Residents of City Heights are concerned that yet another business wants to sell beer and wine in their neighborhood.

This time it's a Chevron station, located at the corner of University Avenue and Interstate 15, that also is across the street from an elementary school and next door to a church.

"Having alcohol as a staple for sale in the neighborhood, rather than food, antiques or books, hurts the community," said Thom Turner, president of the Azalea Park Neighborhood Association. "I want to make City Heights a better place to live, and we can't do that by saying yes to every businessman who wants to sell beer."

The businessman applying for this permit is Mark Kassab, a well-respected community leader and owner of Murphy's Market on Fairmount Avenue. Kassab was honored by the city when April 2, 2002, was proclaimed Mark Kassab Day. He has donated more than 1,500 books to local literacy programs, gives away bicycles every year at an elementary school, sponsors a soccer team, donates refreshments for community events and participates every year in National Night Out crime-fighting rallies.

"I like Mark dearly, he's a good person, and he has done a lot for this community," said Maria Cortez, president of the Teralta West Neighborhood Alliance. "But we don't need another liquor establishment. We have them on every corner."

But Kassab says he needs to provide a service his customers want and will do so in a clean, well-lighted, safe and friendly environment.

"I am a responsible grocery store owner," he said. "This is the most beautiful Chevron. I'm not going to turn it into a haven for people who hang around."

Kassab said he was the only business owner who agreed not to sell alcohol before 8 a.m. when a school opened across the street from Murphy's. He said that he does not advertise alcohol on the outside of the building or sell single beers. He said he will follow the same self-imposed rules at his Chevron station if he gets a permit.

"I know there is a school in the area and a beautiful church," Kassab said. "But that doesn't mean that as soon as we get the license we are going to forget about basic laws and humanity. I care about this community."

Although neighbors say the area is inundated with booze -- they cite 39 outlets in City Heights West alone -- the state department of Alcohol Beverage Control says the area
that the Chevron station is not over-saturated. That area allows for a total of four off-sale permits, according to the ABC. Currently there are three.

The city can, but is not required to, deny a permit if the establishment is within 600 feet of a school, church or playground.

A public hearing is planned tomorrow at 8:30 a.m. at City Hall. A hearing officer, who is a member of the city’s senior planning staff, will make a decision, which can be appealed to the Planning Commission.

Deborah Ensor: (619) 542-4574; deborah.ensor@uniontrib.com

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