



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

# PLANNING BOARD

CITY HALL ANNEX, 344 BROADWAY, CAMBRIDGE, MA 02139

Date:	June 14, 2023
Subject:	Cannabis Amendments Zoning Petition
Recommendation:	The Planning Board recommends ADOPTION.

To the Honorable, the City Council,

On June 13, 2023, the Planning Board (the “Board”) held a public hearing to discuss a Zoning Petition by City Council (the “Council”), to amend Article 4.000 and Article 11 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance to remove the special permit requirement for “Cannabis Retail Store” and “Cannabis Delivery Operator” and instead make these uses permitted as-of-right, subject to the requirements of Section 11.800 *Cannabis Uses*.

The Board heard a presentation from CDD staff, followed by public comment and discussion among Board members. Following the discussion, the Planning Board voted unanimously to forward a positive recommendation to City Council.

Board members generally expressed enthusiasm for the proposed change. Board members noted the large volume of cannabis-related special permit applications that have come before the Board over the past three years, and generally agreed that it was not a productive use of the Board or the public’s time to continue to review special permit applications when there is already an extensive permitting process in place between state licensing requirements, Host Community Agreement requirements, and building permit and certificate of occupancy review.

Some Board members expressed the importance of urban design guidance on proposed façade designs, in order to minimize the deleterious effects of opaque retail storefronts that seek to meet state requirements around the concealment of cannabis products from public view. However, Board members generally agreed that this guidance could live on in Host Community Agreement requirements, or as part of building permit review. Board members also suggested that City staff could develop guidelines to show applicants best practices in storefront design that meet state licensing requirements.

Board members asked several questions related to the implications of the proposed amendment on existing special permits, should the amendment be adopted. Specifically, Board members asked what action, if any, the Planning Board will need to take to void existing special permits for Cannabis Retail stores once a special permit requirement is removed. Board members also sought clarification on the applicability of various special permit conditions, including traffic mitigation fees, that apply to existing special permits for which a building permit or certificate of occupancy has not yet been issued.

The Planning Board voted 7-0 to transmit the above report. One member was absent.

Respectfully submitted for the Planning Board,

*Catherine Preston Connolly*

Catherine Preston Connolly, Vice Chair.