LA COUNTY OFFICE OF CANNABIS MANAGEMENT

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

COMMERCIAL CANNABIS REGULATORY PROGRAM

In February 2022, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors approved the framework for a commercial cannabis program in unincorporated Los Angeles County and directed the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) to develop the ordinances, regulations, environmental review, and other requirements needed to put that framework into place.

This FAQ answers common questions about the proposed ordinances and regulations, including community protections, licensing, oversight, enforcement, and program implementation.

SECTION 1: ABOUT THE PROPOSED PROGRAM

Has the County already approved the program?

In February 2022, the Los Angles County Board of Supervisors approved the development of a commercial cannabis regulatory program for unincorporated Los Angeles County. Since then, OCM has developed the proposed ordinances, implementing regulations, and environmental review necessary to implement that direction.

The proposed land use ordinance and environmental review will first be considered by the Regional Planning Commission before being forwarded to the Board of Supervisors for final consideration of the proposed ordinances and certification of the environmental review. If approved, OCM will then implement the program through the adopted ordinances and implementing regulations.

What is the County's proposed commercial cannabis regulatory program?

The proposed program is designed to create a highly regulated system for commercial cannabis businesses in unincorporated Los Angeles County. If adopted, the program would establish:

- Where cannabis businesses can operate.
- How many businesses are allowed.
- The requirements businesses must meet to obtain and keep a license.
- How businesses will be regulated and held accountable.
- Community protections to safeguard intended neighborhoods and prevent overconcentration.

The program also proposes Social Equity Program to expand opportunities for individuals and communities disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of cannabis.

Why is the County proposing a regulated program instead of continuing the current prohibition?

A regulated program allows the County to establish clear rules for where commercial cannabis businesses may locate, how they must operate, and how they will be monitored and held accountable. The proposed program is designed to protect communities through a limited number of licenses, community safeguards, ongoing oversight, and enforcement.

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SECTION 2: COMMUNITY SAFEGUARDS

Can cannabis businesses locate anywhere in unincorporated Los Angeles County?

No. Being in an eligible zone does not automatically make a property eligible. A proposed cannabis business must meet all applicable County and State requirements - including zoning, distance buffer requirements, license caps, geographic distribution limits, and other licensing standards - before it can be approved.

What safeguards help protect communities?

The proposed program includes multiple safeguards that work together to protect communities. These measures include license caps, distance buffer requirements, storefront spacing, Planning Area safeguards, and geographic distribution limits. Together, these measures help prevent overconcentration and promote a limited, highly regulated program.

What distance buffer requirements would apply?

The proposed program includes 600-foot minimum distance buffers between cannabis businesses and specified youth-oriented uses, such as schools, public libraries, parks and recreation centers, licensed game arcades, as well as drug and alcohol recovery facilities. In addition, storefront retail cannabis businesses would be required to maintain 500-foot minimum distance buffers between each other. These buffer requirements are one of several safeguards designed to protect communities and reduce potential impacts.

Additional information is available in the *Understanding the Proposed Los Angeles County Commercial Cannabis Program* fact sheet.

Why doesn't the County prohibit cannabis businesses in specific communities?

The County developed countywide standards that apply consistently across similarly situated communities rather than creating different rules for individual neighborhoods. The proposed program includes multiple community safeguards, such as license caps, geographic distribution limits, distance buffer requirements, and storefront spacing, to help protect communities throughout unincorporated Los Angeles County. This approach promotes consistency, fairness, and transparency in how the program is implemented.

SECTION 3: LICENSING & PROCESS

What does "ministerial" mean?

A ***ministerial*** process means applications are reviewed using objective standards adopted by the County. If an application meets all applicable requirements, it may be approved. If it does not, it may be denied. This approach promotes consistency by applying the same standards to every applicant.

Why isn't there a public hearing for every cannabis business?

Public input helped shape the County's ordinances and regulations that establish the rules for the program. Once those standards are adopted, individual applications are reviewed for compliance with those objective requirements rather than through separate public hearings.

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SECTION 3: LICENSING & PROCESS (CONTINUED)

When could licensed cannabis businesses begin operating?

Licensed businesses could begin operating only after the Board of Supervisors adopts the necessary ordinances and regulations, applicants complete the County's licensing process, obtain all required approvals, and satisfy applicable County and State requirements.

Why are there separate ordinances and regulations?

The ordinances establish the County's legal framework for the program, while the implementing regulations provide the detailed requirements for licensing, business operations, compliance, administration, and the Social Equity Program. Together, they create the County's commercial cannabis regulatory program.

SECTION 4: OVERSIGHT & ENFORCEMENT

How will the County regulate licensed cannabis businesses?

Before a cannabis business can begin operating, it must obtain the required County and State licenses and satisfy applicable requirements from multiple County departments, including Building & Safety, Public Health, Fire, and other regulatory reviews, as applicable. Once licensed, businesses remain subject to ongoing inspections, complaint investigations, compliance monitoring, and enforcement to help ensure continued compliance with County and State requirements.

What happens if a licensed business violates the rules?

The County's goal is to help licensed businesses maintain compliance with applicable requirements. When violations occur, the County may take enforcement action based on the nature, severity, and frequency of the violation. Depending on the circumstances, this may include a Notice to Correct, administrative penalties, license suspension, license revocation, or other enforcement actions authorized by law.

How can residents report concerns?

Residents will be able to report concerns about licensed cannabis businesses through the County's complaint process. Complaints will be investigated as appropriate, and storefront retail businesses would also be required to maintain a Community Liaison to help address neighborhood concerns.

How is a licensd cannabis business different from an illegal cannabis business?

Licensed cannabis businesses must comply with County and State requirements, including inspections, operating standards, security requirements, and ongoing oversight. Unlicensed businesses are not authorized to operate and remain subject to enforcement under applicable law.

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SECTION 5: SOCIAL EQUITY & BUSINESS RESOURCES

What is the Social Equity Program?

The proposed Social Equity Program is intended to expand opportunities for individuals and communities disproportionately impacted by the criminalization of cannabis. The proposed program includes eligibility requirements, business ownership protections, education and technical assistance, and other measures intended to support long-term participation in the regulated market.

Where can I learn more about the Social Equity Program?

Detailed information regarding eligibility, verification, ownership requirements, application procedures, and implementation will be provided through the proposed implementing regulations and future guidance developed by the Office of Cannabis Management.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. The Board of Supervisors approved the overall policy framework in 2022 and directed OCM to develop the ordinances and regulations needed to implement the program.
2. The proposed program is designed to be restricted and highly regulated.
3. Multiple safeguards work together to protect communities, including license caps, geographic distribution limits, distance buffer requirements, and storefront spacing.
4. Licensed businesses would be subject to ongoing oversight, inspections, complaint investigations, and enforcement.
5. The Board of Supervisors will consider the proposed ordinances, regulations, and environmental review for final approval.

LEARN MORE

PROJECT WEBSITE:
cannabis.lacounty.gov

FACT SHEET:
Understanding the Proposed Los Angeles County Commercial Cannabis Program Fact Sheet

PUBLIC HEARING INFORMATION:
Find dates, agendas, and ways to participate

SCAN TO VISIT THE PROJECT WEBSITE

Stay informed: Sign up for email updates

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