

Public Policy Memo

To: Pasco City Council
From: Nicholas Gutierrez (Aspiring MPA Student)
Date: June 7, 2024
Subject: Retail Cannabis Sales Ordinance in Pasco, WA

Summary:

This memo evaluates the recent ordinance allowing retail cannabis sales in Pasco, WA, its immediate effects, and potential influence on neighboring cities. Two dispensaries have already opened in Pasco, prompting Richland and Kennewick to reconsider their bans on cannabis retail. The ordinance includes measures to balance community interests and maintain regulatory oversight.

Introduction:

On June 5, 2023, the Pasco City Council passed an ordinance permitting retail cannabis sales within designated zoning districts. This decision marks a significant policy shift, aimed at balancing economic benefits with community safety and regulatory compliance. This ban has been in the works of getting the right votes to be able to sale cannabis since it was legalized in Pasco eleven years ago.

Analysis:

1. Current Developments:

- **Dispensaries Opening:** Two cannabis dispensaries have already opened in Pasco, reflecting immediate economic activity and consumer demand. (Lucky Leaf & Green2Go)
- **Regional Influence:** The successful implementation in Pasco is influencing Richland and Kennewick to reconsider their bans on retail cannabis sales.

2. Policy Details:

- **Retail Limits:** The ordinance allows up to three retail cannabis stores, with a potential fourth for social equity licensees.
- **Zoning and Buffers:** Specific zoning districts have been designated, with buffer requirements to distance stores from sensitive areas such as schools and parks.
- **Prohibited Activities:** Cannabis production and processing facilities remain banned to mitigate potential negative impacts on the community.

3. Economic and Social Impacts:

- **Economic Growth:** The new dispensaries are expected to contribute to local economic growth through job creation and tax revenue.
- **Community Concerns:** The council's decision reflects an effort to address community concerns through regulatory measures and ongoing public feedback. The community has

previously expressed their concern with a potential raise in DUI chargers. Public feedback has been proven to the city of Pasco to be just as important for this change as any other.

Recommendations:

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Establish a committee to monitor the impact of the new dispensaries on local crime rates, public health, and economic indicators. With this change it should be noted that positive interviews will be taken into account as well as the negative.
- Community Engagement: Continue to engage with community members and stakeholders to address concerns and gather feedback on the implementation of the policy.
- Regional Coordination: Collaborate with Richland and Kennewick to share insights and develop a cohesive regional approach to cannabis regulation.

Conclusion:

The ordinance permitting retail cannabis sales in Pasco represents a strategic move to harness economic benefits while addressing community concerns through careful regulation. The opening of two dispensaries has already spurred economic activity and may influence neighboring cities to adopt similar policies. Continuous monitoring and community engagement will be crucial in ensuring the policy's success and addressing any emerging issues.

For further details, please refer to the full website of Pasco City Council
Pasco, WA - official website: Official website. Pasco, WA - Official Website | Official Website.
(n.d.). <https://www.pasco-wa.gov/>