



Dear St. Paul Planning Commission, Members of the City Council, and Mayor Carter,

An unprecedented new industry is currently being built in Minnesota. The Union Park community and neighborhoods deserve the opportunity to enter into this new world of cannabis business establishment with careful consideration and on a scale that protects communities. Union Park District Council would like to take a phased-in approach to introducing cannabis businesses into the community that allows an opportunity to learn what the impacts these new, never before seen businesses, will have on our neighborhoods, including environmental, youth access and exposure, air quality, traffic patterns, public safety, and other impacts. Coining a phrase from the cannabis industry, “starting low and slow” also applies to the introduction and establishment of these new businesses in Union Park.

Specifically, we urge the City to adopt policies that reflect the state legislative authority to:

1. **Restrict location of retailers and other cannabis businesses to the maximum distance as allowed under state law;**
2. **Restrict hours of operation to the maximum allowed by state law; and,**
3. **Limit the density of cannabis retailers as allowed under state law.**

Additionally, the City should study and adopt public-health oriented time, place, and manner restrictions allowed under the Minnesota law and a robust registration and inspection system for cannabis and lower-potency hemp edible retail as required under state law.

Background:

In 2023, the Minnesota Legislature and Governor Walz took a bold step to decriminalize and legalize adult use cannabis in Minnesota. In 2022, the legislature had already legalized the sale of so-called lower-potency hemp-derived edible and beverage THC products, albeit with very little oversight. The decriminalization of cannabis possession, use, growing, and sales is a significant step in righting the wrongs of decades of the failed war on drugs, which unfairly targeted communities of color and resulted in irreparable harms to individuals, families, and communities that bore the brunt of such damaging policies.

With legalization and the commercialization of cannabis and lower-potency hemp edibles sales, the Minnesota Legislature has provided local communities with several levers to regulate the location, hours of operation, and other aspects of commercial sales of these products. There is very persuasive evidence to support a measured approach to introducing and expanding this commercial industry into our St. Paul communities.

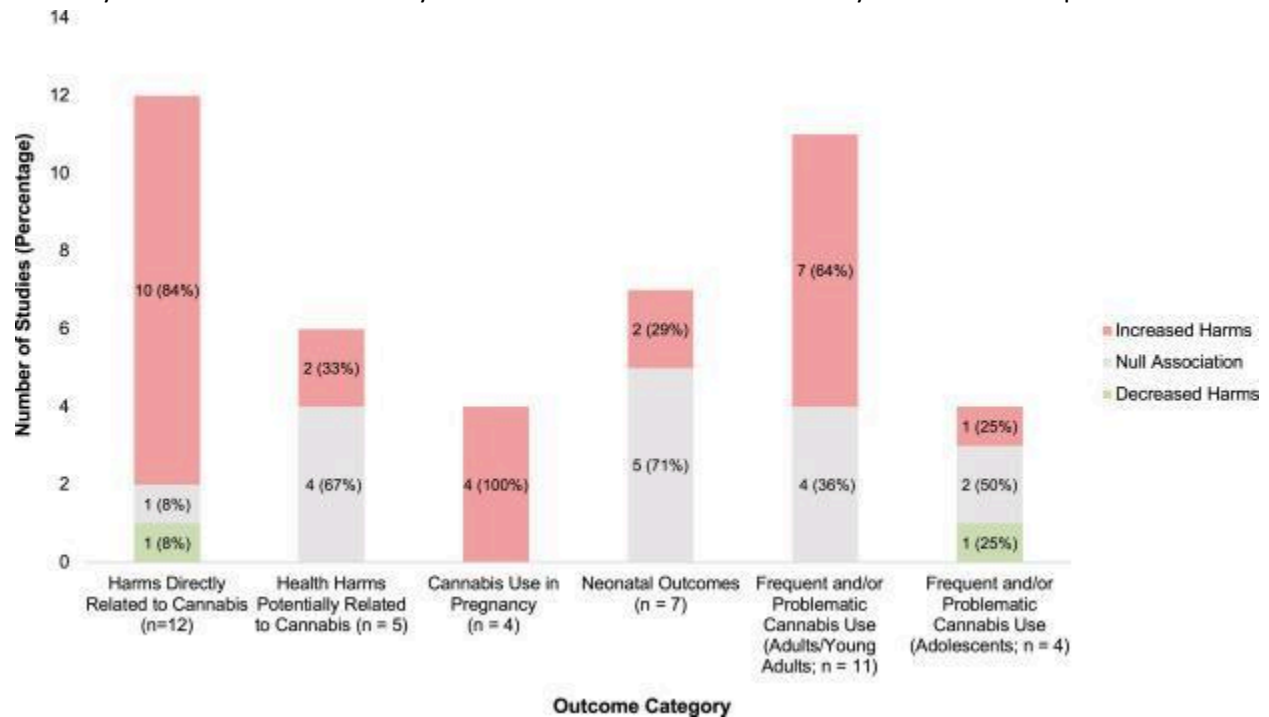
Communities with a higher concentration of cannabis and lower-potency hemp edible retailers within their jurisdiction expose more youth and young adults to commercial cannabis and lower-potency hemp edible marketing, making the products more attractive or enticing and making it easier for them to obtain the products. Additionally, proximity to cannabis retailers is associated with increased harms of cannabis use including, increases in poison control calls, increased cannabis use during pregnancy,

