



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: September 3, 2019

Re: **Special Permit PB #348, Home Grown 617 LLC Cannabis Retail Store at
580 Massachusetts Avenue – Continued Hearing**

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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 revisions to the project in graphic form. This memo comments on the proposed changes.

Planning Board Action

Home Grown 617 LLC is proposing to repurpose a portion of the existing building at 580 Massachusetts Avenue to operate a retail cannabis store. The proposal includes renovation of 5,800 square feet of the existing building to use the first floor for the store and the basement for storage and office area. The application mentions that the applicant Home Grown 617 LLC is an Economic Empowerment Applicant (EEA201966). But the Cannabis Control Commission records 612 Studios LLC as EEA201966.

The project is located in the Business B (BB) District and requires a Special Permit to allow a cannabis establishment use per Section 11.800. Applicable sections of the zoning are provided in an appendix.

Last year, the City Council amended Section 11.800 to include provisions for non-medical or "adult use" cannabis establishments in addition to medical cannabis establishments. The Council is currently considering a "Cannabis Business Permitting Ordinance" which, if adopted, could apply to this use.

Requested Special Permits	Summarized Findings <i>(detailed zoning text on following pages)</i>
Cannabis Retail Store (Sections 11.800)	<p>Complies with Zoning Requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Located in a BA, BA-2, BA-3, BB, BB-1, BB-2, BC, IA-1, IB, IB-1, or IB-2 district, or a BA-1 district only if it is designated by the Cannabis Control Commission as an Economic Empowerment Applicant or as qualifying for its Social Equity Program. • Located in a permanent building. • Not within 1,800 feet of another Cannabis Retail Store, unless it is designated by the Cannabis Control Commission as an Economic Empowerment Applicant or as qualifying for its Social Equity Program. • Not within 300 feet of an existing public or private K-12 school or within 300 feet of a public children’s playground, public youth athletic field, or public youth recreation facility, otherwise the Planning Board finds that it is sufficiently buffered such that users of such facilities will not be adversely impacted by its operation. • No packaging or re-packaging of cannabis products will occur on-site. <p>Meets Special Permit Criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • Location and design of cannabis use will not detract from the sense of activity with opaque, unwelcoming façade at ground floor in retail areas. • 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. • The facility will provide programs to assist qualifying patients in obtaining services under Massachusetts Medical Use of Marijuana Program.
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 August 6, 2019 hearing. The Applicant has provided responses in the submitted materials.

- Consider alternate interior layout to increase the capacity of the waiting area and improve interior circulation.
- Review design options that will deter customer crowding in the adjacent sidewalks.

Staff Comments on New Materials

In response to the Board's comments, the Applicant has further studied the interior layout of the proposed cannabis retail store. The preferred option is included in the revised application materials. While the preferred option does not relocate the event/education space, additional queuing space has been provided by moving the sales floor deeper into the building and by providing a separate egress to Pearl Street. The queuing potential of the waiting area at the main entry on Massachusetts Avenue has been increased to 44 people.

The preferred option also enables the establishment of a separate identity on Pearl Street for the event/education space, which staff understands is needed to successfully deliver the Applicant's desired uses for that space. The event/education space has been given more prominence with the addition of a recessed, glass door and sidelights. Staff had suggested that windows also be added to the Pearl Street façade to highlight the event/education space and activate the frontage, but the Applicant advised that there are some limitations associated with the existing stucco façade. In addition, it is understood that the Applicant is still refining the event/education space concept and uses, so there is the potential to add windows at a later date.

An option that more directly reflects the Board's comments will be presented at the Planning Board Hearing. That option will show the event/education space relocated to the Massachusetts Avenue side of the building to maximize the queuing potential at the main entry.

Continuing Review

The following is a summary of issues that staff recommends should be further studied by the Applicant, either in preparing revised materials 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:

- Review of all exterior materials, colors, façade alterations and details.
- Review of the treatment of display windows and entry doors.
- 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.
- Provide clarification regarding the relationship between Home Grown 617 LLC and 612 Studios LLC since only the latter has EEA certification from Cannabis Control Commission.