



CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Community Development Department

To: Planning Board

From: CDD Staff

Date: July 30, 2019

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

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This memo contains an overview of the proposed project at 580 Massachusetts Avenue, the special permits being requested, and related comments.

Summary of Proposal

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 site is within the Central Square Overlay District, requiring review by the Central Square Advisory Committee, whose report is attached to this memo. The building is a contributing structure in the Central Square National Register District but the proposal is not expected to affect its contributing status. The Cambridge Historical Commission staff has reviewed the project and has no concerns about the impact of the proposal on the architecture of the building.

Requested Special Permits

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).

Area Planning and Zoning

The base zoning for the site is Business B (BB) and it is in the Central Square Overlay District. The district allows a broad range of residential and commercial uses, including retail.

Cannabis Retail Stores

Cannabis retail stores are generally allowed in districts where other retail uses are allowed. The pertinent planning and zoning considerations for cannabis retail stores are their location relative to other cannabis retail stores and relative to schools and youth-oriented public facilities, their operational characteristics in terms of transportation for customers, employees, and products, and their façade design in relation to the character of other retail storefronts in the area. The zoning provides greater flexibility for applicants with an “Economic Empowerment” or “Social Equity” designation from the state Cannabis Control Commission to promote greater participation in the cannabis industry from communities that have been disproportionately affected by past drug enforcement policies. Cannabis establishments are subject to the same dimensional, parking, and signage requirements as comparable retail uses within a given zoning district.

In addition to meeting the zoning requirements and special permit criteria summarized on the preceding page, cannabis retail stores must be properly licensed by the state Cannabis Control Commission. A host community agreement is required under new state regulations for both medical and non-medical cannabis establishments. Special permits are unique to a particular cannabis retail store (i.e., not transferrable to a different operator).

Central Square

The Central Square Overlay District provides special design standards and greater scrutiny for development projects to advance the planning goals for the area. The specific design guidelines for Central Square are included in the appendix, and include encouraging strong retail frontage for Massachusetts Ave., providing visual interest and pedestrian orientation in storefront design, preventing disruption of parking and service facilities on pedestrians and residences, and taking advantage of existing public transportation.

So far, one medical retail cannabis dispensary has received a special permit in Central Square, at 541 Massachusetts Ave. The dispensary is currently under construction. Additional cannabis retail stores would only be allowed in the vicinity if they are Economic Empowerment or Social Equity applicants. In addition to the current application, the Planning Board has thus far received one other application for a cannabis retail store in Central Square, at 567 Massachusetts Ave., which is also applying as an Economic Empowerment Applicant and is scheduled for a future hearing at the Board.

Comments on Proposal

Consistency with Planning and Zoning

This is the first special permit application for a cannabis retail store made after the City Council adopted amendments to cannabis zoning last year that address both medical and non-medical cannabis establishments within the city.

The proposal is to renovate a portion of the existing building on the lot, which is currently conforming with regard to dimensional requirements and contains 2,647 square feet of retail area. No dimensional changes are proposed and therefore the dimensional standards of the district will continue to be met. The proposed establishment will be a cannabis retail store with its main entrance on Massachusetts Avenue and a service access on Green Street, operational between 10 am and 11 pm all days of the week. The application does not indicate the location from which the products will be supplied. The application mentions that the applicant Home Grown 617 LLC is an Economic Empowerment Applicant (EEA201966). The attached report from the Cannabis Control Commission records Sieh Samura and 612 Studios LLC associated with EEA201966. The relationship between Home Grown 617 LLC and 612 Studios LLC is not clear from the application.

Location

The site is within the BB district, where cannabis retail stores are allowed under current zoning. This site is within 1,800 feet from the permitted medical dispensary at 541 Massachusetts Avenue. However, since the applicant is an Economic Empowerment Applicant, the 1,800-foot separation requirement does not apply. The project narrative materials indicate that the site is not within 300 feet of a 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.

