



**City of Westfield
Cannabis-Related Businesses Social Equity Plan
September 2025**

Introduction

The purpose of this Cannabis Social Equity Plan is to satisfy the requirements set forth by 935 CMR 500.181(3)(b)(2) as promulgated by the Cannabis Control Commission and governed by MGL Chapter 94G Sections 3 and 4.

This regulation establishes minimum acceptable standards for Massachusetts municipalities to promote and encourage full participation in the regulated Marijuana industry by people from communities that were disproportionately harmed by Marijuana prohibition and enforcement

Historic Context

On November 8, 2016, Massachusetts voters approved an initiative petition known as "*The Regulation and Taxation of Marijuana Act*", which was codified as Chapter 334 of the Acts of 2016 ("Chapter 334"). Chapter 334 reduced state criminal penalties and instituted civil penalties for the possession and recreational use of marijuana by persons over 21 years of age. It also created a way for the Commonwealth to control the production and distribution of marijuana through licensing, regulations, and taxation of Marijuana Establishments. Chapter 55 of the Acts of 2017 ("Act") was enacted by the State Legislature as an amendment to Chapter 334. The Act encompassed significant amendments to Chapter 334 including a six-month delay in state licensing with a new start date of July 1, 2018.

The Act allows Marijuana Establishments to cultivate, manufacture, and process marijuana, and to sell marijuana to persons over 21 years of age. An applicant requesting certification as a Marijuana Establishment must meet the requirements set forth in 935 CMR 500.00, the regulations promulgated by the Cannabis Control Commission ("Commission"), to be considered for a final license as a Marijuana Establishment.

The Act also calls for local control by allowing municipalities to create licensing requirements and to make reasonable regulations that control the time, place and manner of Marijuana Establishments (G.L. c.94G, §3).

In November 2022, "An Act Relative to Equity in the Cannabis Industry" (Chapter 180 of the Acts of 2022) further amended Chapter 94G of Massachusetts General Laws, clarifying municipalities' responsibility to "encourage and enable full participation in the marijuana industry of people from communities that have been disproportionately harmed by marijuana prohibition and enforcement and to positively impact those communities.

On July 5, 2018, the City of Westfield adopted Ordinance No. 1687, "AN ORDINANCE AMENDING THE CODE OF ORDINANCES, CITY OF WESTFIELD, ADOPTED JUNE 17, 1993," replacing Article VII (Controlled Substances and Medical Marijuana) of Chapter 8, Health & Environmental Regulations, with a new ARTICLE VII. – MARIJUANA. Operation of such a marijuana establishment is subject to said ordinance, as well as the City's marijuana zoning overlay, and regulations promulgated by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission as 935 CMR 500.000.

Further information can be found at the City's web site at:

- A. <https://westfieldma.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=80699edcf56a4893ba68b59126aa99bb>
- B. <https://www.cityofwestfield.org/DocumentCenter/View/864/Article-3---Section-3-130---Industrial-A-Districts?bidId=>
- C. <https://www.cityofwestfield.org/DocumentCenter/View/873/Section-4-90---Medical-Marijuana-Uses?bidId=>
- D. <https://www.cityofwestfield.org/DocumentCenter/View/7688/Gen-Ordinance-1687---Marijuana?bidId=>

Definitions

A **social equity business** is a marijuana establishment with not less than 51 percent majority ownership of individuals who are eligible for the social equity program under MGL c. 94G, §22 whose ownership qualifies it as an economic empowerment priority applicant as defined by the commission's regulations promulgated pursuant to MGL c. 94G §4.

Cannabis Advisory Team ("CAT"): The City of Westfield hereby forms an Advisory Group to the Mayor to review Host Community Agreement applications from cannabis-related business entities to make recommendations to the Mayor for review of the same. The CAT is comprised of the Community Development Director, the Building Commissioner, the Director of Public Health, the Chief of Police, the Fire Chief, and the City Solicitor, or their respective designees.

Policy Statement

- A. The Cannabis Advisory Team for the City will provide priority licensing review to Social Equity business applicants who demonstrate they meet at least one of the following criteria:
 1. Income that does not exceed 400% of Area Median Income and Residency in an Area of Disproportionate Impact, as defined by the Cannabis Control Commission, for at least 5 of the past 10 years;
 2. Residency in Massachusetts for at least the past 12 months and a conviction or continuance without a finding for an offense under MGL c. 94C or an equivalent conviction in Other Jurisdictions;
 3. Residency in Massachusetts for at least the past 12 months and proof that the applicant was either married to or the child of an individual

convicted or continuance without a finding for a MGL c.94C offense or an equivalent conviction in Other Jurisdictions;

4. Any individual listed as an owner on the original certification of an Economic Empowerment Priority Applicant who satisfies one or more the following criteria:
 - a. Lived for 5 of the preceding 10 years in an Area of Disproportionate Impact, as determined by the Commission;
 - b. Experience in one or more previous positions where the primary population served were disproportionately impacted, or where primary responsibilities included economic education, resource provision or empowerment to disproportionately impacted individuals or communities;
 - c. Black, African American, Hispanic or Latino descent; or
 - d. Other significant articulable demonstration of past experience in or business practices that promote economic empowerment in Areas of Disproportionate Impact.

B. If an applicant meets one of the above criteria, they must provide documentation as proof of the qualification or the application will be reopened or denied. Proof for qualifications can include the following:

1. Massachusetts driver's record or Massachusetts ID card record
2. A signed lease agreement that includes the subject's name
3. Residential property deed that includes the subject's name
4. School records
5. Housing authority records
6. Banking records
7. Utility bills, which identifies energy and water use
8. Dated notices or correspondence from a local or state government entity that includes the subject's name
9. List of all qualifying drug related offenses including type of offense, jurisdiction of offense, law enforcement authority, date of offense, court disposition, relationship to offender (if other than self), contact to verify offense, contact phone and email
10. Other appropriate evidence

C. The Cannabis Advisory Team for the City will provide priority licensing review to Certified Economic Empowerment applicants who demonstrate at least 3 of the following 6 criteria, one of which must be from listed items 1 - 3:

1. Majority of ownership belongs to people who have lived in Areas of Disproportionate
2. Impact for 5 of the last 10 years. Majority of ownership has held one or more previous positions where the primary population served were disproportionately impacted, or where primary responsibilities included economic education, resource provision or empowerment to disproportionately impacted individuals or communities.
3. At least 51% of current employees/subcontractors reside in Areas of Disproportionate Impact and will increase to 75% by first day of business.

4. At least 51% of employees or subcontractors have drug-related CORI, but are otherwise legally employable in a cannabis-related enterprise.
5. A majority of the ownership is made up of individuals from Black, African American, Hispanic, or Latino descent.
6. Owners can demonstrate significant past experience in or business practices that promote economic empowerment in Areas of Disproportionate Impact.

D. Recommendation for HCA

Although an applicant may be granted priority review, the applicant is in no way entitled to a marijuana license from the City, and priority review is not a promise or guarantee the City will enter into a Host Community Agreement with said applicant. After the CAT has completed its review and the applicant has conducted its Community Outreach Meeting, the CAT will make a recommendation to the Mayor and shall notify the applicant of its recommendation. The City is not obligated to enter into an HCA with any applicant, or to do so within set time period. No HCA shall be entered without the express authorization from the Mayor.

For additional information on Cannabis-Related businesses in Westfield, please refer to www.cityofwestfield.org/963/13873/Cannabis-Related-Business-Licensure.