

February 28th, 2024
Planning Department
City of Santa Cruz

**RE: Project Information BBKG Inc, DBA The Hook Retail
Dispensary, APN -006-493-27**



Dear Santa Cruz City Planning Department,

I am writing regarding our application for the administrative use permit hearing regarding our proposed dispensary at 1129 Mission Street, Santa Cruz, CA. As principal partners, Kyle Giorchino and I bring a wealth of experience in legally permitted cannabis business operations deeply rooted in community engagement and sustainable practices. Our partnership on this project, especially our collaboration with WAMM, underscores our commitment to medical cannabis and community health. Having operated cannabis dispensaries in the county for over a decade, we have a flawless compliance record and have never received a citation or violation for our operations. In addition, we have extensive experience working collaboratively with community partners and local governments to help shape and support regulated cannabis in our community.

Location

Our chosen location at 1129 Mission St. APN -006-493-27, strictly adheres to Santa Cruz's zoning and setback requirements, as detailed in the attached "1129 Mission ST Land Use Report." The site, previously occupied by a bakery, aligns with the city's Mixed Medium Density (MXMD) zoning and does not necessitate a variance for its operation as a cannabis retailer. Furthermore, the property offers adequate parking and accessibility, meeting the city's stringent standards for commercial establishments.

The proposed location of The Hook Outlet at 1129 Mission St. maintains a similar distance to sensitive use areas as other dispensaries in Santa Cruz, ensuring adherence to city zoning requirements. For example, Canna Cruz is 0.4 miles from Kirby School, Reef Side is 0.4 miles from Grant Park and 0.6 miles from Monarch Community Elementary School, and Kind Peoples Collective is 0.2 miles from Central Park and 0.6 miles from Monarch Elementary School. The Hook Outlet is located 0.4 miles from Santa Cruz High School and Mission Hill, demonstrating a consistent commitment across dispensaries to minimize potential impacts on youth by maintaining appropriate distances from sensitive areas.

City code requires dispensaries to be greater than 600 feet from schools measured by property line to property line. Our location is over 680 feet away from Santa Cruz High School. It is 1871ft from Santa Cruz High School and 2462ft from Mission Hill Junior High School when measured by the shortest path of travel.

Securing this location was a painstaking process that took months, given the limited compliant options in the city and the inability of any landlord who holds a commercial mortgage to rent to cannabis companies due to banking restrictions.

Partnership with WAMM Phytotherapies

We are committed to delivering substantial community benefits in line with Santa Cruz's general plan and our company's values as a 100% locally owned business. This includes creating local jobs with living wages and benefits, fostering community education on cannabis,

supporting local organizations working towards a more just and equitable future for our residents, and ensuring our operations are environmentally sustainable.

A cornerstone of our project is our partnership with WAMM Phytotherapies, an organization with a storied history as the nation's oldest medical cannabis collective. This collaboration is at the heart of our mission, aiming to broaden their compassion program, which provides free or subsidized medical cannabis to low-income patients facing severe medical conditions. Founded by Valerie Corral, a trailblazer in the medical cannabis movement, WAMM Phytotherapies (formerly known as the Wo/Men's Alliance for Medical Marijuana) is distinguished by its commitment to compassionate care and community support. The organization is dedicated to offering therapeutic-quality, regeneratively-grown cannabis products that are both accessible and affordable, reflecting a deep-rooted commitment to health, wellness, and holistic care for individuals with serious illnesses.

Through our partnership, we support WAMM's compassion program, which currently benefits over 70 members by offering weekly donations of medical cannabis products at our Treehouse dispensary in Soquel. These efforts are bolstered by contributions from local cannabis companies, including Caring Kind, Coastal Sun, and Highway One Distribution. Our collaborative goal is to extend WAMM's compassion program's reach, providing up to an additional 70 members at our Santa Cruz location with weekly access to free medical cannabis.

This initiative not only continues WAMM's legacy of compassionate care but also strengthens community ties and supports individuals facing significant health challenges. Moreover, the expansion of an additional storefront in Santa Cruz will enable us to further our ambition of extending WAMM's compassion program to South County. By year's end, we aim to service an additional 70 members at our Watsonville location, underscoring our commitment to making a meaningful impact on the well-being of our community through sustainable, compassionate care.

Public Outreach Efforts

Understanding the importance of community engagement, we have undertaken extensive outreach efforts to address concerns, particularly those of members of the city school district and concerned parents. Recognizing the proximity of our proposed location to local schools, we proactively met with city school officials. We reached out to the Parent Teacher Associations of both Mission Hill Middle School and Santa Cruz High School. Our aim was to open a dialogue and offer comprehensive information about our project and how we plan to operate responsibly within the community.

As a direct result of our conversations with school officials, we launched (www.safecannabis.net). This website is designed to provide educational material on responsible cannabis consumption for adults and offers guidance for parents on discussing substance use with youth. The focus is on education, harm reduction, and securing substances away from children and pets, addressing key community concerns head-on.

To further disseminate information about our proposed dispensary and its location, we have created an extensive FAQ page accessible on our website and via large QR code signs placed prominently on our monument sign at 1129 Mission Street. This initiative ensures that community members have easy access to vital information about our project. As of February 28, 2024, our Project Site and FAQ page have received 2,079 visits, indicating significant community interest and engagement.

Additionally, we have utilized Nextdoor to post extensive information and links to resources related to the project and location. This post has received over 10,600 views as of February 28, 2024, demonstrating the effectiveness of our outreach and the community's receptiveness to our efforts.

These outreach initiatives underscore our commitment to transparency, safety, and community well-being. We are dedicated to maintaining an open line of communication with the community and city officials to ensure that our dispensary meets and exceeds the expectations for responsible cannabis retail in Santa Cruz.

Conclusion

In partnership with WAMM, we aim to set a new standard for medical cannabis accessibility and patient support in Santa Cruz. Our efforts have been focused on transparency, safety, and the well-being of our community, which we believe aligns with the city's objectives for responsible cannabis retail.

We appreciate the Planning Commission's consideration of our application and are prepared to provide any further information required. Our team is committed to constructive dialogue with the community and city officials to ensure our dispensary enhances Santa Cruz's vibrant and health-conscious community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Bryce Berryessa
Principal, The Hook

Attachments:
Independent Land Use Report
Infographic - Community Support