

GIS Final Project: Hollywood Boulevard Liquor Licenses

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For my GIS project I sought to map and show the heavy concentration alcohol related establishments along Hollywood Boulevard and its immediate cross streets. My study area is the nine block portion of Hollywood Boulevard from Highland Avenue in the west to Argyle Avenue in the east. This portion of Hollywood Boulevard is the most crowded during weekend nights and is home to tens of restaurants, bars, and nightclubs.

Hollywood has continuously housed traditional bar type uses but beginning around 2000 the area began to see an influx of more high end nightclub type uses which were previously only located in areas such as the Sunset Strip. Like many gentrifying neighborhoods, Hollywood's first phase of redevelopment was pushed by those liquor oriented uses only to then be followed many years later by the establishment of more conventional retail and restaurant uses.

Hollywood's businesses have more traditionally catered to outside visitors over area residents themselves. That is beginning to change and is an important transition. Tattoo parlors, smoke shops, and largely vacant spaces have been transitioning into hair salons, grocery stores, and coffee shop cafes. Many of these businesses serve downtown Hollywood's growing base of residents who have moved into the area's many new condominium and loft conversions.

It's important that Hollywood's nightlife scene is also a destination and largely doesn't serve residents themselves. I'd identify Hollywood as the place to go for Angelinos to party on a weekend night. Hollywood is also the destination for people from across the Southland who are taking a limo or party bus for a fun night out. Everyone out in Hollywood on a weekend night is presumably having a good time and I'm no stranger to the scene, but it does also have to be recognized that having such an agglomeration of bars and being such a late night destination does cause some negative externalities to residents themselves. Where a group of 30 year olds celebrating a bachelorette party from Orange County may come into Hollywood for just one night, residents must endure the same scene day in and day out.

So where there was little resistance to the issuance of liquor licenses in the past and during those earlier stages of gentrification that is now beginning to change. Pressure is beginning to be placed on the granting of alcohol related conditional use permits (CUP's) and those operating conditions contained there-in. In fact, the local district area council office represented by Eric Garcetti has reportedly placed a so-called soft moratorium on the issuance of type 48 liquor licenses (definition coming). This is a far cry from those earlier conversations I had with LAPD's Hollywood Region Vice Department officers who'd said they'd never seen a liquor license turned down.

For the purposes of our class project I want to research just how many liquor licenses are along Hollywood Boulevard and if there is in fact an over-concentration of licenses. As a summer intern at the Hollywood Boulevard Business Improvement District I'd repeatedly heard of this

over-concentration, but now want to research its actual existence and map out those individual liquor establishments using GIS.

To see if Hollywood in fact has an undue concentration of liquor licenses I first looked at those guidelines as laid forth by the subject regulatory agency, the California Department of Alcohol and Beverage Control (ABC). According to the ABC the number of liquor licenses issued is dependent on the population of the host census tract. Those census tracts that comprise my project study area are 1902.01, 1902.02, and small portions of 1907 and 1910. According to the ABC those combined census tracts are authorized to contain 10 on-sale licenses but actually contain 118 on-sale licenses. On-sale licenses permit alcohol to be consumed on premises, different from an off-sale license which is more for a market or liquor store type use. These four census tracts contain over ten times their allowed license allotment though I'm confident the count of 118 licenses although high is even an understatement.

Breaking down these four census tracts and looking only at my study area, the nine block stretch of Hollywood Boulevard from Highland to Argyle Avenues, there are 65 active licenses! So within only this small portion of the four census tracts which are allotted a combined 10 licenses I count 65.

The Hollywood Boulevard subject area contains many additional alcohol related establishments, but I again chose to map only those establishments allowing for on-sale consumption, thereby eliminating those market and liquor store type uses. I also withdrew establishments where the on-site serving of alcohol seemed incidental to primary food based operations. This led me to not count restaurants such as the California Pizza Kitchen or Miceli's Italian where one may enjoy wine with a meal but where food is the primary focus. The 65 mapped establishments are then comprised of only those more alcohol focused restaurants, traditional bars, and nightclubs. Being a young twenty something, having lived in Hollywood, and having interned for the Business Improvement District I used my best judgment to determine those restaurants which were more alcohol focused.

