



Cambridge Cannabis Business Permit Process

Updated November 2022

Anyone seeking to operate a Cannabis Business, as defined in the [Cannabis Business Permit Ordinance](#), in the City of Cambridge must obtain a Cannabis Business Permit from the City. The Cannabis Business Permit is comprised of three distinct Local Approvals: Local Approval 1 (Cannabis Business Permit Eligibility Review), Local Approval 2 (Planning Board Special Permit), and Local Approval 3 (Host Community Agreement). The Cannabis Business Permit process is explained in detail below, and key staff contact information is provided for each Local Approval step.

At this time, the City is only considering Cannabis Business Permit applications from applicants who meet the definition of Group A Priority Applicants (Priority A Applicants) in the City's [Cannabis Business Permitting Ordinance](#).

The Cannabis Business Permit process is distinct from the state licensing process for a Marijuana Establishment, which is overseen by the [Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission](#) (MACCC). Some steps for obtaining a Cambridge Cannabis Business Permit must be undertaken prior to, or after, certain state requirements for obtaining a Marijuana Establishment License. Information about the state Marijuana Establishment License process can be found on the MACCC website.

General Advice Before Starting an Application

Process:

- Read the requirements of the Cannabis Business Permitting Ordinance and the Zoning Ordinance (see below).
- Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis, in the order they are received, and there is no cap on the number of Cannabis Business Permits the City can issue. Starting an application does not secure "a place in line". Applicants should have all their [Priority A Applicant Documentation](#) ready before beginning the process.
- The Cannabis Business Permit application process is online, through the City's ViewPoint platform. However, Local Approval 2: Planning Board Special Permit, and Local Approval 3: Host Community Agreement require separate materials and submissions outside of the ViewPoint application.
- The Cannabis Business Permit fee is \$350. The fee is waived for Priority A Applicants who are Economic Empowerment Applicants certified by the MACCC.
- Local Approval 1: Cannabis Business Permit Eligibility Review
 - CDD's Economic Opportunity & Development Division verifies that the Applicant is eligible to receive a Cannabis Business Permit. In Cambridge, only [Priority A Applicants](#) are eligible at this time.
- Local Approval 2: Planning Board Special Permit
 - Applicants may apply for and receive a [Special Permit](#) from the Planning Board before completing Local Approval 1.
 - Local Approval 2 is required for all Applicants, except a Cannabis Courier.
- Local Approval 3: Host Community Agreement

- o CDD's Economic Opportunity & Development Division reviews the Statement of Interest for a [Host Community Agreement](#) for completeness.
- o The Statement of Interest is reviewed only after applicants have completed Local Approvals 1 & 2 (unless a Cannabis Courier, for which Local Approval 2 is not required).
- o Local Approval 3 is required for all Applicants.
- Once an Applicant has secured Local Approvals 1-3, the Applicant may notify the MACCC to obtain their Provisional Marijuana Establishment License.
- After receiving the Provisional License from the MACCC, the Applicant must provide a copy to City Staff through the Viewpoint platform to receive their final Cannabis Business Permit.
- After receiving a Cannabis Business Permit, the Applicant can apply for a Building Permit.

Applicant Details:

- Provide information and contact details for the **primary business owner**. Lawyers, consultants, or other representatives **should not** use their personal contact information for the application.
- Pick an active and closely monitored email address for all communications. The City's ViewPoint platform will send important alerts to your chosen email address, including communications from City Staff.
- Presently only applications from Priority A Applicants can be reviewed, per the recently updated [Cannabis Business Permitting Ordinance](#). The individual or entity that meets the definition of a Priority A Applicant must own at least 51% of the Cannabis Business for the business to be considered a Priority A Applicant.

Application Information:

- **Information provided for any Local Approval stage must match exactly across all documents provided to the City, as well as with information provided to the MACCC. Discrepancies across documents will significantly delay processing time.**
- A request to change any information submitted for Local Approval 1 on ViewPoint needs to be formalized in writing through an Info Change of Request Form. The Info Change Request Form must be submitted through Viewpoint. Common information changes have included:
 - o Hours of Operation
 - o Ownership team, ownership percentages, and beneficial interest lists
 - o Contact information, including residential address, of the ownership team
 - o Doing Business As (D.B.A.) name

Further advice is provided for each Local Approval Stage on the following pages.

