

## DATA BOOK:

# The Alcohol Retail Environment in Miami Gardens, Florida

By the Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug (ATOD) Sub-Council of the  
Live Healthy Miami Gardens Initiative



# Introduction & Acknowledgements

This Data Book offers a snapshot of the alcohol retail environment in the City of Miami Gardens, the third largest city in Florida's most populous county (Miami-Dade). It was created by the Resource Room and the Alcohol, Tobacco & Other Drugs (ATOD) Sub-Council of the Live Healthy Miami Gardens (LHMG) initiative, a partnership among over 100 organizations and residents working together to forge strategies that improve health outcomes in the city.

LHMG was born from the realization that though health is largely influenced by individuals' choices, the conditions in the communities where we live, learn, work and play are also major factors affecting people's ability to make healthy choices. Research shows that communities with safe places to play, good public transportation, affordable housing, access to fresh, healthy food, and regulation on the availability of alcohol and tobacco products have healthier residents.

To better understand the alcohol retail landscape in Miami Gardens, the ATOD Sub-Council launched a research project in which they gathered quantitative and qualitative data on the availability of alcohol products, marketing practices of these products in local retail outlets, and compliance with existing laws and regulations. They also engaged several subject matter experts to better understand how different practices related to alcohol retail sales can affect the community and to identify recommendations for Miami Gardens. This Data Book outlines the findings of the Sub-Council's work.

As illustrated in the following pages, the alcohol retail landscape in Miami Gardens mirrors the trends seen in other communities of color across the country.

*In addition to a higher density of off-premise alcohol retailers, compared to other cities in Florida, Miami Gardens has more neighborhood-based alcohol retailers, and a significant number of alcohol sales outlets with operating practices that promote high-risk alcohol consumption.*

To advance LHMG's ultimate goal – to make Miami Gardens a healthier place to live – this Data Book will be broadly shared with stakeholders who can positively impact public health outcomes in the city.

## SPECIAL THANKS

### ■ Our Funders

Live Healthy Miami Gardens' ATOD Sub-Council and The Resource Room are grateful to the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) for funding the development of this Data Book, and to the Health Foundation of South Florida for its six-year investment in LHMG to build the capacity of community stakeholders to collectively impact health in Miami Gardens.

### ■ Our Research Partners

The support of these partner organizations enabled the ATOD Sub-Council to implement diverse data collection techniques for this Data Book:

- City of Miami Gardens
- Florida Department of Health
- Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco
- Miami Dade NAACP Youth Council
- Miami Gardens Police Department
- St. Thomas University
- The Resource Room
- Urban Market Analytics
- Dr. Matthew E. Rossheim, George Mason University

### ■ Experts & Analysts

A Work Group met weekly over four months to develop the Data Book. Group members included three subject matter experts (SMEs):

- **Thamara Labrousse**, Program Director, LHMG
- **Alexis Carter**, Program Coordinator, LHMG
- **Chuck Ridley**, Co-Chair of the ATOD Sub-Council (SME)
- **Michael Sparks**, SparksInitiative (SME)
- **Dr. Matthew E. Rossheim**, George Mason University (SME)
- **Lindsay Corrales**, Health Foundation of South Florida
- **Laurent Saint-Louis**, Health Foundation of South Florida
- **Gypsy Gallardo**, Urban Market Analytics
- **Anthony Olivieri**, FHEED

# Live Healthy Miami Gardens – A Healthy Community Partnership

Through an extensive competitive process, The Health Foundation of South Florida selected the City of Miami Gardens as one of two communities in Miami-Dade County to receive a Healthy Community Partnership Grant (2014-2020) to support Live Healthy Miami Gardens (LHMG) as a collective impact initiative to better the health of Miami Gardens residents.

LHMG is designed to develop, implement and sustain effective community-level health strategies in five Health Impact Areas: Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs (ATOD); Healthy Eating and Improved Nutrition; Mental Health; Physical Activity; and Primary Health Care.

## ■ Partners of LHMG

- 24 Hour Fitness
- Abundant Living Health & Wellness Resulting Services
- All Star Media Solutions
- Alliance for a Healthier Generation
- Alliance for Aging
- AM 1490 WMBM
- Antioch Missionary Baptist Church
- Beach Stone Counseling
- Catalyst Miami
- Center for Family & Child Enrichment
- Children's Village
- Citrus Health Network
- City of Miami Gardens
- City of Miami Gardens Police Department
- Common Threads
- Concerned African Women
- Dr. Lynn Labrousse
- Early Childhood Link
- FLIPANY
- Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade County
- Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco

- Florida Health Networks
- Florida Impact to End Hunger
- Florida International University Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine
- Florida Memorial University
- Florida National Guard Counterdrug Civil Operations
- Fresh Start of Miami Dade
- Gang Alternative Miami
- Health Education Prevention and Promotion
- Health Foundation of South Florida
- His House Children's Home
- Holy Family Episcopal Church
- Jessie Trice Community Health System
- MD Marketing Network
- Miami Dade County Public Schools
- Miami Gardens Substance Abuse Coalition
- Mt. Pisgah Food Pantry
- Muslim Communities Association of South Florida
- New Horizons Community Mental Health Center
- Opa-Locka Community Development Corporation
- Optimal Health Medical Center
- Powell Health Solutions
- QQ Research Consultants
- SEEK (Seeking Education Empowers Knowledge) Foundation
- Simply Healthcare
- St. Thomas University
- The Children's Trust
- The Miami Coalition
- The Portrait of Empowerment
- The Resource Room
- Trinity Church Peace Makers Family Service Center
- UHI Community Care
- University of Florida/Institute of Food & Agricultural Sciences
- University of Miami
- Urban Health Partnerships
- Urban Health Solutions
- Urban Oasis Project

## ATOD Sub-Council

The LHMG ATOD Sub-Council spearheaded the research within these pages and together with The Resource Room, garnered the support of the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to develop this Data Book.