I again decided to not count all liquor licenses and to eliminate those more restaurant oriented uses as those uses are not those which cause the negative liquor related externalities Hollywood experiences. In fact there's a desire amongst the Business Improvement District and its associated property owners to have more quality area restaurants which do not double function as bars and clubs. I'd indicated the count of 118 licenses according to the ABC was low because that count includes all on-sale licenses where I had removed those more restaurant type uses. If I included all on-sale licenses just within my own small subject area I'd for example be very close to the 118 reported licenses for all four census tracts.

To visually show and map out this apparent over-concentration (I don't know if there's a firm definition of the term) I first compiled an Excel database of those liquor establishments which met my above criteria. I then geocoded each of establishments' addresses using those steps as set

forth in Chapter 8 of 'The GIS 20 Essential Skills'. I then displayed each of those 65 establishments using one of the Value Field Categories I had created in Excel (I mapped Establishment Type: Bar, Restaurant-Bar, Nightclub) and altered those Symbols for each type of establishment.

To find all the establishments I mapped I used a variety of sources. I used personal experience and knowledge of the area; I've in fact been to a good portion of those 65 places. I walked up and down Hollywood Boulevard with my preliminary Excel sheet print-out and made notes of those recently opened places, and those which may have closed (nightclubs were a little harder to identify as they often have non-descript signage and entryways which may even be off the street in side-alleys). I then concluded by using the social media website Yelp and typing in key-words such as 'bar' and 'lounge' for the Hollywood area and noting all the establishment results. The attached Excel document with a database of those liquor establishments is fairly accurate, though there is a good chance new bar openings and closures have occurred since the time of my data compilation.

In the Excel database there are informational fields for each establishment for categories such as contact information (which I then used to geocode), weekend closing hours, and liquor license type.

I'd like to now provide some background information for the Excel field, 'Liquor License Type.' There exist numerous liquor license types that each allow for different business operating conditions. Those license types for my 65 establishments are: Type 40 which allows for only the sale of beer, type 41 which allows for the sale of beer and wine at a bona-fide eating place, type 47 which allows for the sale of all liquor categories at a bona-fide eating place, and type 48 which allows for the sale of all liquor categories at a public premises (food not required). Type 48 licenses, those generally needed to operate nightclub style uses are the most difficult to obtain and usually come with the most stringent operating conditions. Because type 48 licenses are more difficult to obtain and notably more expensive than other license types, many establishments instead opt to receive type 47 licenses but then operate more like type 48's (nightclubs). This according to the Hollywood Vice Department (LAPD) and the Business Improvement District is a common occurrence and major problem.

Many establishments are supposed to operate as bona-fide eating places with open kitchens and food available at all operating hours, but this is often not adhered to. From personal experience (some Friday night research) I know that many of the locations I've listed in Excel with type 47 licenses do not in fact serve any food or stop serving food at an 'early' hour. Many area establishments that also self-label themselves on their company own sites as nightclubs operate with type 47 licenses. Again, these distinctions between liquor licenses may seem trivial but when an establishment operates as a nightclub use when designated to function more as a restaurant, additional neighborhood negative externalities often occur.

The final two maps included below actually display the over-concentration of liquor licenses referenced throughout the report. The ABC's website has a downloadable document which lists the allotments of on-sale liquor licenses per census tract for all California counties. Los Angeles County has over 2,000 census tracts, I focused on only the 60 census tracts surrounding my subject four (1902.01, 1902.02, 1907 and 1910) in central Hollywood. Each census tract had an allotment greater than zero with the highest allotment of any census tract being 5. The average ABC license allotment per census tract is 2.8.

I then used the ABC's 'License Query System – Reports' to find the actual number of on-sale licenses per each of my census tracts and the surrounding 60. Of the census tracts the minimum number of actual licenses is 0 (on 7 occasions) with a maximum of 54 actual licenses (Tract 1907 in my study area). The average number of actual licenses is 9.4, which compares to the average allotment of 2.8.

