

**AN ORDINANCE TO ENACT A TEMPORARY MORATORIUM ON THE
ISSUANCE OF NEW BUSINESS LICENSES FOR NEW CORNER PROPERTIES
WITHIN THE CITY PENDING COMPLETION OF AN EQUITY IMPACT
ASSESSMENT**

#0098

Sponsor:

**Council
Member**

Darby

WHEREAS, City Council is empowered by the City Charter to enact legislation that preserves, protects, and promotes the general health, safety, and welfare of the residents of the City of Wilmington; and

WHEREAS, City Council has observed a proliferation of corner properties, a/k/a bodegas, particularly in low-income and minority neighborhoods; and

WHEREAS, the residents of these neighborhoods have repeatedly expressed concern over the disproportionate presence of corner properties that offer limited healthy food options, contribute to poor public health outcomes, and often operate without meaningful community engagement; and

WHEREAS, there is growing evidence that the oversaturation of corner properties, many of which sell processed and unhealthy foods, tobacco and lottery tickets, contribute to the perpetuation of food deserts, public safety concerns and economic disinvestment in Black and Brown communities; and

WHEREAS, in residential districts, including R-3 and R-5-A-1 districts, the use of a corner property is generally not a use permitted as a matter of right, but instead, such use must be approved by the zoning board of adjustment at a public hearing; and

WHEREAS, in commercial districts, the use of a corner property is generally a use permitted as a matter of right, and therefore, public notice and hearing is not required to open a corner property in these districts; and

WHEREAS, City Council believes that an equity impact assessment should be conducted by the Department of Land Use and Planning that identifies the areas in the City

with an oversaturation of corner properties, the impact on public health, public safety, and local economic development, and any community interest in alternative retail businesses, including grocery stores, food co-ops, and culturally relevant businesses; and

WHEREAS, the equity impact assessment can then be utilized to prepare amendments to the zoning code that, among other things, require public notice and community input before any new corner property may open in the City (including both commercial and residential districts), establish buffer zones and/or caps on the number of corner properties per neighborhood or section of the City, and prioritize businesses that support food sovereignty, health equity, and neighborhood revitalization; and

WHEREAS, City Council finds that a temporary moratorium on the establishment of new corner properties in the City is necessary and appropriate to provide time for the Department of Land Use and Planning to complete an equity impact assessment; and

WHEREAS, the implementation of a temporary moratorium on new corner properties does not constitute a Constitutional violation nor does it conflict with or exceed the City's legal authority.

**NOW, THEREFORE, THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF WILMINGTON
HEREBY ORDAINS:**

SECTION 1. Temporary Moratorium Established. A temporary moratorium is hereby established on the issuance of any new business licenses for corner properties, as defined in the City Code. During the period in which the moratorium is in effect, the zoning board of adjustment shall not consider any application for permission to establish a new corner property, or any application or request for a variance or special exception to establish a new corner property, unless the applicant can show undue hardship.

SECTION 2. Equity Impact Analysis. The Department of Land Use and Planning is hereby ordered to perform an equity impact assessment. At minimum, the assessment shall identify the areas in the City with an oversaturation of corner properties, the impact of corner properties on public health, public safety, and local economic development, and any community interest in alternative retail businesses.

SECTION 2. Effective Period of Temporary Moratorium. The temporary moratorium set forth in Section 1 shall become effective on the date that the Mayor signs this Ordinance and shall until such time an equity impact assessment is completed by the Department of Land Use and Planning, unless this City Council repeals this moratorium.

SECTION 3. Effective Date. This Ordinance shall become effective upon its passage by City Council and approval by the Mayor.

First Reading.....August 28, 2025

Second Reading.....August 28, 2025

Third Reading.....

Passed by the City Council,

President of City Council

ATTEST: _____

City Clerk

Approved this ____ day of ____, 2025

Mayor

SYNOPSIS: This Ordinance issues a temporary moratorium on the establishment of new corner properties in the city. The moratorium will be in effect until such time an equity impact assessment has been completed by the Department of Land Use and Planning, unless repealed by City Council. During the period in which the moratorium is in effect, the zoning board of adjustment shall not consider any application for permission, variance, or special exception for the establishment of a new corner property. The zoning board of adjustment may consider applications for a hardship exception to the moratorium.

FISCAL IMPACT: This Ordinance is expected to have a minor fiscal impact, as the Department of Land Use and Planning will have to contract with a company to perform the equity impact assessment.