

**From:** On Behalf Of Jesse Chandler  
**Sent:** Wednesday, June 14, 2017 11:37 AM  
**To:** Planning <[Planning@a2gov.org](mailto:Planning@a2gov.org)>  
**Subject:** Ann Arbor Distillery Private Hall Rental

To the Ann Arbor Planning Commission,

I am writing in strong support of the Ann Arbor Distillery's petition to allow the existing space to be used for social occasions and stage productions. I have no association with the petitioner and am writing as both a resident of the Water Hill neighborhood (1008 Brooks Street) and an admirer of their fine spirits. I think that this proposed modification should be granted for several reasons.

First, I think that there is a shortage of quality event space in Ann Arbor - the fact that there is a business case for converting prime downtown retail storefronts into event spaces (Pretzel Bell, the Greyline) that sit empty 90% of the time demonstrates this clearly. I see the proposal to have events at the Distillery as fulfilling this demand using space that would otherwise sit vacant.

Second, I think that having an event space like this in Water Hill benefits the neighborhood. It could conceivably be used for community events. I also think that having a walkable live music venue fits well with the artistic vibe of the community (e.g., the Water Hill Music Festival). We need spaces that are smaller than the Ark or the Michigan Theater to allow local musical talent to develop. This seems like a good contender.

While there may be some challenges that come with having more people in this space (e.g. parking), I think that the impact will be quite limited. The Distillery is not directly beside residences to the North or West, residences to the East are in the floodway and the city seems intent on eventually purchasing these houses and tearing them down. The planned condo development to the south does not exist yet, but is marketed as "steps" from amenities like restaurants, so it clearly benefits from proximity of a successful and creative craft distillery (see my point below). Any challenges that may emerge from having events here can surely be managed within the existing ordinances and regulations, rather than through a heavy-handed prohibition of events.

Finally, I think that in the long term, it only makes sense to run a distillery in a city if the benefits (e.g. brand exposure through foot traffic) exceed the costs (property taxes and foregone money from selling the land). If they do not, they may eventually leave. An event space in particular will raise the profile of Ann Arbor Distillery products to people coming from other neighborhoods or towns for events and this will benefit the distillery. I think that the community is much better off (mixed use, diverse, well-rounded etc.) with a distillery here than with more condominiums, but more condominiums will be the outcome if that is the land use that makes the most financial sense. The best way to prevent this is to find innovative ways to allow the Ann Arbor Distillery company to thrive, and adding an event space seems to fit the bill.

Sincerely,  
Jesse Chandler