To find license concentrations for each of the 60 tracts I divided the number of actual on-sale licenses by the allotted number and determined ratios which range from 0 to over 20 times the allotment. These ratios are displayed in the final maps and are divided into 5 intervals using color gradation. The map evidences the areas with the highest over-concentration of liquor licenses are my Hollywood study area and neighboring West Hollywood.

Further Research and Some Complications

There were many additional steps I could have taken to make my project more comprehensive and to provide a better visual of Hollywood's over-concentration of liquor licenses. These steps would have taken more time but more importantly require a better understanding of GIS.

I would have liked to add additional fields to the Excel file attached and to hyperlink those place markers in the ArcMap file. I'd like for one to be able to click each of those 65 markers and then pull information such as operating conditions through hyperlinked conditional use permits.

I was able to find operating conditions for some of those 65 establishments but had difficulty doing so. I went under the website Zimas, selected those individual parcels I knew contained some of the 65 establishments, and then looked for CUP's pertaining to alcohol under the 'Case Numbers' tab. But because CUP's are listed by the parcel and not the individual address, and because some parcels contain multiple addresses finding individual CUP's became difficult. In those cases where multiple addresses and many establishments were contained within one parcel I was often unable to find CUP's for each establishment.

To include a proper listing of operating conditions I also realize I need to better understand the liquor license approval process. I am somewhat confused as to how liquor licenses seemingly run with the land and parcel and not the individual establishment? I believe this has also been an issue in Hollywood as the nightlife industry is rather fickle. For example, it's not uncommon for an establishment to be the hot place for a period only to go under a short while thereafter. A new

temporary 'it' spot then takes the original hot spot's place and the cycle hence continues. Resultantly, I believe that many liquor establishments do business under prior CUP's that don't reflect to their current operations. I.e., now operating as a nightclub type use when the issued CUP was for more of a restaurant oriented use (type 47).

In addition to incorporating operating conditions I would have liked to include an Excel field for and mapped each establishment's capacity. Capacities are noted in CUP's but are sometimes difficult to pull out and there may additionally be multiple listed capacities for the same establishment dependent on its set-up (for example, a set-up with more tables and chairs or a design oriented more for standing room).

If I obtained the capacities of those Hollywood Boulevard establishments I'd then have a good idea of the total number of people coming into Hollywood to party on a typical Friday night. I don't believe anything cumulatively and looking at the entire district has been done like this before, but I think the number of people would be astonishingly high and a factoid I'd be curious to know. Once my Excel database had the capacity figures for each establishment I'd similarly geocode the addresses but then select 'Capacity' as the displayed field instead of 'Establishment Type' as in the map below. I'd then create place markers and adjust their symbols by adding multiple interval ranges for the varying establishment capacities.

As shown above and a much larger question I'd need to research to complete the report; How have liquor licenses been issued and continue to be issued when such a blatant over-concentration of liquor licenses according to ABC authorization exists? To reiterate, within those four census tracts containing my study area there is an allotment of 10 licenses but an actual count of 118 (65 within just my study area). Are these ABC allotments more like guidelines rather than hard caps? And does the Los Angeles zoning administrator, planning commission, or whoever the discretionary approval agency is consider those ABC thresholds when hearing and granting CUP's? To continue my project, I'd have to research how liquor licenses are granted in places other than Hollywood/Los Angeles and determine if similar over-concentrations exist in other areas.