### ■ Co-Chairs

- **Michelle Johnson**, Director of Strategic Partnerships, Concerned African Women
- **Chuck Ridley**, Coalition Director, Drug Free Miami Gardens

### ■ Members

- **Islamiyat Adebisi**, MPH, CHES, Health Educator Consultant, Florida Dept of Health
- **Tanika Dufreshe**, Program Director, The Resource Room
- **Vidal Garcia**, Code Officer, City of Miami Gardens
- **Sheila Gerald**, Special Agent, Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages and Tobacco
- **Matthew Jean**, LMFT, Founder, Sober Words
- **Ebony Johnson**, Executive Director, The Resource Room
- **Thamara Labrousse**, Director, Live Healthy Miami Gardens
- **Veronica Lambert**, Officer, Miami Gardens Police Dept
- **Lonnie Lawrence**, Board Chair, Miami Coalition
- **First Lieutenant Gabrielle K. Magnanti**, Counterdrug Civil Operations Specialist and South Florida Office in Charge, Florida Army National Guard Counterdrug Program Civil Operations Program
- **Gwendolyn McDuffie**, Planning & Zoning Administrator, City of Miami Gardens
- **Michael Nozile**, Executive Director, Gang Alternatives
- **Lisa Tamburello**, LMHC, Healthy Me Program Administrator, Citrus Health Network

# 3 Ways Lower-Income, Communities-of-Color are Targeted for Higher Alcohol Consumption



Research has shown that alcohol availability and marketing are disproportionately concentrated in communities of color.<sup>1</sup> Alcohol marketing & outlet density, high alcohol content products, and state alcohol laws are three factors that fuel higher alcohol consumption. These national trends are replicated in the alcohol retail landscape in Miami Gardens.

## 1. ALCOHOL MARKETING & OUTLET DENSITY

The alcohol industry fuels a disproportionately greater concentration of alcohol product advertising and access in lower-income communities of color, including higher density of alcohol retail outlets.<sup>1,9,14</sup>

Plus, studies consistently find that, compared to other youth, African American youth are exposed to far more alcohol advertising.<sup>1,3,5,7,11,18</sup>

This is not only through differences in the built environment, e.g., a far greater number of alcohol billboards in African American communities, but also through targeted pro-drinking messages including ads in Black-targeted magazines, sponsorship of cultural events such as Juneteenth, donations to the Black Congressional Caucus, and product endorsements by Black celebrities.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. HIGH-ALCOHOL CONTENT PRODUCTS

Beyond hyper-targeting of marketing, the alcohol industry has continuously targeted African American communities with more dangerous products. Malt liquor, which has greater alcohol content than regular beer, has been most heavily promoted to young African Americans.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, in 2007, a new class of ready-to-drink alcohol products with extraordinarily high alcohol content was introduced to the U.S. market - "super-sized alcopops" with the alcohol content of nearly a six-pack of beer in a single-serving can. They are often available at gas stations and convenience stores for an average price of \$2.79 and at a promotional rate of 2 cans for \$5.<sup>14,16</sup>

Research shows that supersized alcopops are commonly consumed by underage drinkers, are associated with greater odds of being injured while under the influence, and often result in "blacking out" or vomiting.<sup>6,17</sup> Consuming a single supersized alcopop over two hours can put youth well over the legal driving limit of 0.08 g/dL. Consuming two cans puts them at risk of alcohol poisoning.<sup>15</sup>

National research shows that supersized alcopops are disproportionately available in communities with higher poverty, younger average age, and a greater proportion of Black residents<sup>14</sup>. Also, in-store product placement substantially increases the sale of alcohol, particularly types with higher alcohol-by-volume.<sup>12</sup>

Given differences in the built environment, it is therefore not surprising that living in African American neighborhoods and other communities of color is associated with greater consumption of high alcohol content products and the experience of more negative related consequences.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. STATE ALCOHOL LAWS

State-level factors play a role in the availability of these dangerous products.<sup>14</sup> States with weaker alcohol control policies have greater availability of supersized alcopops. Florida ranks 33rd among the 50 states and D.C. in terms of the strength of its alcohol policies.<sup>13</sup> Weak state policies likely also play a role in the availability of alcohol products in Miami Gardens.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF LOCAL LAWS:

Research supports that city-level restrictions on the sale of high-alcohol content beverages results in reductions in crime, particularly assaults and vandalism<sup>10</sup>, and that local government policies can improve alcohol retail operational practices. In Miami Gardens, additional laws and better enforcement of existing laws can significantly reduce local access to these dangerous products. Therefore, it is imperative to adopt local laws that are not state pre-empted that focus on reducing alcohol availability and addressing the nuisances that alcohol outlets are known to contribute to.

# Alcohol Retail Outlets in Miami Gardens (Off-Premise Outlets)

In Florida, alcohol retail outlets fall in two distinct categories (off-premise and on-premise). Off-premise outlets sell alcohol for consumption off-premises. They include:

- **Liquor stores:** Alcohol is the primary product for sale
- **Grocery stores/supermarkets:** Primarily selling food
- **Convenience stores/gas stations:** Often in or near residential areas
- **Drug stores:** Including national chains such as CVS and Walgreens

This group of alcohol retailers was the subject of analysis by the ATOD Sub-Council and its research partners. The Sub-Council analyzed data from State of Florida licensee databases at two points-in-time:

- **March 2018** – This first data capture enabled the Sub-Council research team to study the locational link between off-premise alcohol retailers and 911 calls to Miami Gardens Police Department (findings are featured in the maps on this page and the next).
- **December 2019** – A second round of data capture was used to study the prevalence of off-premise alcohol retailers in Miami Gardens, using the adjacent City of Aventura for comparison. Please see pages 12 and 13 for more detail on the selection of Aventura as a comparison city.

