

DRAFT - An open letter regarding Cookies Brentwood

The Brentwood Community Council (“BCC”) is writing to express the community’s concern, outrage, and disapproval over the City of Los Angeles’ licensing a retail cannabis dispensary for retail operations at 13030 San Vicente Boulevard. This location is adjacent to the Brentwood Country Mart, a well-known family- and child- friendly outdoor shopping center, complete with an outdoor food court, a barber shop that works with children, a toy store, an ice cream shop and other children-focused enhancements.

This location (San Vicente@26th) also serves the community as a centralized school bus pick up and drop off for a number of the City’s independent schools: The Archer School for Girls, Brentwood School, with 2 afternoon drop-offs, Harvard-Westlake, Loyola High School, Marlborough, and Windward School. Moreover, while this location is not within the prescribed “sensitive use” zone, it is in fact sufficiently close to Paul Revere Middle School, with students in grades 6 through 8, that as a practical matter, those school children frequently can be found after school at the Brentwood Country Mart area, as well as children from the neighboring areas of the Polo Fields and Brentwood Terrace, as well as many children from other parts of Brentwood, Pacific Palisades, and elsewhere from our City and from neighboring Santa Monica.

Allowing a retail cannabis dispensary to operate in an area that is favored by, and caters to, young children, tweens and teens, is, simply put, a bad idea. It is important to note that the BCC is neither weighing in on, nor passing judgment on, the use of cannabis as permitted under California law. The concerns being voiced by the BCC on behalf of its community relate to location, location, location.

The Brentwood Community Council is further dismayed at the complete lack of outreach by any of the cannabis licensee, the store operator, the property owner, or the Department of Cannabis Regulation (“DCR”) prior to licensing this business. Community concerns were not taken into account during this licensing process, because the community was never asked. There should have been outreach conducted prior to licensing. Pursuant to LAMC Section 104.04 and 104.05, prior notice was to be provided to both CD-11 and the BCC. No such notice was given. It is unclear whether there is any form of recourse for the community as a result of this egregious and very unfortunate oversight.

The BCC takes this action following its consideration of the concerns of residents voiced during its public meeting held on September 14, 2022, its review of email correspondence received from a variety of concerned neighbors from various parts of Brentwood, and recommendations assembled from an ad hoc committee formed to examine the matter.

ACCORDING TO THE DCR WEBSITE, ADDITIONAL LICENSES FOR CANNABIS RETAILERS COULD BE AWARDED WITHIN THE BRENTWOOD COMMUNITY. THE BCC URGES THE DCR AND CD-11 TO TAKE ALL ACTIONS AND MEASURES NECESSARY TO ENSURE THAT NO OTHER LICENSES ARE AWARDED WITHOUT FIRST TAKING, AND HEEDING, COMMUNITY INPUT. IN PARTICULAR, ONE PENDING LOCATION IS CLOSE TO THE VA, WHICH OFFERS A SERIES OF SOBER LIVING OPTIONS FOR VETERANS, AND A NEW SYLVAN LEARNING CENTER THAT PROVIDES LEARNING ENHANCEMENT SERVICES TO CHILDREN.

The BCC urges the CD-11 office to consider and pursue the attached suggestions with the City Council, so that others are spared the unfortunate situation Brentwood and its residents find themselves in.

Please take actions that will protect our children.

Brentwood Community Council

Action Items:

- Amend the Cannabis Licensing process ordinance to include, as a penalty for failure to obtain public input prior to licensure, license suspension and revocation. There was no notification to BCC prior to the license being issued for the Cookies operation, or the cannabis delivery service at Wilshire and Federal.
- Amend the Cannabis licensing process so that, in addition to any license from the DCR, there is a process similar to that of the Conditional Use Permit – Beverage process that allows for public notice, hearings, and input from both the community and the LAPD so that appropriate safety and security measures are considered. It is hard to understand how businesses selling alcohol must go through a discretionary review process with Planning and cannabis retailers do not.
- Amend the Cannabis sensitive use regulations to include school bus stops for K-12 students to be a “sensitive use.” What has happened at 26th and San Vicente is nothing short of a travesty for our children. In addition, during the time that Cookies and the school bus stops coexist, the community asks that Cookies close during the hours that the school buses drop off students.
- Ask the City Attorney to audit the DCR to ensure that they are following the laws and regulations that govern their awarding of licenses.
- Instruct the DCR of the existence and importance of Community Councils, including without limitation, the Brentwood Community Council and the Pacific Palisades Community Council, and of their functional equivalent to a Neighborhood Council, in connection with public outreach. Create consequences for the failure to conduct appropriate public outreach in advance of cannabis location licensing.
- Consider additional security-related requirements in construction to prevent/hinder break-ins, and well as requiring armed response alarm monitoring of retail dispensaries.
- Re-examine the social equity program to determine whether it is accomplishing its stated goals, or is instead being used by big business to obtain licenses not otherwise available to them, under the guise of helping those less fortunate. According to newspaper articles, “Cookies” is a billion dollar business.
- Require 24/7 private security of cannabis retailers, and if not of all cannabis retailers, at least all of those that have more than 2 break-ins over a 3 month period, until such time as they are break-in free for 6 consecutive months. The BCC has been told that there have been at least 2, and perhaps 3, break-ins in the first month of operations of Cookies.