



CITIZEN INITIATED REFERENDUM

Referendum on Ozark Ordinance Establishing A Permanent Entertainment District

ELECTION DATE: Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2025

What is being proposed?

This is a referendum election, which means voters in Ozark have the final say on whether a local law establishing a permanent entertainment district approved by Ozark City Council members in April will take effect.

In this special election, voters are being asked whether they want to keep or repeal the city's Ordinance 2025-3 that established an entertainment district. Casting a FOR vote in this election is to keep the ordinance in place. Casting an AGAINST vote in this election would repeal the city ordinance and the entertainment district would be canceled.

When is the election?

The election is Tuesday, Nov. 18, 2025.

Early voting starts on Nov. 12 and takes place at the Ozark Training Room, 120 S. 2nd St. in Ozark. Early voting continues through Nov. 17.

Voters can check their status and find out where they are supposed to vote by calling the Franklin County Clerk's Office in Ozark at 479-667-3607.

You can also check your voter registration status online at www.voterview.ar-nova.org.

PUBLIC POLICY CENTER

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QUICK LOOK:

What does your vote mean?

FOR: A FOR vote means you are in favor of the city's ordinance establishing an entertainment district in Ozark.

AGAINST: An AGAINST vote means you are not in favor of the city's ordinance and do not want an entertainment district in Ozark.

EXERCISING YOUR VOTING PRIVILEGE:

We live in a democratic society where voting is a privilege of citizenship. Democracy works best when informed citizens exercise their voting privilege. Election Day for this issue is Nov. 18, 2025. Early voting begins Nov. 12, 2025. **Please exercise your right to vote on this issue.**

The following statements are examples of what supporters and opponents have made public either in media statements, campaign literature, on websites or interviews with Public Policy Center staff. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture does not endorse or validate these statements.

What do supporters say?

- The new Entertainment District ordinance is an important step toward breathing new life into downtown Ozark. By encouraging more people to visit, shop, and stay downtown, we're not just boosting business, we're preserving the spirit of Ozark and investing in the future of our hometown. More visitors mean more customers for every local business working hard to keep our downtown vibrant - and in a way that honors our long history of viticulture.
- Right now, special permission can already be granted for events where wine or spirits are served. This change doesn't loosen regulation, it actually strengthens it. By setting clear expectations and boundaries, we create a safer, more predictable environment for residents, visitors, and business owners alike.

What do opponents say?

- Everything wonderful a city would want for entertainment, arts, or improvements can be achieved without an overarching, expansive Permanent Entertainment District 156 days a year engulfing our new downtown youth center in the old Spectator Building, Franklin County Courthouse, Pocket Park, and crossing two (2) state highways.
- The passage of Permanent Entertainment District ordinance 2025-3 is not necessary for alcohol to be available for event driven festivals. The public consumption of alcoholic beverages on the sidewalks and outdoor public spaces sends a bad message about our priorities, sets a terrible example for our young people and children, and will inevitably have detrimental effects on our quality of life.

Why is this issue on the ballot?

People opposed to the entertainment district created a local-option ballot committee, Residents Organizing Ozark to Stand (ROOTS), to collect signatures from registered voters in Ozark to put the city ordinance on the ballot for voters to decide.

Campaigns must collect signatures from at least 15% of the number of people who voted for mayor in the last general election to qualify a referendum for the ballot.

Who can vote in this election?

People who live in Ozark and are registered to vote can vote in this special election.

What is an Entertainment District?

Arkansas legislators passed Act 812 in 2019, which granted towns and cities the authority to establish entertainment districts to promote tourism and hospitality in their communities. It allows adults 21 and older visiting entertainment districts to buy alcoholic drinks and walk around the district without being arrested by police for a misdemeanor crime of drinking in public.

Districts must be located in commercial areas with restaurants, taprooms, taverns, entertainment establishments, hospitality establishments, music venues, theaters, bars, art galleries, art studios, tourist destinations, distilleries, dance clubs, cinemas, or concert halls. Examples of existing entertainment districts include the downtown square in Mountain Home and businesses near Dickson Street in Fayetteville.