## ALCOHOL RETAILERS IN MIAMI GARDENS

In March 2018, there were 150 alcohol retail outlets operating in the City of Miami Gardens.



**SOURCE:**  
Florida Division of  
Alcoholic Beverages  
& Tobacco – Public  
Records; Licenses,  
Registrations & Permits  
(Geospatial data  
provided by FHEED).

## PREVALENCE OF OFF-PREMISE RETAILERS

For perspective on the findings in Miami Gardens, the ATOD Sub-Council identified the neighboring City of Aventura to provide a comparison. Although Aventura is smaller than Miami Gardens in both size and population, both cities sit within Miami-Dade County and are less than five miles apart. The comparison of the prevalence of off-premise alcohol retailers in Miami Gardens is described below.

- **Miami Gardens has nearly 4 times more off-premise alcohol retailers than Aventura (as a percentage of alcohol licensees).**

The cities are worlds apart in the way alcohol is purchased. Off-premise alcohol retailers make-up a full two-thirds (67%) of alcohol retail licensees in Miami Gardens, but comprise only 17% of Aventura's alcohol retail licensees.



- **Miami Gardens has nearly 2 times as many off-premise alcohol retailers per 1,000 residents.**

In December 2019, there were .76 off-premise alcohol sales outlets per 1,000 residents in Miami Gardens versus .42 per 1,000 residents in the neighboring City of Aventura.

	Population	Outlets/1,000 Residents
<b>OFF-PREMISE ALCOHOL RETAIL LICENSEES</b>		
Miami Gardens	112,913	0.76
Aventura	37,780	0.42

# Miami Gardens Store Buffers & 911 Events Mapped Together

## ■ Alcohol Outlets & Crime

There is strong scientific evidence that greater alcohol outlet density is associated with increased alcohol consumption and related health and social problems, including crime, violence, neighborhood disruption, injury and public nuisance activities.<sup>14</sup>

In the City of Miami Gardens, the ATOD Sub-Council found a concentration of 911 service calls in the areas immediately surrounding alcohol retailers. This map depicts 1,000-foot buffers around Miami Gardens' off-premise alcohol retailers (large peach circles), overlaid by 911 calls for service between June 2017 and May 2018 (small multi-colored dots).

The 1,000-foot buffers surrounding off-premise alcohol outlets comprise 33% of the City's total land area (in purple border). Yet, over the 12 months of 911 calls analyzed by the ATOD Sub-Council, 54% of the calls came from within those 1,000-foot buffers surrounding off-premise alcohol outlets (3,682/6,831 calls).

### CLEAR DIRECTION:

These local data suggest that better regulation of alcohol outlet density is urgently important for preventing and reducing crime and public nuisance activities associated with their operations in Miami Gardens as well as laws that (a) reduce access to high-alcohol content products sold at low prices and (b) address the nuisances surrounding the establishments that sell these products.

## 911 CALLS WITHIN 1,000 FEET OF OFF-PREMISE ALCOHOL RETAILERS

JUNE 2017 to MAY 2018



### SOURCES:

Miami Gardens Police Department (911 Service Calls) and Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco (Licensed Alcohol Retail Outlets); Geospatial data provided by FHEED.

# Deeper Look at the Link Between Alcohol Retail Outlets & 911 Service Calls

Analysis commissioned by the Health Foundation of South Florida illustrates the locational link between off-premise alcohol retailers in Miami Gardens and 911 calls to the Miami Gardens Police Department.

## ■ Analysis of 911 Calls Within 1,000 Feet of Off-Premise Alcohol Sales Outlets

Overall, 54% of 911 calls originated from incidents within a 1,000-foot radius of off-premise alcohol sales outlets in Miami Gardens (i.e., convenience stores, gas stations, drug stores and grocery stores that sell alcohol for consumption elsewhere).

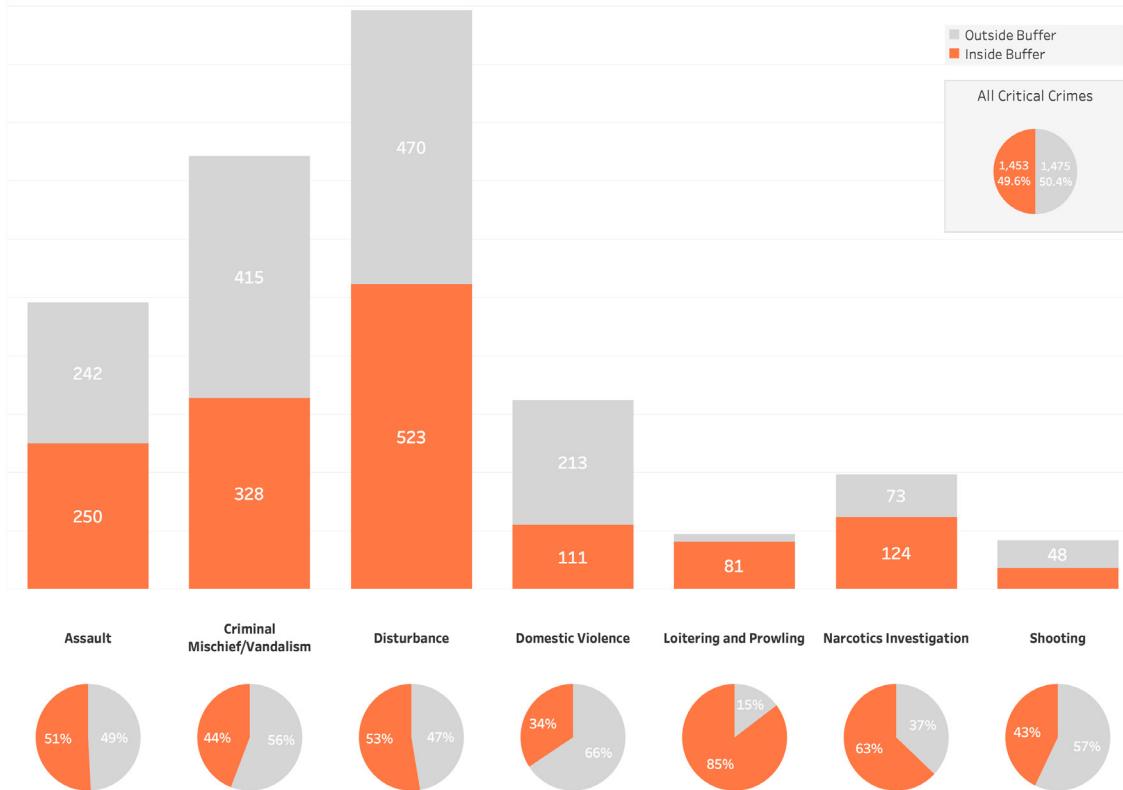
Based on interviews with Miami Gardens residents, the types of 911 calls which are most concerning are disturbances, criminal mischief, assaults, domestic violence, loitering, shootings, and narcotics. When examining the 911 call data, the ATOD Sub-Council found 50% of the 911 calls in these categories occurred within 1,000 feet of an off-premise alcohol retailer ( $1,453/2,928=49.6\%$ ).

