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Alcohol OK'd for art lounge

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Budding artists soon should be able to paint pictures and enjoy an adult beverage in southeast Shreveport.

The City Council on Tuesday approved a zoning board decision — amid protests from a nearby residential neighborhood — to let the local Painting with a Twist franchise serve beer and wine while patrons get creative. The business should open in February in University Place Shopping Center at Youree Drive at East 70th Street, owner Jean Beauclair said.

Alcohol was the main issue for most opponents, residents of nearby University Terrace. The next step for challengers would be a lawsuit.

Beauclair said she visited other Painting with a Twist locations and found painting to be the main part of business. By local law, no more than 35 percent of Beauclair's revenue could come from alcohol sales. "Here it got turned into more about the alcohol than the art. That's not the case."

Opponents, who along with supporters spoke to the City Council for two hours, said neighborhood negoti-

ations with the shopping center's previous owner would have kept open containers out of its main strip, which includes Super Target. Businesses that serve liquor, wine and beer, such as Olive Garden, are freestanding and closer to Youree Drive.

Painting with a Twist will be next door to the LSU-themed Tiger Town, whose owners are against having an alcohol-serving neighbor.

"I'm concerned mainly about safety," said Caddo Commissioner Mike Thibodeaux, who lives in University Terrace and represents the area, which already has a lot of foot and vehicle traffic.

"You're putting yourself at risk by allowing an additional factor for someone that may be coming out. Especially if there's nothing to eat there."

The business also gained approval from Stirling Properties, which owns the shopping center. "If we didn't believe that Mrs. Beauclair's business would be a positive addition, we wouldn't lease space to her," spokesman Bill McFadden said. "We regularly turn down other leasing opportunities."

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