Under the law, city councils can pass ordinances



establishing district boundaries and can decide whether they exist for a limited time or to make them permanent. State law allows entertainment districts only in areas (1) where existing businesses have a permit from the Alcoholic Beverage Control Division, (2) that collect Advertising and Promotion Commission taxes (also known as “hamburger” or “hotel” taxes), and (3) located in a county where voters have approved alcohol sales (also known as a “wet” county). When establishing an entertainment district, cities and towns must also set reasonable standards for the regulation of alcohol possession within the boundaries of the designated entertainment district.

What are the proposed boundaries of Ozark’s entertainment district?

City council members voted to establish a permanent entertainment district with the following boundaries:

- The intersection north of Commercial Street, from Fourth Street east to Second Street.
- The block of Third Street to College Street, east to Second Street.
- The intersection south of Commercial Street from Fourth Street east to First Street.
- The intersection of Main Street and Third Street east to the Anderson Building.
- Riverview Plaza on River Street west to Third Street.

What are the proposed hours of operation or the entertainment district?

Adults could buy alcoholic drinks and walk throughout the district with their drinks on Thursdays, from 5 p.m. to midnight, and on Fridays and Saturdays, from 7 a.m. to midnight.

What additional rules has the city council set for the entertainment district?

The ordinance establishing the entertainment district requires:

- Permission from businesses for adults to enter their establishment with alcoholic drinks. Businesses would need to have a sign in their window announcing they are participating.
- Businesses participating in the sale of alcohol in the entertainment district to pour drinks into paper, Styrofoam or plastic cups imprinted with the entertainment district logo.
- Drink containers to be no less than 2 inches wide by 1.5 inches tall in size. Containers could not hold



more than 16 ounces of liquid.

- Participating businesses to provide each adult consuming alcohol a wristband, which must be worn while they are walking around the district.
- Participating businesses to limit sales of alcoholic beverages to one open container per adult.
- Participating businesses to post the rules of the entertainment district.
- Adults to empty and dispose of their containers before leaving the boundaries of the entertainment district.

Would people be allowed to bring their own alcoholic drinks to consume in the district?

No. Only drinks purchased by adults at participating businesses would be allowed in the entertainment district. The ordinance states it would be unlawful to drink alcoholic beverages from a can, bottle or glass container, or in a vehicle, or to consume alcoholic beverages purchased outside the district. Violating this ordinance could result in an arrest with a misdemeanor charge.

Who is in charge of overseeing the entertainment district?

The ordinance approved by city council members calls for establishing a committee made up of five members, specifically one person representing a business located within the city,

one person representing a business located within the entertainment district, one city council member, one member of the city’s Advertising and Promotion Commission, and one person representing Main Street Ozark.

The committee would be responsible for recommending any policy updates, addressing complaints, and ensuring maintenance and safety within the district.

Who would pay for the cost of the required items, such as cups?

According to city officials, Main Street Ozark and/or participating businesses would be responsible for paying for the cups, wristbands, and signage.

How much does the city anticipate the district raising in tax revenues?

City officials do not have any projections on additional taxes or revenue from the district’s creation. Ozark does not charge a city-level alcohol tax on alcoholic beverages.



The following is the official wording for the local option question as it will appear on the ballot.

SPECIAL ELECTION FOR CONSIDERATION OF CITY OF OZARK ORDINANCE NUMBER 2025-3 ESTABLISHING A PERMANENT ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT

FOR ☐

AGAINST ☐

#ARballot



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Conflict of interest: This fact sheet was prepared to provide the citizens of Ozark with information to help them in making an informed choice on Election Day. An effort has been made to ensure the information is presented in a fair and balanced way that best represents the facts associated with this ballot issue. As part of this effort, we are obligated to divulge potential conflicts of interest and to recognize their influence on the educational programs and matter we produce. The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and Franklin County Extension Office are partially funded by state and county general funds. As such, any laws affecting revenues of the state or county has the potential to affect county and state extension programs. In providing this information, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture and the Franklin County Extension Office are not advocating for or against this ballot initiative.