Within this sub-group of incident/offense types, the ratio of 911 calls that take place within the 1,000-foot buffers varies by offense type.

**Nearly 87% of 911 calls for loitering and prowling and 84% of calls for suspected narcotics transactions happen within a 1,000-foot radius of off-premise alcohol retailers.**

The 1,000-foot buffers also account for a majority of 911 calls for assault (51%) and disturbances (53%).

## DISTRIBUTION OF CITIZEN-PRIORITY CALLS IN RELATION TO 1,000-FOOT BUFFER



# Police & Inspector Perspectives on Enforcement of Laws and City Codes



One focal area of the ATOD Sub-Council's research was enforcement of alcohol-related laws and the extent to which alcohol retailers in Miami Gardens comply with existing state laws and city codes for alcohol sales. To gather information on this topic, the ATOD Sub-Council interviewed law enforcement officers and led community compliance checks at local stores.

## MEETINGS WITH ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS

Two meetings were conducted between Live Healthy Miami Gardens representatives (Program

Director Thamara Labrousse, Program Coordinator Alexis Carter and Co-Chair of the ATOD Sub-Council Chuck Ridley), and representatives of Miami Gardens Police Department (MGPD) and the Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco (ABT). The meetings were designed to discuss:

- Concerns on the part of MGPD and ABT regarding alcohol sales to minors;
- The frequency and number of compliance checks by ABT and the agency's ability to increase the number of checks conducted; and
- The ability of MGPD to take a more proactive role in conducting compliance checks.

## KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM MEETINGS

### ■ **Concerns of Miami Gardens Police Department (MGPD)**

MGPD officers expressed concern about the operating practices of convenience stores and gas stations (which make-up 67% of off-premise alcohol retailers in the City). Chief among them is the need to address the potential for alcohol sales to minors.

When asked whether they are able to carry out compliance checks for sales to minors (which are currently conducted by ABT), they clarified that MGPD sustains a partnership with ABT whereby the ABT takes a lead role in compliance checks. This is for three reasons - MGPD's limited resources,

the unique risks associated with utilizing underage youth as decoy shoppers conducting compliance checks, and the administrative supports required to supervise the checks.

### ■ **Insights from Florida Division of Alcoholic Beverages & Tobacco (ABT)**

ABT provided an overview of their protocols for conducting alcohol sales compliances checks, which include the use of minors, ages 16 to 20, as decoy shoppers. ABT staff cited three factors that impact the number of compliance checks conducted – safety, geography and staffing.

The ABT's primary concern during the checks is the safety of the decoy shoppers, which limits their compliance monitoring to outlets that do not place minors at risk. Additionally, ABT shared that their biggest challenge is the large geographic area they enforce, and the limited number of officers on board to oversee compliance checks.

Chuck Ridley offered an overview of the ATOD Sub-Council's work and requested that ABT officials increase the number of compliance checks conducted from 10 per year to 40. While ABT staff committed to remain a strong supporter of the ATOD Sub-Council's work, they felt it would be impossible to effectively increase the number of compliance checks conducted within the constraints of their current capacity.

# Compliance Checks Find Non-Compliance at Two-Thirds of Alcohol Retailers Visited

## RESULTS OF COMMUNITY-LED COMPLIANCE CHECKS

Community-led Compliance Checks are inspections conducted by civilians with no law enforcement authority and are used to gather information on retailer compliance with laws. The Sub-Council used this methodology to collect data on two elements of compliance: sales to minors and sales after hours (i.e., between midnight and 6 a.m., which is the legislated cut-off time for alcohol sales).

The Sub-Council followed best-practice guidelines for community compliance checks, including the following:

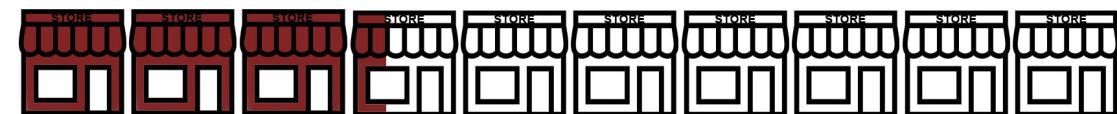
- Shoppers were between the ages of 16 and 20 and did not appear to be 21 years old;
- Shoppers were trained to conduct effective inspections;
- Shoppers dressed in clothing appropriate for the neighborhood, but that specifically avoided attire that could be interpreted as gang clothing or colors;
- Once inspections were done, shoppers left the outlets and proceeded directly to their transport vehicle (driven by an adult volunteer) to debrief while facts were still fresh.

