



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: December 10, 2018

Re: **Special Permit PB #339, Revolutionary Clinics II, Inc. Registered
Marijuana Dispensary at 541 Massachusetts Avenue – Continued
Hearing**

Update

Since the last Planning Board meeting, the Applicant has worked with staff to respond to comments and questions raised in the initial review of the application. The Applicant's recent submission provides additional information about the project in narrative and graphic form. This memo comments on the additional information and proposed changes.

Planning Board Action

Revolutionary Clinics II, Inc. is proposing to repurpose the existing building at 541 Massachusetts Avenue to operate a registered medical marijuana dispensary (RMD). The project does not propose adding any off-street parking. The proposal includes renovation of the 6,025 square feet existing building and includes a community engagement space at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Norfolk Street for active street frontage.

The site is within the Central Square Overlay District and in the Central Square National Register District, but the building is not a contributing structure. The Cambridge Historical Commission has reviewed the proposal and concluded that it did not require any additional reviews. The project is located in the Business B (BB) District and requires a Special Permit to allow a RMD use per Section 11.800. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

A petition to amend Section 11.800 is currently under consideration by the City Council for all cannabis establishments. If adopted, the proposed RMD would be required to meet the requirements in that petition. A permitted RMD would need to seek an additional special permit from the Planning Board to allow an adult-use cannabis retail establishment.

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Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(see appendix for zoning text excerpts)</i>
Medical Marijuana Dispensary Use in Business B District (Sections 11.800)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Location shall serve an area that currently does not have reasonable access to medical marijuana. • The location is at least five hundred feet from a school, daycare center, preschool or afterschool facility or any facility in which children commonly congregate, or if not located at such a distance, it is sufficiently buffered from such facilities such that its users will not be adversely impacted by its operation. • Site design provides convenient, safe and secure access and egress for clients and employees arriving to and leaving from the site using all modes of transportation, including drivers, pedestrians, bicyclists and public transportation users. • Traffic generated shall not create a substantial adverse impact on nearby residential uses. • Loading, refuse and service areas are designed to be secure and shielded from abutting uses. • Building and site are designed to be compatible with other buildings in the area and to mitigate any negative aesthetic impacts that might result from required security measures and restrictions on visibility into the building's interior.
General Special Permit Criteria (Section 10.43)	Special permits will be normally granted if the zoning requirements are met, unless it is found not to be in the public interest due to one of the criteria enumerated in Section 10.43 (see appendix).

Planning Board Comments from First Hearing

The following summarizes some of the key comments made by the Planning Board at the October 16, 2018 hearing. The Applicant has provided responses in the submitted materials.

- Consider deeper window box treatment for art displays on Massachusetts Avenue frontage.
- Explore retail use at the corner of Massachusetts Avenue and Norfolk Street for street activation.
- Reconsider the corner space to include a retail use that is accessible to the general public with a direct entry.
- Replace the Norfolk Street façade mural.
- Consider developing a mural on the rear façade.

Staff Comments on New Materials

The supplemental material (accompanied by a cover letter dated November 13, 2018) primarily addresses concerns that were raised by the Planning Board associated with accessibility, street activation on Massachusetts Avenue, and the architecture of the project. The revised set of plans and supporting graphic materials show changes intended to better engage Central Square's active pedestrian environment.

The revised materials propose a separate wellness retail space instead of the event space at the corner facing Massachusetts Avenue and Norfolk Street, which would have an entrance from the same entry vestibule as the RMD but would not require patrons to enter the RMD itself. While this is initially proposed to be operated by a subsidiary of the RMD operator, staff recommends that the Planning Board permit this space to be used for any non-cannabis retail establishment that is allowed in the zoning district. Staff also recommends that consideration be given to entering the separate wellness retail space directly from the building's outdoor recessed entrance, rather than through its interior vestibule.

The revised materials also include detailed drawings of the window display boxes, and show minor changes to the interior layout and exit location, and to façade design. The materials also indicate that the landlord is agreeable to having an additional mural painted on the north side of the building, similar to the new mural planned for the Norfolk Avenue side of the building.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be further studied by the Applicant if the Planning Board continues the hearing to a future date, or as conditions for ongoing design review by staff if the Board decides to grant the special permit:

- Confirm that the proposed RMD shall not be used as a distribution point for home deliveries.
- Confirm the hours of operation for RMD 9am to 9pm, Monday through Saturday, as mentioned during the first hearing.
- Provide a loading and service delivery management plan to be approved by TP&T.
- Review of any proposed mechanical equipment on the rooftop, façade or exterior of the building and visual/acoustical screening if needed.
- Review of exterior signage, lighting, and other security features that may be required by state regulations. Any proposed outdoor lighting should be designed to conform to the guidelines recommended in the proposed Cambridge Outdoor Lighting Ordinance.
- Review of specifications for window glass and colors of exterior materials.
- Review of the design of the window display boxes and their lighting.
- Review of options for the administration and curation of the window displays.