

CDS Approves New Phase for Medical Cannabis Zoning

Hopkinsville Approves Zoning Proposal for Medical Cannabis Businesses

The city of Hopkinsville took a significant step toward allowing medical cannabis businesses within its boundaries with the recent approval of a zoning proposal by the Community & Development Services (CDS) Committee. This decision aligns with the broader state movement to legalize medical cannabis, following legislative changes in Kentucky.

Zoning Proposal Development

CDS Executive Director Tom Britton highlighted that the Plan Review Committee had been working on a medical cannabis zoning proposal for some time. After presenting the draft language to the CDS Committee last month, the proposal was brought forward for approval, which would send it to the Hopkinsville City Council for further review and potential adoption.

“Our indication from Christian County is they are not going to opt out, and our indication from the city, at least from this point, is they will remain opted in,” Britton stated during the meeting.

The proposal comes after the Kentucky General Assembly passed legislation in 2023 and 2024 that authorized the cultivation, processing, testing, and sale of medical cannabis. Under the new law, permits for cultivators, processors, and dispensaries are limited and will be awarded through a lottery system. Applications for permits closed today, and Britton anticipates that the city may have a clearer idea of who applied and where by October.

Key Zoning Provisions and Restrictions

The zoning proposal establishes specific standards for the location, development, and operation of medical cannabis businesses. According to the draft proposal, no cannabis business may be located within 1,000 feet of an existing elementary school, secondary school, or childcare center. Additionally, dispensaries must be located at least 40 feet from any lot containing a single-family dwelling or areas zoned as suburban or rural estate, including R-1 to R-5 districts.

Britton noted that the 40-foot requirement was a key element of discussions in the Plan Review Committee. “The thought process is in B-4 district, which is primarily Fort Campbell Blvd as well as Main Street, you do have residential structures which are located behind or on adjacent streets, and that 40 foot accounts for that right of way industrial behind that,” he explained.

Access and Signage Restrictions

The proposal also includes access restrictions, aiming to orient traffic toward main roads like Fort Campbell Blvd., Skyline, Country Club, North Main Street, and U.S. 41, reducing the likelihood of traffic disruptions in residential neighborhoods.

Additionally, signage for medical cannabis dispensaries will be limited to 50 square feet to maintain the discreet nature of the businesses. “This is a destination use as opposed to a capture or drive-by use,” Britton said. “We felt like signage needed to have some special restrictions so you are capturing the folks who are intending to go there, not encouraging folks who do not have a medical card or are passing by.”

District Zoning for Cannabis Businesses

Under the proposal, cannabis dispensaries would be zoned in the B-4 commercial district, which includes portions of Fort Campbell Blvd., Skyline, U.S. 41, and Main Street. Cultivators, processors, and safety compliance facilities will be zoned in the I-2 heavy industrial district.

“Those have industrial components, so we have put [them in the] I-2 district,” Britton explained.

The proposal also includes a variance eligibility, similar to what was done for solar projects. This would allow businesses that cannot meet the 40-foot distancing requirement to apply for a variance in certain circumstances. Britton clarified that this was to ensure flexibility for unique situations, ensuring that potential cannabis businesses still had a pathway to open even if they were close but not fully compliant with zoning distances.

Traffic Considerations and Community Impact

The committee’s discussions emphasized the importance of limiting medical cannabis businesses to major roadways to manage traffic effectively and protect nearby residential areas. According to Britton, the committee estimates that about 170-200 lots could potentially qualify for a cannabis dispensary.

“From the standpoint of traffic generation, we thought it was important to limit the use to major roadways as opposed to having them on local streets, as well as providing some protection for adjacent residential uses,” he said.

Committee Vote and Next Steps

Of the 10 committee members present at the Monday meeting, nine voted in favor of the proposal, while one member, *David Brame*, who represented Lafayette, voted against it. With overwhelming support, the proposal will now move forward to the Hopkinsville City Council for consideration.

If approved by the City Council, this zoning proposal will lay the groundwork for medical cannabis businesses to operate within the city, providing a regulated pathway for the cultivation, processing, and sale of medical cannabis in accordance with state law.

The approval of this proposal marks a pivotal moment for Hopkinsville as it prepares for the potential growth of medical cannabis businesses, ensuring a regulated and responsible framework for their operation while balancing the needs of the community.

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