## KEY FINDINGS

### ■ Alcohol Sales to Minors

The Sub-Council opted to focus on convenience stores and gas stations for community compliance checks. This decision was based upon the findings of scans conducted by the ATOD Sub-Council, which identified these stores as the type most likely to use operational and marketing practices that tend to heighten the potential to illegally sell alcohol to minors. Stores were sampled on the weekend and in the afternoon between 2 p.m. and 7 p.m.

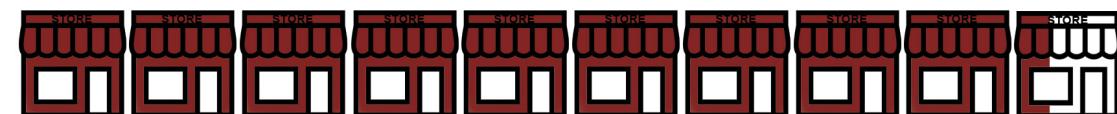
### 10 of 32 Stores Visited (31%) Sold Alcohol to Underage Shoppers



### ■ Illegal After-Hours Sale of Alcohol

According to Miami Gardens codes, alcohol sales are only permitted between 6 a.m. and 12 a.m. Sub-Council meetings with MGPD officers revealed that some of the city's 24-hour convenience stores and gas stations were illegally selling alcohol after hours in violation of the municipal code. To corroborate the officers' feedback, representatives of the ATOD Sub-Council visited 13 stores after midnight. For safety reasons, the Sub-Council selected stores primarily on 27th Avenue, with lighting that made them visible from the street.

### Of 13 Stores Visited, 12 (or 92%) Illegally Sold Risky Alcohol Products Between 12:30 a.m. and 2:30 a.m.



# Environmental Scans

## Methodology



Seniors at St. Thomas University who supported the ATOD Sub-Council's expansive work in the field

### THE BEST PRACTICE “FOUR Ps” SCANS METHOD

Environmental scans are a national best practice prevention strategy that allowed the ATOD Sub-Council to gather data on Miami Gardens’ alcohol retail landscape. The Sub-Council and partners conducted three types of environmental scans of off-premise alcohol sales outlets, focusing most intensively on convenience stores and gas stations. The scans used the best practice “Four Ps” scan method (described in the box at right). A primary objective was to determine if the stores’ marketing and operating practices place the community at risk for public health issues.

### ■ Youth Team Scans

Youth and parents from the Miami Dade NAACP Youth Council conducted a tour and scan of neighborhood retail outlets in Miami Gardens. The group received three hours of training on how to conduct the scans, including a survey to identify community risk factors associated with alcohol.

### ■ Outlet Visit Scans by Experts

Michael Sparks (National Alcohol Consultant) and Chuck Ridley (Local Drug Prevention Community Organizer and ATOD Sub-Council Co-Chairperson) conducted environmental scans of alcohol retail outlets in Miami Gardens by visiting national and regional chain stores as well as local convenience stores and gas stations. Their goal was to identify risk factors for alcohol misuse and abuse through the lens of the Four Ps.

### ■ University Student Scans

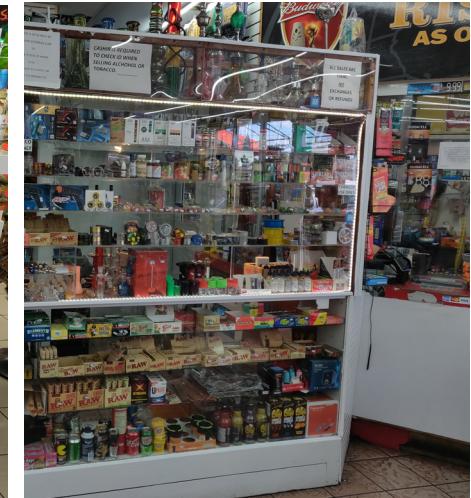
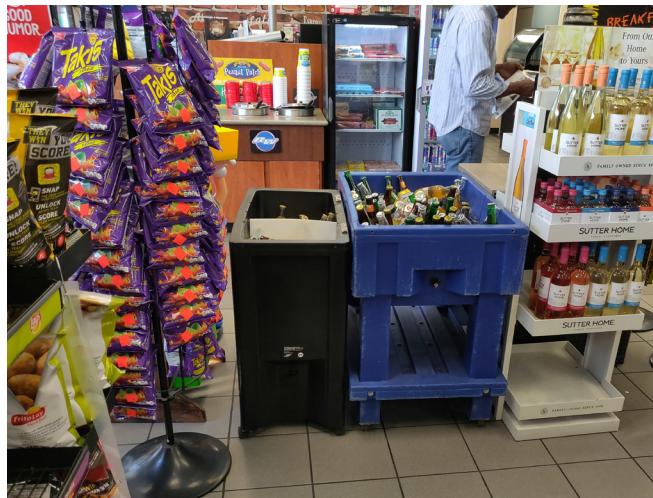
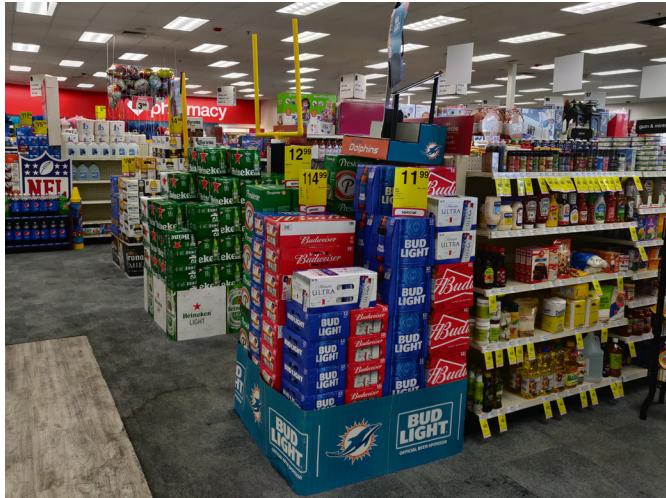
A team of seniors at St. Thomas University conducted scans that collected data and photos at 42 alcohol retail outlets. Guided by Dr. Jodi Grace, Associate Professor of Psychology, the team’s work made it possible for the ATOD Sub-Council to create a side-by-side “tale of two cities,” comparing alcohol retail practices in Miami Gardens versus Aventura.