cannabis related hospitalization during pregnancy, and an increase of cannabis use frequency in adults and young adults. (Cantor, N., et. al. The association between physical availability of cannabis retail outlets and frequent cannabis use and related health harms: a systematic review. The Lancet Regional Health – Americas 2024;32: 100708 Published Online <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lana.2024.100708>.)

A systematic study that looked at studies from countries where cannabis has been legalized, including United States, Canada, Netherlands and Uruguay, concluded that:

“Overall, this systematic review finds evidence of significantly increased associations between greater physical cannabis retail access and increased cannabis use and harms, including healthcare utilization related to cannabis and harmful patterns of cannabis use in a variety of populations (adults, young adults, pregnant individuals). These findings caution that allowing greater retail availability following legalisation may increase cannabis-related harms.”

One way to address retailer density issues is to limit where retailers may be located or cap on the



number of registered cannabis retailers and lower-potency hemp edible retailers that may be issued by the city.

The chart below from this study depicts the specific and significance of the harms associated with physical proximity to cannabis retail stores.

Fig. 2 Direction of association between increased cannabis retail access and adverse cannabis health outcomes by population and outcome.

Minnesota is currently undergoing a grand experiment with unprecedented access to intoxicating so-called “lower-potency hemp edibles” available at gas stations, co-ops, bars, restaurants, grocery stores, liquor stores, and more. While some would like people to believe that these are innocuous products akin to 3.2 beer, these products are in fact intoxicating and psychoactive. A recent news article about enforcement actions against lower-potency hemp edible retailers quoted Minnesota Department of Health, stating that:

“According to [the Minnesota Department of Health] MDH, more than 1,000 compliance checks have been conducted, with 65% of retailers breaking the law for selling products with illegal

levels of THC.” (WCCO News, Jason Rantala, May 24, 2024, [St. Cloud raid seizes THC products more than 100 times legal limit, police say - CBS Minnesota \(cbsnews.com\)](#))

Union Park District Council Recommendations:

Union Park District Council recommends that the City of St. Paul take the phased in approach to allowing the establishment of a commercial retail industry in Union Park and other communities in St. Paul. **The overarching goal of the City’s regulations should be to allow access and availability of the products without encouraging use. City policies may make the products available for sale to discourage an illicit market, but the City should not have a role in promoting the sale, purchase, and use of cannabis.**

1. The City should adopt policies that maximize the limitations in location and hours of operation that the Minnesota Legislature explicitly put into the legalization law. The Minnesota Legislature recognizes that communities should be able to control these key aspects of commercialization and provided explicit authority for local jurisdictions.
 - a. **Restrict location of retailers and other cannabis businesses.** The City should prohibit the location of retailers and other cannabis businesses to within 1,000 feet of a school, or 500 feet of a day care, residential treatment facility, or an attraction within a public park that is regularly used by minors, including a playground or athletic field as state law allows. ([Minn. Stat. § 342.13 \(c\)](#) (2023))
 - b. **Restrict hours of operation.** State law allows local jurisdictions to limit hours of operation of cannabis businesses between 10 a.m. and 9 p.m., seven days a week. ([Minn. Stat. § 342.27, subd. 7\(b\)](#) (2023)) The City should adopt a requirement that limits hours of operation accordingly.
 - c. **Restrict density of cannabis retailers.** The City should adopt an ordinance to limit density of cannabis retailers based on population. State law allows a local unit of government to adopt an ordinance limiting the number of licensed cannabis retailers to no fewer than one registration for every 12,500 residents. The City may also coordinate with other jurisdictions and the county to limit the number countywide to 1 per 12,500 residents. ([Minn. Stat. § 342.13 \(j\)](#) (2023))
2. The City should adopt public-health oriented time, place, and manner restrictions allowed under the Minnesota law. ([Minn. Stat. § 342.13 \(c\)](#) (2023))
3. The City should adopt a robust registration system as mandated by state law, with robust inspection requirements to ensure this nascent industry is following the requirements of state and local law. ([Minn. Stat. § 342.22](#) (2023))

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Union Park District Council