

# Pompano on track to bar unwanted businesses

By **Anne Geggis**  
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City officials are eager to temporarily limit businesses such as pawn shops or drug treatment centers, but in doing so will also banish doctors, dentists and hospitals.

The City Commission tentatively approved a six-month moratorium Tuesday night that closes the door on liquor stores, check cashing stores, pawn shops, thrift stores, convenience stores and dormitories. But the ban includes health care facilities such as doctor or dentist offices.

The moratorium is being sold as an opportunity to put a pause on the proliferation of such businesses so officials can study if Pompano Beach is attracting the right mix of development in the right places.

"The vision of the city is to have retail and restaurants in the main corridor of the city," said Mayor Lamar Fisher. "The city has invested millions of dollars in that vision."

But the moratorium, which could be extended, produced a big thumbs-down from people representing drug treatment and rehabilitation facilities at Tuesday's meeting.

"I'm a little concerned about why health care is in the same category as pawn shops and liquor stores," said Gus Crocco, chief executive officer of First Step Behavioral Health. Crocco said he is days away from opening a new facility that he's invested \$575,000 in upgrading.

The moratorium moved forward with unanimous approval from the City Commission Tuesday. It comes up for final approval at the commission's next meeting. There was no discussion on the dais Tuesday.

Concern about the concentration of recovering drug addicts has also emerged in Delray Beach. Unlike Pompano Beach, though, the concern centers around "sober homes" — which does not fall into the health care category. These homes are the finish line for drug addicts coming out of rehabilitation and looking to reintegrate into society. But Delray Beach officials have been struggling for years to shape the kind of city they want, without illegally discriminating.

"Cities have the right to prohibit certain uses in their city, but it gets tricky with housing," said Delray Beach Mayor Cary Glickstein. "By grouping them together in such high concentrations as we are seeing in certain cities, you are creating an institutional environment that the housing laws were designed to eliminate."

Jeffrey Lynne, a Delray Beach attorney, representing two drug treatment facilities, sent a letter to Pompano Beach warning that the moratorium could be a violation of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Despite getting approvals from the city's zoning officials, his clients are having trouble getting their business license, he said.

"It's like when you've bought airline tickets, booked the hotel, the shows, and then you get bumped from the airplane," he said. "The city seems to be saying, 'Too bad.'"

He said he understands that sometimes a pause is necessary when demand for certain types of facilities don't jibe

with a city's vision.

"But I question whether they would have this moratorium if the 10th Starbucks popped up, or the 10th Burger King," he said.

Gloria Freifield, chief finance officer of Banyan Treatment Center, said she was disappointed and confused by how the city passed this moratorium.

"We've been grouped in with pawn shops, dentists, thrift stores — I don't know why or what or how but it's out there," she said. "We just paid \$950,000 for a building, that we can't even use for its intended purpose.

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