### THE FOUR Ps:

The scans explored the Four Ps of the alcohol environment (Price, Product, Promotion, and Place), which are associated with the nature and extent of alcohol-related problems in local communities.

- **PRICE:** How cheap is alcohol? How much does a 40-oz malt liquor cost versus 12-oz soda? Is alcohol less expensive in certain settings?
- **PRODUCT:** What range of alcohol is sold? Do certain products appeal to younger people (e.g., alcopops)? How much inventory is devoted to malt liquor? Are malt liquor and beer sold in single cans?
- **PROMOTION:** How and to whom is alcohol promoted and advertised? What percent of window space is dedicated to advertisement?
- **PLACE:** Where are alcohol retailers located and where is alcohol placed in stores, e.g., Is beer next to soda in coolers? Do “beer caves” make large amounts of cold beer available? Are products displayed where they can be stolen?

# Findings Miami Gardens' Alcohol Retail Environment



## ■ Findings from the Youth Team Scans

Major findings from the NAACP Youth Team's scans included the following:

- Larger supermarkets and grocery stores such as Aldi's, Publix and Winn-Dixie were more responsible in alcohol-related marketing and operating practices. For example, this group was much more likely to place "We I.D." signage at cash registers and store fronts.
- Smaller, neighborhood-based retailers were most problematic in their alcohol-related marketing and operating practices. Neighborhood convenience stores and gas station convenience stores are particularly problematic citywide. Drug stores in lower socio-economic areas of the city also exhibited problematic practices. For example, a much larger percentage of this group placed alcohol advertising outside their storefronts and displayed alcohol products adjacent to popular non-alcohol products.

Observations	Super-Markets	Drug & Convenience Stores
Sell single can or bottle sales	0%	33%
Place alcohol products close to other products	15%	60%
Place alcohol products at front of store	42%	30%
Place "We I.D." signage at store front or at register	100%	40%
Sell malt liquor or alcopops	10%	60%
Post alcohol ads outside, on windows or walls	15%	60%
Sell drug-related goods (e.g., rolling paper, pipes)	0%	50%
Allow loitering outside their premises	0%	35%

# Findings

## Outlet Visits by Experts in the Substance Abuse Prevention Field

Michael Sparks (National Alcohol Consultant) and Chuck Ridley (Local Drug Prevention Community Organizer and ATOD Sub-Council Co-Chairperson) conducted environmental scans of alcohol retail outlets (located within the clusters identified in the maps to the right), visiting national and regional chain stores, including drug stores and supermarkets, as well as local convenience stores and gas stations.

Their goal was to identify risk factors for alcohol misuse and abuse through the lens of the Four Ps.



**PRICE:** Research confirms that the lower the price of alcohol, the greater the consumption and the greater the rate of alcohol-related consequences. Scans revealed that 100% of the stores visited participated in discounts and promotions of alcohol products; and that a significant portion of cooler space was dedicated to single containers of low-cost alcohol.



**PRODUCT:** The team visited national and regional supermarkets and drug stores as well as local convenience stores and gas stations. With the exception of Publix and Aldi's supermarkets, all the stores visited had a large inventory of high-risk alcohol products such as malt liquors, alcopops, and fortified wines. A significant portion of cooler space in

stores was dedicated to cheap high potency alcohol products. Several studies show that consumption of these products contributes to crime around retail outlets where it is sold. Data suggest this association prevails in Miami Gardens as well.

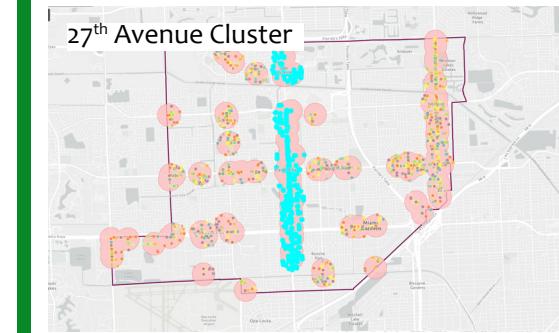
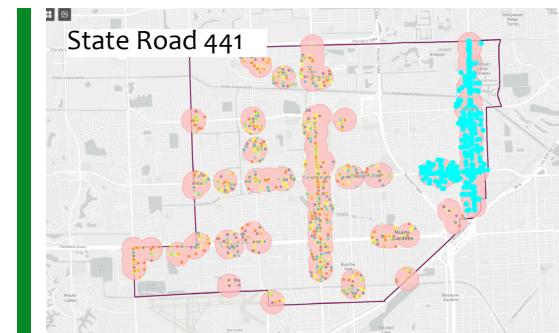


**PROMOTION:** The team's scans revealed that Point of Sale (POS) displays are a dominant promotion practice to market alcohol products in Miami Gardens. POS displays are a marketing tool driven by the alcohol industry, and are designed to be eye-catching. Alcohol retailers often placed alcohol advertising in store windows, on the doors of beverage coolers, in displays such as product pyramids, or hung from ceilings.

**PLACE:** The team's scans revealed that convenience stores and gas stations make-up a majority of alcohol retailers in Miami Gardens. Most of the city's gas stations are open 24 hours a day, seven days a week, which increases the availability, accessibility of alcohol and likelihood of illegal after-hour sales.

