



President
Henry Conde

Ghent Neighborhood League
P O Box 11431
Norfolk, VA 23517

Dear Planning Commissioners,

The Ghent Neighborhood League is opposed to the following to two special exceptions applications from 7-11 proposed to be located at 100 W. 21st St, Norfolk, VA 23517.

- a. For a Special Exception to operate a Retail Goods Establishment after Midnight.
- b. For a Special Exception for an Establishment for the Sale of Alcoholic Beverages for Off-Premise Consumption.

Representatives presented at the October 12, 2011 GNL meeting and the proposal was met with overwhelming community opposition from those in attendance at the meeting. The GNL extended a second invitation for representatives to make a second presentation at the meeting (November 2011) which was the meeting at which City Manager Marcus Jones was the featured speaker. The plan again met with overwhelming opposition. Community members expressed many concerns regarding the operations of the current locations and the lack of any need for additional 24 hour convenience store or another duplicative location for alcohol sales.

It was noted repeatedly that our neighborhood is already over served with 24 hours convenience locations and locations to purchase alcohol and there is no unmet community need nor apparent benefit to the community for any such additional locations and for such special exceptions to be granted.

After two presentations from various 7-11 representatives and meeting with them, the GNL does not support these two applications for special exceptions.

In this case, we do have the benefit to look at the examples of the same company operation for several years in the same neighborhood. 7-11 historically has NOT been a positive business to the community and has only sought to address concerns at its existing locations when this application met resistance and - even then - it has not been great. Historically 7-11 has not been a good business to residents. While providing "open all night" 24 hr convenience, they also have created undesirable locations with in our neighborhoods. In our meeting, customers reported that they have been harassed, they had observed stores loitering issues and residents reported aggressive panhandling. While 7-11 corporate representatives now say they "are going to resolve those issues", they have for too long had a history of not protecting their customers and not creating a positive business vs a negative.

A willingness to be a good neighbor and to show concern to neighbors - their customers - by providing a healthy environment has clearly not been a top priority of 7-11, even during this application process. We while we have now have been promised by the newest corporate manager at 7-11 that he will make sure that concerns will be addressed and resolved, there is no guarantee that this one manager will be in this position forever.

Currently with 3 stores in the Ghent neighborhood area and at least 4 additional 7-11 stores within walking distance, we feel the need of a convenience store operating 24hrs and selling alcohol are actually saturated and over met and there is no need to have an additional duplicative store.

The granting of such special exception for alcoholic beverages and 24 hours services should be unique and necessary and not duplicative and over saturated. Further, such special exceptions should not be concentrated into the hands of one applicant and 7-11 already has more than its fair share and holds one of the highest numbers in our neighborhood and perhaps the City.

The location of alcohol sales should take into account both the number of existing licenses and the proximity to schools and community services. In this case, there is a school, a daycare, a halfway house - - all within a block or two and just around the corner there is also a Salvation Army shelter and other social services providing services to those with alcohol dependence issues. It does seem from ill advised from a community compassion stand point to site such a carry out location with ready access in such close proximity to those struggling with addition issues.

Further, we are deeply troubled with the seeming disparities between the representations made by 7-11 to the community emphasizing that this is a corporate store and news reports that 7-11 is - in fact - building up its inventory of locations in the area to sell them as franchises. For your ready reference, attached is an article from Inside Business that reports :

"A release from 7-Eleven said its Southeastern Virginia market is on track with company franchise goals.

"Four years ago, when 7-Eleven first offered franchise opportunities in Virginia, approximately 240 company-owned stores were available for franchise in the greater Hampton Roads area," the release said. "As of Aug. 31, 121 of these stores have 'changed over' to franchise-owned businesses, with an additional seven stores to be franchised by the end of October. Approximately half the original inventory is still available." "

As such, with this applicant, any such promises of improvement of the 7-11 corporation seem sort term at best. While a sale in the foreseeable future to a franchisee could actually mean an improvement over operations of current corporate owned stores, the lack of forthrightness and full disclosure by 7-11 of these plans should be deeply concerning to the Commission in weighing its recommendation to City Council.

As such, for the reasons stated above, we ask that the Planning Commission recommend denial of the two requested special exceptions.