Conclusion

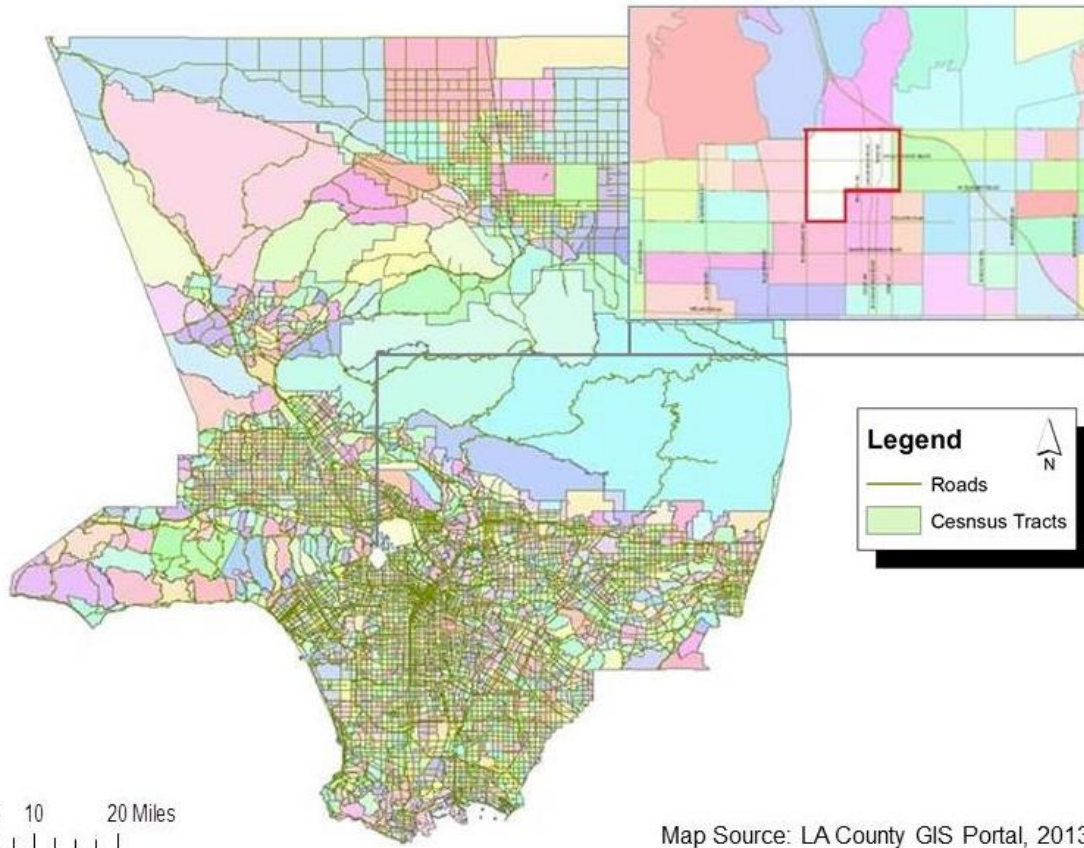
While working for the Hollywood Business Improvement I commonly heard of the existence of an over-concentration of area liquor licenses. According to those guidelines as set forth by the ABC that over-concentration is clearly in fact an actuality. With the conclusion of this project I'm pleased to visually show this concentration and to not just speak of it. I feel seeing the over-concentration of liquor related uses does far greater justice than just reading the list of those 65 counted establishments.

Ultimately I believe Hollywood will continue to be a night-time destination but will just see more liquor related regulation similar to places such as West Hollywood, Main Street Santa Monica, and Old Town Pasadena. As Hollywood continues its redevelopment and attracts

additional residents to its downtown core, especially with the passing of the new Hollywood Community Plan, I believe greater attention will inevitably be placed on those quality of life detracting issues that result from too high of concentrations of liquor licenses. In analyzing those updates to the operating conditions of existing establishments and when determining whether to issue new CUP's I believe maps similar to the one created below will be utilized as an additional resource.

Continued...