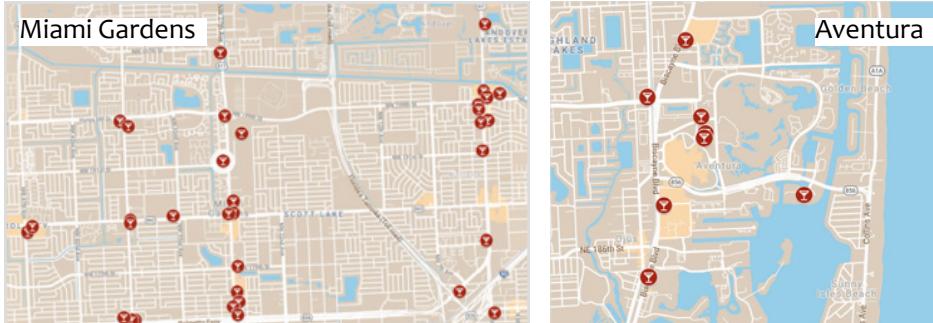
Seventy percent (70%) of Miami Gardens' off-premise alcohol retailers are gas stations and convenience stores, and a majority of the outlets are located in two clusters. One is the commercial corridor on State Road 441, from 215th Street to the Palmetto Expressway, and the second is on 27th avenue, from 215th to 151st Street (depicted in the maps below).

### CLUSTERS OF OFF-PREMISE ALCOHOL RETAILERS VISITED BY EXPERTS



# Findings Miami Gardens vs Aventura

## ■ Scans by St. Thomas University Students



Fifteen students and faculty of St. Thomas University conducted scans of 42 alcohol retail outlets, including 34 stores in the City of Miami Gardens and eight stores in the neighboring City of Aventura (listed by type below).

Off-Premise Alcohol Retailers	Miami Gardens	Aventura	Total
Grocery stores	5	2	7
Pharmacies	3	2	5
Gas stations	21	3	24
Convenience stores	3	1	4
Liquor stores	2	0	2
Totals:	34	8	42

## ■ Findings by the St. Thomas University Team



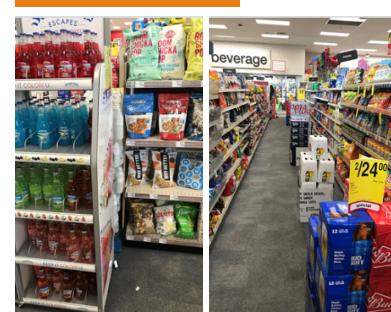
**PRICE:** Inside of all types of stores visited they found (a) inexpensive and discounted alcopops and malt liquors, as well as large quantities of beer; and (b) larger quantities (18 or 24 packs of beer) were on sale but not smaller quantities (6 or 12 packs of beer).



**PRODUCT:** In Miami Gardens, 71% of off-premise alcohol sales outlets visited sold "Four Loko" (supersized alcopops), malt liquors, and grain alcohol, versus only 12% of Aventura alcohol sales outlets visited.



**PROMOTION:** There was a visible difference in the types of products promoted at the front of stores. A majority of alcohol outlets visited in Miami Gardens and Aventura promoted alcohol products at the front of stores (58% and 63% respectively). In Miami Gardens, mostly alcopops and lagers occupied front-of-store promotions. In Aventura, wine was the primary product in this prime marketing location. There was also a notable difference in stores featuring alcohol advertising outside their buildings (21% in Miami Gardens versus 0% in Aventura).



(e.g., a Niki Minaj alcohol advertisement, in one case).

**PLACE:** In 94% of off-premise alcohol outlets visited in Miami Gardens, alcohol was placed immediately next to non-alcoholic products (e.g., candy, chips). This was observed in 75% of Aventura outlets visited. The St. Thomas University team also noted the placement of low-to-the-ground alcohol advertisements in Miami Gardens, at the eye gaze of children (e.g., a Niki Minaj alcohol advertisement, in one case).

# Findings

## Socioeconomic Differences Linked to Alcohol Retail Landscape

These differences in findings of alcohol retail practices from the environmental scans described above may be explained by the vastly different demographics and social conditions in these two communities.

The majority of people in Miami Gardens are Black (68.8%), whereas most people living in Aventura are White (54.8%) and/or Latino (40.5%). The median age in Miami Gardens is 35.6, versus 50.3 in Aventura. The poverty rate is more than twice as high in Miami Gardens, and the median household income is over 1.5 times as high in Aventura. More than half of adults in Aventura have Bachelor's degrees compared to roughly one-in-seven adults in Miami Gardens who do.

	Miami Gardens	Aventura
Population	112,913	37,780
Median age	35.6	50.3
Females	53.8%	52.8%
Black or African-American	68.8%	2.0%
White	2.8%	54.8%
Hispanic/Latino	26.8%	40.5%
Median household income	\$40,618	\$62,437
People in poverty	21.7%	10.3%
Bachelor's degree or higher	14.7%	53.6%

### SOURCE:

U.S. Census American Community Survey 2018 5-Year Estimates.

### ■ Research-Identified Risk in Miami Gardens Compared to Nearby Aventura

Consistent with national trends, the St. Thomas University team found observable differences between the promotion of alcohol at Miami Gardens stores compared to those in Aventura. For example, at least 50% of observed Miami Gardens stores had substantial window space dedicated to alcohol promotional signs whereas no stores observed in Aventura did.

**National research shows that supersized alcopops and higher-content alcohol products are disproportionately available in communities with higher poverty and larger African-American populations.<sup>15</sup>**

There were no observed stores in Aventura that sold malt liquor or fortified wines (such as Mad Dog 20/20, Wild Irish Rose, or Cisco), whereas these were commonly sold in the stores observed in Miami Gardens. Further, there was significantly less shelf space devoted to supersized alcopops in Aventura than in Miami Gardens stores observed. Of the stores observed in Aventura, none of the alcohol products for sale contained an alcohol content of 20% (considered very high) whereas these products were commonly found in Miami Gardens.

