



StarTribune.com | MINNEAPOLIS - ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA

North Siders win in liquor store battle

City Council says no to a proposed liquor store, after an outcry from some north Minneapolis residents.

By **KATHERINE LYMN**, Star Tribune Last update: April 1, 2011 - 8:14 PM

Applause and jubilation livened up the Minneapolis City Council chamber Friday as members voted 8-5 to deny a liquor license for a proposed north Minneapolis development.

Neighborhood groups opposed the Gopher 94 project from the start, saying there are already too many liquor stores causing too many problems in north Minneapolis. On Friday, at least 30 North Side residents took a chartered a bus to City Hall and crowded the chamber. All wore stickers with an image of a wine glass crossed out with the message, "North Minneapolis does NOT need another liquor store."

Louis Dachis, who organized the bus trip, is also the owner of Merwin Liquors, a half-mile from the proposed Gopher 94 site.

Gopher 94 developer Mark Dziuk said the vote was "greatly disappointing" but not a complete surprise, given the aggressive campaign organized by Dachis, a competitor.

Council Members Diane Hofstede and Don Samuels, whose wards surround the proposed site, voted against the license at a March 21 committee meeting, heeding their constituents' demands. But the committee still voted in favor of the license 3-2, making Friday's flip all the more reason for opponents to celebrate. Those against the project said the safety conditions the developers agreed to were good in theory, but in practice they simply might not work.

Other action

Also Friday, the council ruled the city may keep its contract for firefighter and police officer memberships at Life Time Fitness despite the company's violation of the Equal Benefits Ordinance. Under the ordinance, companies with large city contracts must offer equal benefits for employees' spouses and domestic partners. Life Time Fitness doesn't. Of two council committees that reviewed the contract, one approved an exception for Life Time and one did not.

Council Member Gary Schiff, author of the Equal Benefits Ordinance, was one of four members to vote against the exception. The contract is worth \$460,400 annually.

The council also voted to thaw nearly \$2.7 million of the frozen Neighborhood Revitalization Program funds. The money is part of the \$12.7 million the council voted to tuck away in December to soften possible property tax hikes in 2012 and 2013.

"This is good news for our neighborhood organizations in the city," Council Member Robert Lilligren said.

Steve Brandt contributed to this report. Katherine Lymn is a U of M student on assignment for Star Tribune.

[© 2011](#) Star Tribune. All rights reserved.