

STAFF SUMMARY

This staff summary was authored by DeKalb County Law Department personnel, and constitutes staff's understanding and interpretation of Dr. Dean Dabney's April 1, 2021 report titled "Evaluation of Small Box Discount Retailers and Negative Outcomes In Unincorporated DeKalb County," and the accompanying Executive Summary. This summary is intended to compliment Dr. Dabney's report and Executive Summary in a form that may be more user-friendly to the public, and in the event of any unintended inaccuracies or contradictions Dr. Dabney's work product should be relied upon.

After receiving complaints from citizens regarding several alleged adverse impacts of small box discount retail establishments ("SBDRs") on communities in unincorporated DeKalb County (the "County"), a moratorium prohibiting the permitting and licensing of new SBDR establishments was instituted in January of 2020. Said moratorium and its multiple subsequent extensions through the present were imposed so that Dean Dabney's team at Georgia State University could be retained to perform and complete an objective study on the impacts of SBDRs, and to suggest any appropriate remedial measures.

Since being retained, Dr. Dabney's team thoroughly investigated SBDR establishment's association with (1) crime, (2) food availability and pricing, (3) security and safety features, and (4) nearby property values. Specifically, in the course of his team's investigation, they personally inspected several SBDR establishments in the County (qualitative data), and collected statistical data from several federal and local agencies, such as the U.S. Census Bureau and the DeKalb County Tax Assessor (quantitative data). Dr. Dabney's and his team strived to gain information on the degree to which the presence, growth/expansion, and clustering of SBDRs impacts neighborhoods, in relation to similar non-SBDR retail establishments such as grocery stores (local and national chains), pharmacies, and convenience stores.

The team's site visits showed that SBDRs often have lower prices on some staple household goods and food items than the comparator retail establishments, except large grocery stores. Further, SBDRs were actually more likely to have some fresh food options than the comparators, with the exception of grocery stores (both local and national chains). However, SBDRs are less likely to have safety or security features, and in conjunction with unappealing exterior aesthetics, interior disorderliness and lean staffing, agency-provided data evidenced increased crime within 100 feet of SBDRs.

Meanwhile, the agency-provided data indicated that the number of SBDRs in a given census tract is significantly correlated with the number of violent crimes, property crimes, public order crimes, and total crimes.

The agency data also showed that while SBDRs tend to be located in or near food deserts when compared to pharmacies, such was not the case in relation to the other comparators.

In relation to property values, data showed that the presence of SBDRs (like convenience stores) negatively impacts median home values within a census block, while grocery stores often show a positive effect.

Perhaps most notably, the data showed that SBDRs' negative impacts, particularly on crime, are dramatically increased when SBDRs are clustered together, or with convenience stores. Specifically,

when in close proximity to other SBDs, statistical models indicated statistically significant and numerically large increases in crime counts. Further, when SBDs are clustered in close proximity with convenience stores, models yielded large and significant increases in property crime (but not other crime types). Finally, the models showed a numerically large (but statistically insignificant) increase in all crime types with an increase in the total number of SBDs in a census tract.

Based on the study's findings described above, given the similar negative influences and exacerbating impact when clustered together, it appears appropriate to treat SBDs and convenience stores similarly, and to subject them to the same zoning regulations in an effort to eliminate or reduce their negative effects. For example, distance requirements among and between SBDs and convenience stores might be considered.