**Research also supports that in-store product placement substantially increases the sale of alcohol products, particularly higher alcohol-by-volume products.<sup>16</sup>**

Although a similar proportion of stores in Miami Gardens and Aventura had alcohol available at the front of the store (58% versus 63%), none of the stores in Aventura had alcopops at the front of the store. Alcopops – which are heavily marketed to youth – were commonly featured at store fronts in Miami Gardens.

These local data show that the more dangerous and youth-oriented alcohol products are widely available and heavily marketed in Miami Gardens stores, whereas they are more hidden or non-existent in most Aventura stores.

# Listening with Local Residents & Business Owners

The ATOD Sub-Council prioritized the perspectives of Miami Gardens residents and business owners. The Sub-Council conducted two rounds of one-on-one conversations with residents (October 2018) and one round with business owners (September 2019).

## ■ Feedback from Residents

The ATOD Sub-Council conducted interviews with 19 Miami Gardens residents, most of whom were long-time or life-long residents of the city. Focused on convenience stores and gas stations, the following questions guided the conversations:

- Do these stores contribute to nuisances in your neighborhood?
- Should these stores be allowed to sell drug paraphernalia?
- Do these stores sell too much alcohol?
- Do stores located near schools and parks present a danger to children?
- Do you avoid these stores?
- Do you wish these stores offered healthier food or drink options?

On the whole, residents said they were proud to live or work in Miami Gardens and felt optimistic about the direction of the City. On the topic of alcohol retailers' presence in their neighborhoods, residents were eager to share their thoughts, which include the following:

- Most residents said they either do not shop in neighborhood convenience stores and gas stations or seldom do. Some said they avoid such stores because of the composition of their customer base (e.g., loiterers).
- Residents were concerned that the presence of alcohol retailers in neighborhoods allows patrons to purchase



- alcohol and consume it in nearby public areas.
- Residents felt that alcohol retailers in close proximity to schools and parks should be closely monitored; and that their presence influences young people's perceived behavioral norms.
- Several residents voiced concern that many alcohol retail outlets are owned by non-city residents who do not feel a sense of responsibility to the city.
- Residents contend that too many alcohol retailers tolerate loitering, gambling, panhandling and alcohol consumption on or near their premises.

While most residents voiced concerns, several also felt that neighborhood stores offer a valuable service, providing residents access to needed products.

## ■ Feedback from Business Owners

ATOD Sub-Council stakeholders interviewed nine business owners for their perceptions on the Miami Gardens'

alcohol retail landscape. They had varied opinions and experiences with such retailers but were generally ambivalent about their impact on quality of life. One business owner stated that he knew the reputation of the area prior to leasing at his location and factored potential nuisances into the cost of doing business in Miami Gardens.

Most business owners were reluctant to respond, but those who did offered the following points of feedback:

- Business owners stated that they observe loitering and illegal activities on the premises of or nearby alcohol retailers, including alcohol consumption and gambling.
- By and large, business owners felt it the responsibility of alcohol retailers to ensure responsible operations.
- None of the business owners had complained to City officials or police about the business practices of alcohol retailers, but said that customers occasionally express concerns about loitering near such stores.

# Listening with Officers of Miami Gardens Police Department

As part of its data collection efforts, the ATOD Sub-Council prioritized the perspective of patrol officers of the Miami Gardens Police Department (MGPD). The Sub-Council scheduled a listening session with four MGPD officers who work shifts between 4 p.m. and 4 a.m., to ask for their insights in response to three questions (bolded below and followed by their feedback on each).

## ■ **What types of problems do you frequently encounter when responding to calls for service at or near alcohol retailers?**

MGPD officers cited nuisance-related behaviors as the most prevalent category of 911 calls near alcohol sales outlets, including calls to address public intoxication, violation of open container laws, aggressive behaviors toward store staff and customers, open-air drug dealing, and loitering.

Officers expressed concern about a growing population of transients, many experiencing mental health issues, who congregate or sleep near 24-hour alcohol retailers. These stores serve as a magnet for this population. Given the number of apparent transients who exhibit symptoms of substance abuse, MGPD officers cited the ubiquitous sale of single cans of malt liquor and high-alcohol content products as a likely factor in 911 calls.

## ■ **What are the positives and negatives of adopting City policies to address alcohol outlet related problems?**

ATOD Sub-Council members inquired about the potential impact of introducing new nuisance abatement standards to policies governing alcohol retail practices, including civil citations for retailers and customers who contribute to public nuisance complaints.

All of the officers interviewed expressed enthusiastic support for an ordinance focusing on operational practices by alcohol retailers that contribute to calls for service near their stores. In unison, they voiced frustration with store owners who prioritize profit over people and public safety.

The officers named several store operating practices that contribute to problem behaviors, including:

- Stores that sell single-serve high-alcohol content products (e.g., malt liquor, fortified wines and alcopops) even when store managers are aware of problems associated with these products;
- Stores continuing to sell alcohol to visibly intoxicated patrons; and
- Stores that continue to serve patrons previously issued a “no trespass” citation at the same store.

Officers found it an added challenge that a great number of 911 calls to alcohol retail outlets take place at times when most residents are asleep and senior City staff are not at work, which limits their first-hand experience with the problems. Officers felt that as a result, there is limited community advocacy to address the challenges.

All of the officers interviewed felt that a new ordinance could give them an added tool to address problems that detract from their ability to focus on other serious issues.

## ■ **Are there other strategies you believe could reduce alcohol outlet related problems?**

MGPD officers discussed additional strategies that might lessen the volume of calls for service in and around alcohol sales outlets. Their ideas included placing greater restrictions on the hours and days of permitted alcohol sales (e.g., restricting sales on Sundays).

## IMPORTANCE OF COMMUNITY VOICE

Listening sessions with police officers reinforced the need for community-driven and coalition-based approaches to enforcement, especially in the face of resource constraints that limit government-led enforcement efforts. Coalition-based approaches include the environmental scans and community compliance checks undertaken by the ATOD Sub-Council to inform public discourse.



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