Transportation, Loading and Service

The application includes a transportation logistics plan by Vanasse & Associates, Inc. The Traffic, Parking and Transportation (TP&T) Department is reviewing the analysis. The key considerations for the Planning Board will be whether or not the proposed cannabis retail store might have substantially different transportation impacts than a comparably-sized retail establishment.

Under the current zoning, an establishment of this size would be required to have at least three, but no more than five off-street parking spaces, one long-term bicycle parking space, and four short-term bicycle parking spaces. However, as this is a change of use in an existing building, parking requirements are waived by the provisions of the Central Square Overlay District, and no new bicycle parking is required because the change in use does not cause an increase in the required number of spaces. The project proposes 8 long-term bicycle parking spaces, exceeding the minimum requirements, which is supported by staff. The proposed long-term bicycle parking spaces will allow the employees to secure their bikes in a weather protected location.

Urban Design

The Central Square Overlay District's guidelines encourage visually interesting retail frontage. Although the applicant must comply with State requirements regarding screening of the product, staff's preference is for the waiting area near the Massachusetts Avenue customer entrance to be visible from the street. Staff would prefer that the product screening be moved deeper into the store, away from the street frontage.

The application includes several possible treatments of the street frontage (see sheet SK-04). Staff preference is for 3D art installations, as shown in options 3 and 4. These would require a well-lit internal

area. Displays should be updated regularly, at least quarterly. Staff discourages options that block views into the interior with an opaque or translucent material applied to the glass, or with a digital screen as in options 2, 5, and 6.

Staff would prefer that customer entry door incorporate a substantial amount of glazing. Regardless of the material used, the door should be well lit, both as an aesthetic contribution to the street, and for security concerns

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:

- The narrative mentions that smelling or opening of cannabis products will be permitted in the dispensary. Provide clarification that this will not conflict with the requirement that all products offered to consumers shall be pre-packaged off-site, and no packaging or repackaging of cannabis or marijuana products shall take place on the premises of the store.
- Provide clarification regarding:
 - Marijuana-establishment applicant - The applicant may be an individual or several individuals. Individuals required to be named in the application include executives, managers, and close associates, as well as any person or entity who will contribute 10% of more of the initial capital to operate the Marijuana Establishment. The list must include any individual with direct or indirect authority over business policies, cultivation operations or security operations because these are individuals the Commission is likely to interact with over the term of the license. Individuals listed on the application also must disclose their individual interest in any Marijuana Establishment application for licensure or licensee, as well as their past or present business interests, including marijuana-related business interests, in other states.
 - Business organization - Applicants must provide proof that the business is registered to do business in Massachusetts. Certificates providing proof of business incorporation may be requested online from the Corporations Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts at <http://www.sec.state.ma.us>. Applicants should provide a copy of the articles or organization and bylaws, as well as certificates of good standing from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue and the Corporations Division of the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office.
- Provide EEA certification notice (letter or email) from CCC.
- 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.



ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PRIORITY APPLICANT APPROVALS

May 1, 2018

#	APPLICATION NUMBER	FIRST NAME POINT OF CONTACT	LAST NAME POINT OF CONTACT	BUSINESS NAME (If Established)	THERE ARE NO KNOWN CONFLICTS OF INTEREST AT THIS TIME	AS CLAIMED BY APPLICANT						DATE SUBMITTED
						FIRST CRITERIA	SECOND CRITERIA	THIRD CRITERIA	FOURTH CRITERIA	FIFTH CONDITION OR FACT	SIXTH CRITERIA	
1	EEA201966	Sieh	Samura	612 STUDIOS LLC	no	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	4/18/18 10:32 AM
2	EEA202082	Uma	Dhanabalan		no	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 2:58 PM
3	EEA202078	Caroline	Pineau	Haverhill Stem LLC	no	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	4/23/18 8:40 PM
4	EEA202284	Shaskia	Bosquet		no	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 11:50 PM
5	EEA202410	Adam	Channing		no	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	4/15/18 11:55 PM
6	EEA202265	Korey	Darby		no	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	4/26/18 1:01 PM
7	EEA202183	Austin	Davis		no	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 10:19 PM
8	EEA202296	Hermese	Velasquez		no	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 10:09 PM
9	EEA202415	Elizabeth	Channing		no	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	4/15/18 10:52 PM
10	EEA202277	David	Ritter		no	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 8:40 PM
11	EEA202130	John	Bradshaw		no	Not Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	4/13/18 2:31 PM
12	EEA202368	Matthew	Pavini		no	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 8:04 PM
13	EEA202314	Jaleel	Heath		no	Applicable	Not Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	Applicable	4/15/18 1:20 PM