Hollywood Boulevard Regional Context: Los Angeles County

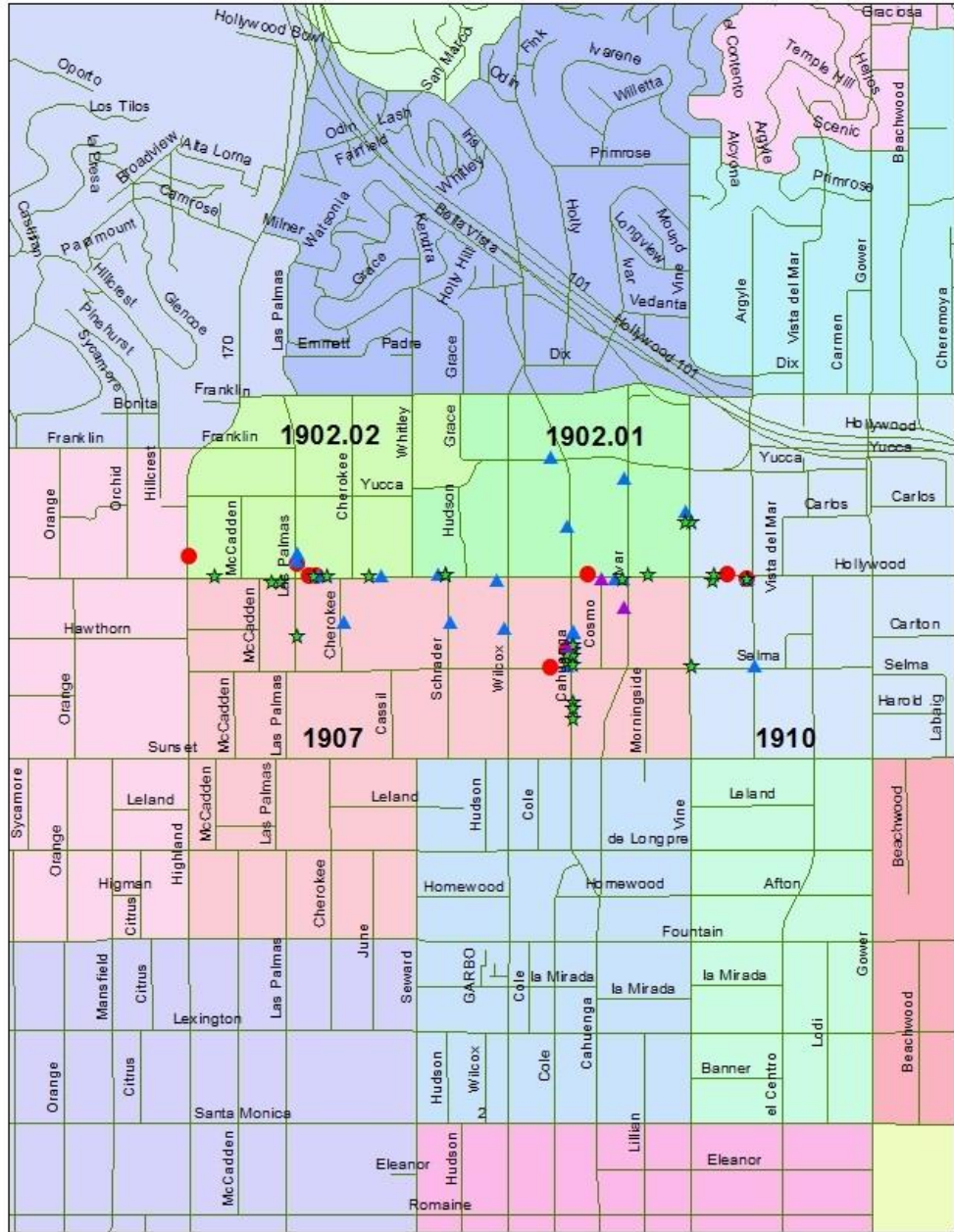


Map Source: LA County GIS Portal, 2013

