of alcohol sales from 1 a.m. to 2 a.m. last November. Ultimately, [both the City Administration and citizens stood in strong opposition and the proposal was scrapped](#). Clearly, Grand Islanders care about how alcohol is sold in their community, and they should have had an opportunity to weigh in here. According to the Grand Island Independent's reporting, City Administration had substantial concerns about the addition of buildings to the licensed area that wouldn't have otherwise been approved for a liquor license because of lack of safety and an inability to adequately supervise the licensed area. Both Grand Island Police Chief Robert Falldorf and Fire Department Life Safety Division Chief Fred Hotz spoke at the council to detail their concerns.

Permitting alcohol throughout Fonner Park increases the ability for minors to gain access

to alcohol from friends or family, or by purchasing it themselves. Among 12th graders in Hall County, [almost 25%](#) (see chart below) reported giving someone money to purchase alcohol for them; statewide this figure was [36.5% in 2018](#). The smaller the area allowed for alcohol consumption, the easier it will be to keep alcohol out of the hands of youth.



Ultimately, money talks and the State Fair Board, which has [experienced financial difficulties](#) in recent years, was able to convince the council that having alcohol in a beer garden is discriminatory towards families and allowing alcohol everywhere will encourage families to spend more money at the fair. Council Member Chuck Haase appeared to echo their talking points: “I support it because, I know that, in walking around, rather than forcing everyone, my family, into a specific area, maybe we want to go sit under the tents as a family.”

“Since when did parents choosing to drink alcohol during a family event make alcohol part of the family experience?” asks Project Extra Mile Executive Director Chris Wagner. “Requiring that alcohol be consumed in a monitored beer garden keeps all fairgoers safe and it's just plain common sense. The fact that we even need to have alcohol at a state fair, or a roller skating rink, or at an indoor trampoline park is an indictment on our culture. The alcohol industry spends billions of dollars to tell us alcohol needs to be everywhere and we just go along with it.”

Indeed, research shows quite the opposite about the role of alcohol in the family. [One such study](#) found alcohol use was associated with higher rates of family domestic violence, particularly intimate partner violence. In addition, the CDC lists alcohol use by caregivers and easy access to alcohol in the community as risk factors for child abuse and neglect.

Research Brief: Alcohol Impairment and the Associated Harms

The July Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report gathered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) examined [motor vehicle crashes in high-income countries between 2015 and 2019](#). Motor vehicle crashes are preventable yet continue to be a leading cause of death in the U.S., with an average of **101 deaths per day**. The most recent Traffic Safety Facts Annual Report, compiled by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) reported a [14% increase in impaired driving deaths between 2019 and 2020](#). Impaired driving deaths had been decreasing from 10,967 in 2016 to 10,196 in 2019, however the 2020 data shows 11,654 deaths.

Unfortunately, progress in reducing alcohol-impaired driving has stalled over the past two decades. The 2018 National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report made the following [recommendations for reducing alcohol-related crashes and fatalities](#):

- Significant increases in alcohol taxes;
- Reduction in availability, including the number of on- and off-premises alcohol outlets and the days and hours of alcohol sales;
- Reductions in state per se BAC limits from 0.08% to 0.05%
- Adoption and/or strengthening of laws and dedication of enforcement resources to stop illegal alcohol sales, including sales to already-intoxicated adults and sales to those under 21;
- Frequent sobriety checkpoints with widespread publicity to promote awareness of these efforts;
- Health care systems and health insurers covering and facilitating effective evaluation, prevention, and treatment strategies for binge drinking and alcohol use disorders, including Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT).

Another study examined [alcohol consumption and 15 causes of fatal injuries](#). Researchers reviewed literature for 1995-2019 for causes of fatal nontraffic injuries that involved high levels of alcohol intoxication. They found substantial proportions of violent and nonviolent injury deaths involved excessive alcohol use.

Cause of injury	Alcohol-attributable fraction
Other road vehicle crashes	0.63
Motor vehicle nontraffic crashes	0.42
Fall injuries	0.37
Fire injuries	0.34
Drowning	0.31
Homicide	0.29
Hypothermia	0.29
Water transport	0.27
Aspiration	0.24
Firearm injuries	0.24
Suicide	0.21
Poisoning (not alcohol)	0.20
Child maltreatment	0.09
Occupational/machine injuries	0.08
Air-space transport	0.03

News Brief: Nebraska hosts the 2022 Uniformed Safety Education Officers Workshop

The Nebraska State Patrol recently hosted the [Uniformed Safety Education Officers Workshop](#) (USEOW), which brought state troopers from across the country to Omaha to learn about how different traffic and public safety presentations are utilized across the country and how they can be adopted in diverse communities.

The Project Extra Mile coalition appreciates the Nebraska State Patrol and all law enforcement agencies for the work they do in keeping our communities safe, particularly as it relates to reducing alcohol-related harms including alcohol-impaired driving. Public education, when paired with enforcement operations and other evidence-based policies and practices, can lead to better health and safety outcomes for Nebraskans.

Please join us on August 10th!

Hobie Rupe, the Executive Director of the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission, will discuss the Commission's role in preventing alcohol-related harms at the next meeting on Wednesday, August 10th at 9:00 a.m. at the National Safety Council, Nebraska. We hope you will join us!



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