

LOCUST POINT CIVIC ASSOCIATION

Frequently Asked Questions

LPCA's MOU Process for New Bars and Restaurants (updated May 2026)

The Basics

What is an MOU?

An MOU — Memorandum of Understanding — is a written agreement between LPCA and a business applying for a liquor license. It documents the operating conditions both parties agree to: hours of service, noise management practices, parking expectations, community engagement commitments, and more.

It is not a permit, a regulation, or an endorsement. It is a relationship document — a shared record of what the business has committed to as a neighbor in Locust Point.

Does LPCA have to be involved when a business applies for a liquor license?

No — LPCA's involvement is voluntary. But as a recognized community association, LPCA has standing before the Baltimore City Board of Liquor License Commissioners (BCLC). When LPCA engages constructively with an applicant and reaches an MOU, it typically strengthens the application at the Liquor Board. When LPCA has unresolved concerns, it has the standing to formally register them.

Does signing an MOU mean LPCA supports the license?

No. The MOU explicitly states that LPCA's signature does not constitute support for or opposition to the granting of the license. It means both parties have agreed on operating conditions. LPCA takes no position on whether the license should be granted based on the existence of an MOU alone.

Who at LPCA handles MOU negotiations?

The Board designates a committee and a committee chair to lead MOU negotiations. The negotiating representative has authority delegated by the Board, but no MOU is binding on LPCA until the full Board votes to approve it. Individual Board members cannot commit LPCA on their own.

For Residents

A new bar is opening near my home. What can LPCA do?

LPCA's process is designed to engage applicants before they open — before problems arise. If you have specific concerns about a proposed business (noise, hours, parking, safety), the best step is to contact the LPCA MOU committee lead and share your concerns in writing. Documented community concerns are part of the context LPCA brings to negotiations.

LPCA aims to engage every applicant early, before a Liquor Board hearing is scheduled. The sooner concerns are raised, the greater their influence on the final MOU terms.

What kinds of conditions can an MOU include?

Standard MOU provisions cover:

- Hours of alcohol service, including stricter hours for outdoor areas
- Noise and amplified sound limits, including required mitigation measures
- Occupancy limits and private event notification requirements
- Parking and transportation demand management
- Trash and exterior maintenance standards
- Security staffing, camera installation, and incident notification
- Designation of a community liaison residents can actually reach
- Annual attendance at an LPCA general membership meeting
- Notification requirements for changes in hours, programming, or ownership

What happens if a business violates its MOU commitments?

The MOU establishes an escalation process: written notice, a meeting within 21 days, and — if unresolved — neutral mediation. If a material breach is not cured, LPCA may terminate the MOU and/or submit documentation of the breach to the Baltimore City Liquor Board at the next license renewal hearing. LPCA may also actively oppose renewal if the breach is serious enough.

Can I attend the meeting where LPCA discusses a new applicant?

LPCA conducts negotiations in confidence, which protects both parties and produces better outcomes than public posturing. However, community input matters and informs LPCA's negotiating position. The Board will provide opportunities for member input — typically through General Membership Meetings — as appropriate. The final executed MOU is a community document and is available to members.

Does LPCA oppose businesses?

LPCA is not in the business of opposing businesses. The 2023 LPCA Community Survey showed residents ranking restaurants and better retail among the top things they want more of in the neighborhood. Our first question is always: how do we help this business succeed in a way that works for the neighborhood? Every establishment that closes because of preventable conflict is a loss for Locust Point — and LPCA knows it.

For Business Applicants

When should I contact LPCA?

As early as possible — ideally before you file your application with the Liquor Board. The earlier you engage LPCA, the more time both parties have to negotiate in good faith without the pressure of an impending hearing date. LPCA commits to contacting applicants (or responding to their outreach) before any Liquor Board hearing.

What does the process look like from start to finish?

In brief: reach out to LPCA → review the standard MOU template → attend an LPCA meeting to present your concept → negotiate terms → execute the MOU after Board approval → include the MOU in your Liquor Board application → designate a community liaison before opening → operate in accordance with MOU commitments → renew the MOU alongside your license renewal. The full process guide, with each step described in detail, is available from LPCA.

Will LPCA treat my restaurant the same as a late-night nightclub?

No. LPCA applies a standard MOU template as a starting framework, but negotiates terms based on the specific business, location, and residential context. A neighborhood wine bar serving seated dinner guests is a very different conversation from a late-night venue with outdoor amplification and a capacity crowd. LPCA aims for proportionality: asking no more than what genuine community interests require, and no less.

What if I disagree with conditions LPCA is proposing?

Raise it for discussion. LPCA commits to taking business realities seriously: if a proposed condition is genuinely incompatible with your operational needs, say so and explain why. The goal is a negotiated agreement both parties can live with, not a checklist imposed on an unwilling business. LPCA won't use the MOU process to extract conditions a business can't operationally sustain.

What happens to the MOU if I sell the business?

The MOU requires you to notify LPCA in writing within 30 days of any proposed ownership change and to provide the incoming owner's contact information. Any new owner must either formally assume all MOU obligations in writing or negotiate a new MOU with LPCA before commencing operations. Community relationships built around a specific operator are not automatically transferred with the license.

How long does an MOU last?

The initial term is one year, consistent with the Baltimore City Liquor Board's standard renewal cycle. The MOU automatically renews for successive one-year terms unless either party gives 60 days' written notice of intent not to renew. Either party may request renegotiation of specific terms by giving 90 days' notice before the end of the current term.

Questions? Contact the LPCA MOU Committee through the Board or at a General Membership Meeting (second Wednesday of each month, 7:30 p.m.).