Guidance & Contacts for Each Local Approval

Local Approval 1: Cannabis Business Permit Eligibility Review (City approval time: 4-6 weeks)

Staff Contacts: Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist, cdilisio@cambridgema.gov

Pre-Application:

- Please refer to the [Cannabis Business Priority A Applicant Documentation](#) for a detailed list of which supporting documents are required to confirm your applicant status.
- Meet with the Cambridge Community Development Department. A meeting will be set when the Applicant has:
 - A confirmed location with some documentation showing landlord agreement;
 - An owner or ownership team that meets the Priority A Applicant criteria;
 - A draft mockup of the building exterior and interior layout; and
 - A potential date for the community meeting to be held
- Community meeting:
 - The MACCC requires a community meeting. Local Approval Steps 2 & 3 also require a community meeting. A single community meeting can satisfy all requirements. But applicants should review the MACCC's requirements to ensure the community meeting is held in the acceptable period of time for State licensing.
 - For the community meeting, the Applicant should document:
 - Any outreach or publicity;
 - Meeting time and place; and
 - Number of attendees, number of speakers, and a summary of any comments.

Local Approval 2: Planning Board Special Permit (City approval time: 3-6 months)

Staff Contact: Swaathi Joseph, Zoning Project Planner, sjoseph@cambridgema.gov

- Zoning regulates where different Cannabis Uses are allowed and whether a Special Permit is required. The following zoning resources will help:
 - The [Zoning Ordinance](#)
 - Cambridge [Zoning Map](#)
 - [Table of Use Regulations \(Section 4.30\)](#) –
 - This section explains which Cannabis Uses are allowed in a given zoning district (such as a Cannabis Retail Store, Cannabis Courier Establishment, Cannabis Delivery Operator Establishment, or Cannabis Production Facility).
 - [Cannabis Use Regulations \(Section 11.800\)](#)
 - This section describes the zoning regulations and [special permit process](#) for Cannabis Uses.
 - List of Cannabis Retail Stores that have received special permits, are currently in the application process, or have held pre-application community meetings:
 - [Planning Board Special Permits - City of Cambridge, MA \(cambridgema.gov\)](#)
 - [Pre-Application Community Meetings - CDD - City of Cambridge, Massachusetts \(cambridgema.gov\)](#)
- Zoning requires an Operations and Logistics Plan that is reviewed and approved by the Traffic, Parking + Transportation Department as well as the Police Dept.
- These are some of the issues that often come up in the Planning Board's review:
 - Managing site operations to prevent impacts on the public such as double-parking of vehicles or queueing on the sidewalk.
 - Designing the storefront to maintain an active streetscape.

Local Approval 3: Host Community Agreement (City approval time: 4-6 weeks)

Staff Contact: Christina DiLisio, Economic Development Specialist, cdilisio@cambridgema.gov

- Host Community Agreements are executed with the City Manager. An Applicant submits a Statement of Interest for a Host Community Agreement, and it is reviewed by City Staff.
- City Staff review Statements of Interest on a rolling basis, in the order they are received, and once a week (generally Thursdays).
- The purpose of the Statement of Interest is to gather detailed information regarding the proposed Cannabis Business's planned leadership structure, safety and security, operations and management, and overall community impact.
- Please refer to the [Request for Statement of Interest for Cannabis Business Host Community Agreements](#) for a detailed list of which supporting documents are required.
- Note: The Applicant should only expand upon information provided in earlier stages if any information has changed. Please ensure that information attested to in the Statement of Interest for a Host Community Agreement is the same as any provided in Local Approvals 1 & 2.

State Process: Application for Marijuana Establishment License Processed

- The MACCC ensures that Applicants have met any, and all, local requirements, before issuing a Provisional Marijuana Establishment License. In Cambridge, the local requirements are Local Approval 1 (Cannabis Business Permit Eligibility Review), Local Approval 2 (Special Permit), and Local Approval 3 (Host Community Agreement) above.
- The Applicant should upload a copy of the MACCC Provisional License to their Viewpoint account.

Cannabis Business Permit Issued

- Once the Provisional License is uploaded by the Applicant, City Staff review and confirm all information is the same throughout all documents.
- The Cambridge Cannabis Business Permit is printed and issued from the Cambridge Inspectional Services Department (ISD).

Cambridge ISD Issues Building Permit

- The Cambridge Cannabis Business Permit must be complete and paid for prior to ISD issuing a Building Permit.

Cambridge ISD Issues Certificate of Occupancy

State Process: Final Marijuana License issued

- The MACCC issues a Final Marijuana Establishment License after inspecting the premise.
- The Applicant should upload a copy of the MACCC Final License to their Viewpoint account.