Hollywood Boulevard: Liquor Establishments by Type

TYPE

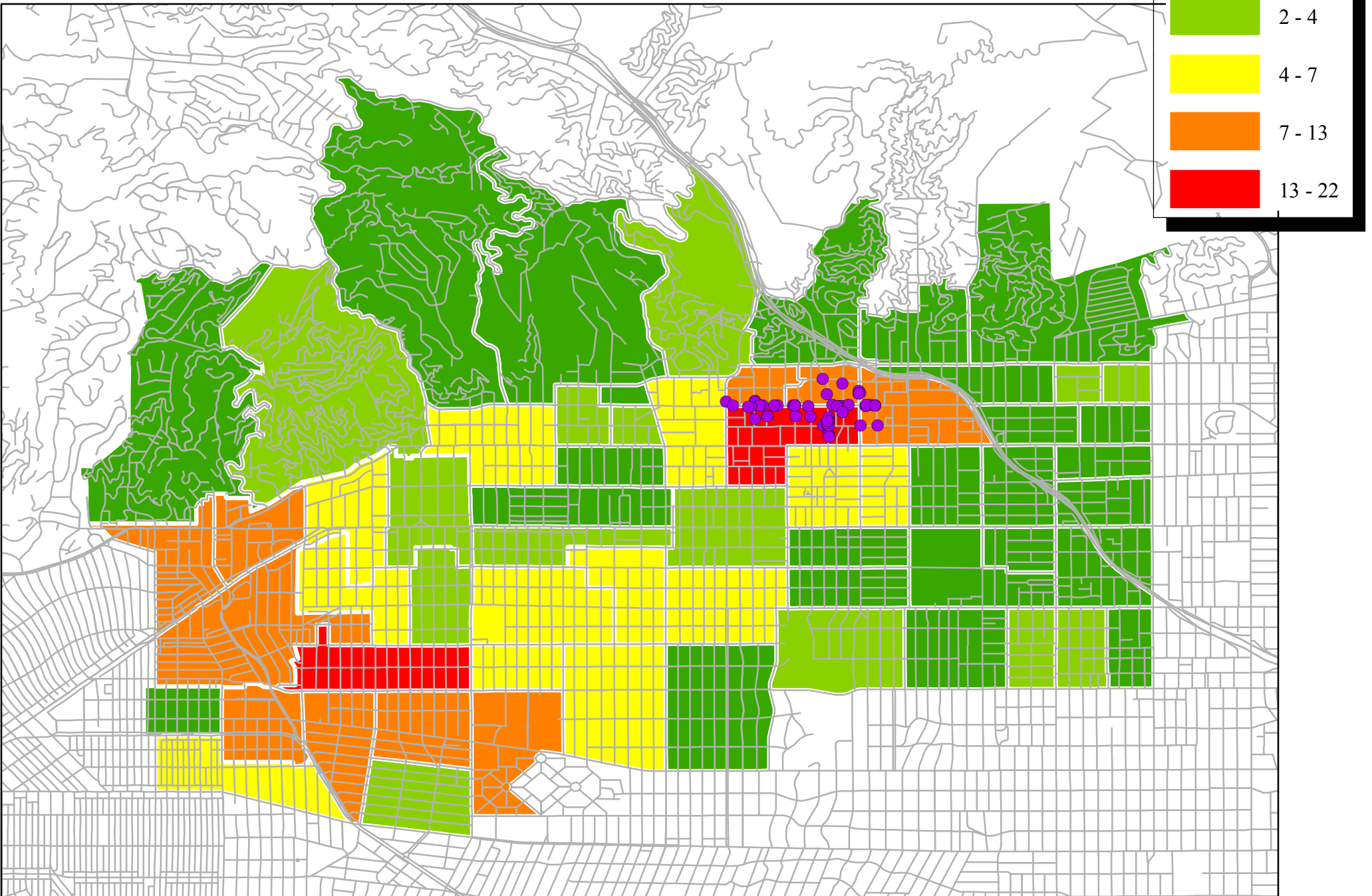
- Bar
- ▲ Nightclub
- ▲ Nightclub Event
- ★ Restaurant Bar

