

# What Medical Cannabis Operations Could Bring to Florence, Union

## Medical Cannabis Legalization in Kentucky Prompts Cities to Finalize Regulations

Starting January 1, 2025, medical cannabis will be officially legal for sale and consumption in Kentucky, a significant shift for the state. As legalization approaches, local governments throughout the Commonwealth have been working quickly to establish rules and regulations to govern the emerging cannabis industry.

In Northern Kentucky (NKY), all 10 cities that placed medical cannabis operations on their election ballots this Tuesday voted to permit cannabis businesses within city limits. This outcome has spurred cities into action to develop zoning and regulatory guidelines to ensure the responsible establishment of cannabis-related businesses.

## Boone County Leads with Zoning Regulations for Cannabis Operations

In preparation for legalization, Boone County has been at the forefront of planning for medical cannabis business operations. As early as July, the Boone County Planning Commission drafted a comprehensive set of zoning regulations aimed at controlling where and how cannabis businesses can operate. These zoning guidelines apply to various pre-existing zoning designations, including Agricultural, Commercial, Industrial, and other specialized zones such as the Walton Downtown District and Union Town Center Zone.

## Key Regulations for Cannabis Businesses in Boone County

To ensure safety and compliance, Boone County's specific-use standards include several restrictions for cannabis businesses:

**Enclosed Facilities:** Cannabis businesses must operate in enclosed, locked buildings.

**Proximity Restrictions:** Facilities must be located at least 1,000 feet from schools or daycare centers and 500 feet from parks, playgrounds, religious assembly facilities, and sexually oriented businesses.

**Dispensary Distance:** No dispensary may be located within 1,000 feet of another dispensary.

These restrictions aim to balance the economic potential of medical cannabis with community safety and zoning integrity.

## Cities Like Florence and Union Adopt and Customize Regulations

Following Tuesday's election results, Boone County is now supporting cities such as Florence and Union in finalizing their own cannabis zoning regulations before the January 1 legalization date. Florence City Council held a special meeting on November 6, where council members discussed adopting Boone County's zoning

recommendations. Mayor Julie Metzger Aubuchon emphasized that Florence residents voted in favor of allowing cannabis businesses, so the council is focused on establishing clear requirements for these businesses within city limits.

Florence city officials made minor adjustments to Boone County's guidelines, including a clause requiring medical cannabis businesses to avoid planned development overlay zones unless explicitly allowed by a concept development plan. The Florence City Council is expected to hold a final vote on these regulations in their upcoming meeting on November 12.

### **Collaboration Between Planning Commissions and Local Councils**

The Boone County Planning Commission continues to work closely with city councils in Florence, Union, and other NKY municipalities to ensure cannabis regulations align with community values and safety standards. During the November 6 meeting, Planning Commission Executive Director Kevin Costello highlighted the collaborative approach, noting that each city is adapting Boone County's recommendations to fit their specific needs.

### **License Allocation and Lottery System for Kentucky Cannabis Businesses**

Kentucky's medical cannabis program includes a controlled licensing system overseen by the state government, which plans to issue licenses to cultivators, processors, and dispensaries through a lottery. In total, 48 licenses will be distributed across the state for dispensaries, with additional licenses for cultivators and processors.

The first license lottery was held on October 28, when Kentucky issued 16 cultivator licenses and 10 processor licenses. Lottery draws for dispensary licenses are scheduled for November 25 and December 16, with cities across the state eagerly awaiting the outcomes. Thus far, no Northern Kentucky city has been selected to host a cannabis business, but the upcoming lotteries could see the region gain several dispensaries.

### **Localized Approach to Cannabis Business Regulation in NKY**

While Kentucky has established the licensing process, local governments retain control over zoning regulations and operational standards for cannabis businesses within their jurisdictions. Boone County's proactive stance and the subsequent steps by cities like Florence and Union illustrate a measured, community-focused approach to integrating medical cannabis into Northern Kentucky. By setting clear guidelines, NKY cities hope to create an environment that fosters responsible cannabis business operations while addressing community concerns.

Each city's customized zoning plan allows for variations based on specific community needs, giving local councils the flexibility to adopt regulations suited to their demographics and infrastructure.

### **Medical Cannabis: A New Economic Opportunity for Kentucky**

For Kentucky, medical cannabis represents not only a new industry but also a potential economic boost. With legalization, medical cannabis will provide new employment opportunities, stimulate local economies, and expand the state's business landscape.

Residents and business owners alike are keeping a close eye on how cannabis regulation develops, understanding that the industry could become a significant revenue stream for the Commonwealth. Local

governments are balancing this potential with responsible planning and regulation to ensure that cannabis businesses operate in a manner that aligns with the values and safety priorities of their communities.

### **Next Steps for Kentucky's Medical Cannabis Program**

As the January 1 legalization date nears, Kentucky's medical cannabis industry is beginning to take shape. Local governments across the state are finalizing ordinances that establish the "time, place, and manner" regulations for cannabis businesses, with Northern Kentucky leading in the development of zoning frameworks. As these regulations fall into place, Kentucky is set to launch its medical cannabis program in a structured, controlled manner, bringing a new era of medical relief and economic opportunity to the state.

With the upcoming lottery dates for dispensary licenses, many cities are hopeful that they'll be selected to host one of these facilities. The lottery system ensures an equitable distribution across the state, providing fair opportunities for different regions to benefit from this emerging industry.

As Kentucky prepares to open its doors to medical cannabis in 2025, the collaborative efforts between county planning commissions, city councils, and state regulators exemplify a coordinated approach to safely and responsibly introducing medical cannabis businesses into local communities.

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