



Legislation Text

File #: CPC CA 18-00033, **Version:** 3

Ordinance No. 18-51 amending Section 205 (Additional Standards for Specific Land Uses) of Part 2 (Commercial Districts) of Article 3 (Land Use Zoning Districts) of Chapter 7 (Planning, Development and Building) of the Code of the City of Colorado Springs 2001, as amended, pertaining to the cultivation of marijuana and medical marijuana in violation of the Zoning Code and providing remedies for the violation thereof (Legislative)

Presenter:

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Summary:

The proposed ordinance would explicitly prohibit the growth, cultivation or processing of marijuana or medical marijuana in commercial spaces, unless licensed by the City of Colorado Springs. The ordinance clarifies existing language under the City's Zoning Code (Section 7.2.108) that prohibits land uses not specifically permitted or allowed under a similar use determination.

The ordinance is developed in conjunction with two additional, complementary ordinances: an ordinance that revises the City's Criminal Code to reflect the proposed clarification to the City's Zoning Code; and an ordinance that revises the criminal code language around unlawful transfer of marijuana. All three ordinances were developed in support of the city's public safety efforts to reduce diversion of marijuana to the black market, and to ensure the public health and life safety of businesses and first responders.

Previous Council Action:

N/A

Background:

In November 2000, Colorado voters passed Amendment 20 that authorized limited possession and use of medical marijuana. A decade after Amendment 20, the Colorado State Legislature approved legislation licensing the commercial production and distribution of medical marijuana. While the medical marijuana industry was legitimized in Colorado State Statute, caregivers and patients remained able to grow their own medical marijuana in residential properties with allowances up to 99 plants.

Years after the state-led legalization of the medical marijuana industry - and retail marijuana industry - black market diversion remains a significant challenge. One of the driving factors identified was the high plant count allowed for patients and caregivers in residential areas - and the allowance that individuals could grow marijuana on behalf of others without being the primary caregiver. In order to address the public safety issue and public nuisance issues that arose with large-scale grows in residential areas the Colorado State Legislature passed House Bill 17-1220 capping the number of

plants allowed in residential properties to 12; Colorado Springs aligned its local rules to adhere to that limit. Additionally, the legislature passed House Bill 17-1221 that made it an offense to grow marijuana on behalf of another individual, unless he or she is the primary caregiver for that individual.

The limitations set forth by legislation provide tools for law enforcement to address large-scale residential grows. However, the Colorado Springs Fire and Police Departments have been encountering an increasing number of unlicensed grows operating illegally in commercial spaces. These grows are not authorized under the catch-all provision in the City's Zoning Code, Section 7.2.108, which prohibits land uses that are not specifically permitted or allowed under a similar use determination. However, it is the belief of the city administration that explicitly addressing unlicensed grows in commercial spaces will equip the Police Department, the Fire Department, and the Planning Department with an additional and more specific tool for addressing these unlawful grows.

The proposed ordinance change further aligns Colorado Springs policies with statewide enforcement priorities to prevent the diversion of marijuana to the black market, and to ensure public safety and welfare. It is consistent with several other jurisdictions' work to address illegal grow activity. Examples include Douglas County, Brighton, Greenwood Village, Pueblo, Commerce City, and Monument among others.

Not only do these commercial grows undermine efforts to prevent diversion, but they also pose public safety hazards. Many of the grows exhibit the following dangers: overloaded electrical circuits; improperly stored, unpermitted hazardous materials; blocked and barred exits; and low hanging wires. These obstructions threaten the safety of the grow operators themselves, first responders (in the event of a fire), and neighboring properties. The health of those who consume products developed in these grows is also of concern. Licensed grows must regularly test their products for insects, mold, and other harmful substances; unlicensed grows do not adhere to the same public health standards.

Additionally, the city administration seeks to ensure the maintenance of usable property in Colorado Springs. Affordable commercial property space is an essential asset to a growing city seeking to attract and retain businesses. The increasing number of commercial spaces that are damaged or destroyed by unlicensed grows undermines city efforts to reduce blight, and encourage business investments.

Having explicit language regarding illegal grows in commercial spaces is necessary for public safety and public welfare, and supports the City's strategic objective of encouraging the development of a defined and well-promoted City image through addressing public safety issues.

Financial Implications:

N/A

Board/Commission Recommendation:

This item was considered by the Planning Commission at their March 15, 2018 meeting. The Commission was presented with the challenges the illegal commercial grows present, and voted unanimously to recommend the ordinance to the City Council.

Stakeholder Process:

The ordinance was discussed with the Council President's Special Marijuana Working Group, and

was given general support to move forward.

Alternatives:

N/A

Proposed Motion:

Move to adopt an ordinance amending section 205 (Additional Standards for Specific Land Uses) of Part 2 (Commercial Districts) of Article 3 (Land Use Zoning Districts) of Chapter 7 (Planning, Development and Building) of the Code of the City of Colorado Springs 2001, as Amended, Pertaining to the Cultivation of Marijuana and Medical Marijuana in Violation of the Zoning Code and Providing Remedies for the Violation Thereof

An ordinance explicitly making unlicensed marijuana grows a zoning violation in non-residential structures.