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

Map Source: Los Angeles County GIS Portal, 2013

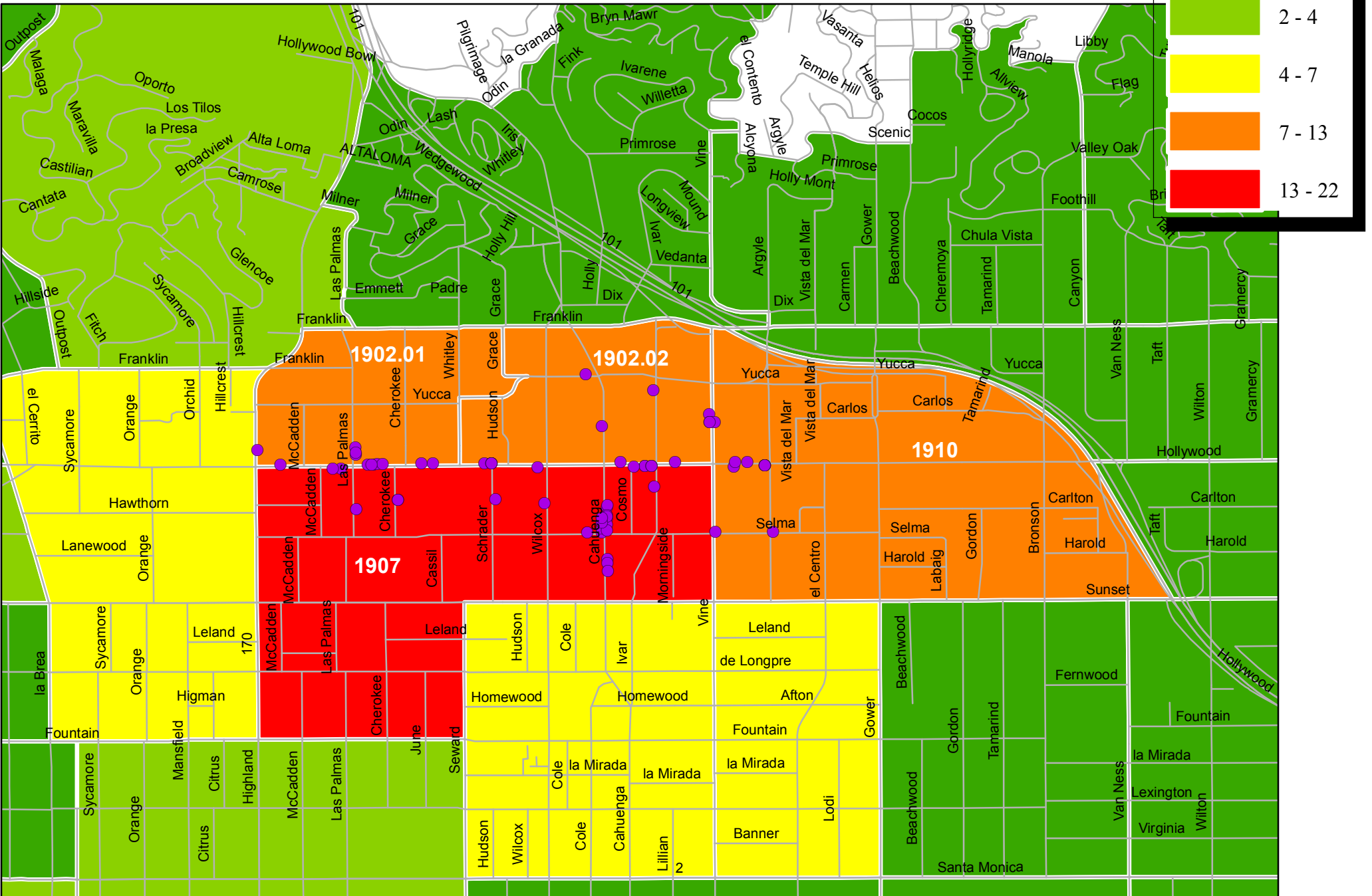
Census Tract Liquor Licenses: Ratio of Actual vs. Authorized



0 0.5 1 2 Miles

Map Source: Los Angeles County GIS Portal, 2013

Census Tract Liquor Licenses: Ratio of Actual vs. Authorized



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

Map Source: Los Angeles County GIS Portal, 2013