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City of Anoka Implements First Social District in Minnesota

ANOKA, Minn. - During the 2022 Minnesota legislative session, Governor Walz signed the Omnibus Liquor Bill into law on May 20, 2022. State Representative Zack Stephenson helped guide the bill through to law. As part of the bill, a provision was included that enables the City of Anoka to adopt local regulations to create a social district within the guidance of state law. The Anoka City Council passed regulations and approved the management and maintenance plan for its social district on August 21, 2023.

A social district is a specific area which allows people to purchase and drink beer, wine, and cocktails from a licensed business and walk through a defined area of the city including public common areas such as sidewalks and parks, and allows for participation in district events and activities.

Anoka is allowed to issue social district licenses to qualified licensed business premises which sell alcoholic beverages and that are contiguous to or within the social district boundary. The social district boundaries are defined by a map which will be displayed throughout the district and on the city's website.

In 2023, a pilot program will commence on Wednesday, September 6th with the Rockin' on the Rum concert at Riverfront Memorial Park, which is within the district boundaries. The pilot program will continue through Saturday, October 7th, seven days a week between the hours of 10 a.m. and 10 p.m. Concert events and more are planned throughout the month-long program by participating businesses and the City of Anoka.

State Representative Zack Stephenson said, *"Anoka's downtown is a treasure and the social district will only make it even more special. I can't wait to spend an evening walking down Jackson Street while enjoying a beer from 10k Brewery!"*

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Customers purchasing alcoholic beverages from licensed businesses will be served in a social district recyclable plastic cup. That cup may travel with the customer outdoors within the boundaries on sidewalk and walkways, but only on the street when the street is designated as part of a special event by which the street is closed off to all traffic. Social district cups may not be used more than once; customers will receive a new cup with each alcoholic beverage purchased.

Window clings will be displayed at each licensed business within the boundaries indicating it is a licensed social district business. For those that opt out and for other retail stores and establishments not participating in the program, window clings will indicate whether or not they welcome social district cups inside their business.

Signage will be displayed within the district defining the boundaries and where the cups cannot travel beyond. Some signs will have a QR code for visitors to scan to learn more about the district, including planned events and activities, rules and regulations, and more.

All State of Minnesota and City of Anoka laws regarding public intoxication, impaired driving, and open containers apply to areas both inside and outside of the social district boundaries.

With the conclusion of the 2023 pilot program, city staff will gather information, report back to the Anoka City Council and then report its findings to the State of Minnesota to help develop a comprehensive plan for the 2024 social district and beyond and as an example for other cities to use.

Visit anokaminnesota.com for more information and updates on this program.

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Cutline: City of Anoka Social District Boundaries Map