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To: City of Cambridge Planning Board
From: Central Square Advisory Committee
Date: 5/8/2019
Re: Home Grown 617 – 580 Mass Ave

The Central Square Advisory Committee (the “Committee”) met on May 8, 2018 to review and comment on the Home Grown 617 (the “Applicant”) proposal for a recreational dispensary at 580 Mass Ave. This meeting was conducted pursuant to the provisions outlined in Section 20.300 of the Cambridge Zoning Ordinance. The Committee is appointed by the City Manager to undertake all large project reviews of variances and special permits for activities within the Central Square Overlay District (the “District”), and to monitor the progress of the Central Square Non-Zoning Recommendations of the 2013 K2C2 Study (the “Study”).

* * *

The Applicant proposed a cannabis retail dispensary that would offer pre-packaged goods consistent with guidelines set by the State’s Cannabis Control Commission (CCC). The facility will accommodate customers seeking medical consultation but will not provide medical cannabis during the initial opening phase. There will be no cultivation and assembling of goods on site. The owners and founders of Home Grown 617 are all residents from Cambridge, Boston, and Somerville, and have experience in cannabis retail and manufacturing industry for both medical and adult-use. Home Grown 617 will be a minority-owned business, as certified by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, and qualifies as an Economic Empowerment Applicant

Committee members who were present spoke in favor of the Applicant’s proposal and raised questions regarding safety/security, logistics, and street activation. The Applicant discussed having a “buzzer system” that would alert customers when their goods are ready for purchase and pickup. This system, according to the Applicant, could encourage customers to also patronize other retail stores in Central Square during that time.

The establishment is located at a very busy section of Mass Ave. As a result, their goal is to get potential customers off the street and into the space. Some establishments take ID right at the door but, given the amount of activity already happening on the sidewalk, customers will be brought into the waiting room/lobby. Staff and security will be on hand to facilitate this. The plans for the establishment include an office space towards the back. While not fully programmed yet, some uses could include training classes for staff and members of the public and incubator or pop-up spaces for other small businesses.

Committee Members Present

- Joel Altstein
- Esther Hanig
- Melissa Greene
- Michael Monestime
- Christopher Sol Gully
- Robert Winters

Committee Members Absent

- Tahir Kapoor

Home Grown 617

- Sean D. Hope, Esq.
- Leah Samura
- Sieh Samura

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Public Comment

- ***I have a question regarding educating members of the public. What are your plans for that?***
 - CCC has some regulations around that, especially when it concerns minors. We are looking to educate high-school aged kids in a way that isn't fear-mongering but is educational and informative. For any product on display in our store, we will provide reading material on them through our webpage and mobile app.
- ***You've talked about overstaffing your establishment, particularly during the early stages of operation. What are your plans to further develop and train staff?***
 - There's an office space located at the rear of this establishment, along Pearl Street, which could be used for staff training purposes. We anticipate eventually having an entrance to this space from Pearl Street. We would not need the same level of security as we do on Mass Ave because no products would be sold out of this space.

submitted on behalf of the Committee,

Wendell Joseph, Neighborhood Planner
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