

Providence City Plan Commission

May 21, 2024



AGENDA ITEM 5 ■ CANNABIS AMENDMENT

OVERVIEW

PROPONENT:	Council President Rachel Miller and Majority Whip Miguel Sanchez	RECOMMENDATION:	Recommend approval of the proposed amendment
CASE NO./PROJECT TYPE:	CPC Referral 3582 Amendment of zoning ordinance		
PROJECT DESCRIPTION:	Amendment of zoning ordinance regarding cannabis regulation	PROJECT PLANNER:	Robert Azar

Discussion

The proponents are proposing to amend the Zoning Ordinance's regulations pertaining to cannabis establishments. Currently, the ordinance allows for Compassion and Cultivation Centers in the M-1 zone by right and the C-3 zone by special use permit. Retail sales only are not currently permitted in any zone.

The Rhode Island Cannabis Act, which passed in 2022, allows for four retail-only cannabis establishments to be licensed in an area of the state that includes Johnston, Lincoln, North Providence, Central Falls, and Providence. The subject ordinance would implement the act by creating new uses of "Cannabis Retailer" and "Social Equity/Workers' Cooperative Licensed Cannabis Retailer." Cannabis Retailer would be permitted in the C-2 zone by special use permit, and in the C-3, D-1, and M-1 zones by right. Social Equity/Workers' Cooperative Licensed Cannabis Retailer would be permitted in the C-2, C-3, D-1, and M-1 zones by right. These uses would be prohibited within 500 feet of a pre-existing public or private school serving grades K-12.

The proposed ordinance also would change the name of the use "Compassion Center or Cultivation Center" to "Hybrid Cannabis Retailer/Cannabis Cultivator," in keeping with new terms introduced in the act. No regulations for this use would change.

The DPD has created a map including schools and the 500 foot buffer that shows where the retail uses would be allowed. We have included the C-1 zone, since the proposed comprehensive plan would combine C-1 and C-2 zones. We feel that the 500 foot distance is not very much and would like to explore whether the act would allow a municipality to increase that distance to 1,000 feet.

Recommendation

Based on the foregoing discussion, the DPD recommends that the CPC advise the City Council to approve the proposed amendment. If permitted by the Cannabis Act, we advise that the separation distance from schools be increased to 1,000 feet.