

Sonoma County first started regulating the cannabis industry with the original dispensary ordinance (Ord. No. 5715) adopted March 20, 2007; and amended on February 7, 2012, to impose a cap of nine dispensaries in the unincorporated County (Ord. No. 5967).

On [December 20, 2016](#), the first comprehensive Cannabis Land Use Ordinance (Ord. No. 6189) was adopted under a Negative Declaration, amending Chapter 26 of the Zoning Code to include new definitions and establish special use regulations to allow commercial (and personal) medical cannabis cultivation, and commercial supply chain land uses in various zoning districts.

On [April 10, 2018](#), the Board conducted a Cannabis Ordinance Study Session and adopted a Resolution of Intent to update the existing Cannabis Ordinance. The update effort was split into two phases. Phase 1 had a limited scope focused on bringing forward amendments that could be developed quickly and brought back to the Board in the next 150 days, including options to increase neighborhood compatibility and to allow adult use by removing the word “medical” from the existing ordinance. Phase II had a larger scope requiring additional analysis, including alignment with state regulations (i.e. adding new license types, updating definitions and reviewing cultivation criteria), and adjustments to ordinances to enhance compatibility and other implementation efforts that would require robust outreach and staff analysis.

On [October 16, 2018](#), consistent with the first phase (from April 10, 2018 meeting), the Board of Supervisors adopted Ordinance number 6245, amending Chapter 26 to allow adult use cannabis in Sonoma County in addition to medical use, enhance neighborhood compatibility with a 10-acre minimum parcel size for cultivation, add new definitions, and make minor non-substantive amendments to harmonize with California state law and regulations, where appropriate.

On [December 11, 2018](#), the Board adopted a resolution providing a formal interpretation that “public parks” related to required sensitive use setbacks in the Cannabis Land Use Ordinance would include all existing Federal Recreation Areas, State Parks, Regional Parks, Community Parks, Neighborhood Parks, and Class I Bikeways as designated in the Sonoma County General Plan 2020.

On [December 17, 2019](#), consistent with the second phase (from April 10, 2018 meeting), the Board approved direction for staff to implement certain changes related to the cannabis program and its management. The primary direction was to amend the Cannabis Land Use Ordinance to expand opportunities for ministerial cannabis cultivation permits to be administered through the Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures.

On [May 18, 2021](#), the Board voted 5-0 to reject the Planning Commission’s recommendation to adopt a Mitigated Negative Declaration and a new chapter 38 to increase ministerial permitting for cannabis cultivation within Agricultural and Resource zoned parcels. The Board, instead, directed staff to bring forth a timeline and resources plan necessary to undertake a comprehensive update of the cannabis program, including an update to the County Code and preparation of an Environmental Impact Report, as expeditiously as possible. Additionally, the Board wanted staff to expedite resolution of permits that have been in process since program adoption. See Temporary Permitting Capacity Increase section at the end of this report for the latest status update.

On [June 8, 2021](#), the Board approved an initial request for resources to launch the first phase of a Comprehensive Cannabis Program Update, consisting of community engagement to inform the Board's Policy Goals, and gave additional direction on an overall project timeline.

On [September 21, 2021](#), the Board adopted an Ordinance No. 6354 to establish a temporary (45-day) moratorium on multi-tenant cannabis cultivation permits.

On [September 28, 2021](#), the Board received a report summarizing results of community engagement conducted in August and early September, 2021, and provided direction to staff on overall goals and policy options for updating the Cannabis Ordinance and associated EIR. The Board was also presented a tentative timeline, which included completion of a draft ordinance framework outlining all potential program elements to consider in the EIR for the new program. Today's discussion includes a request that the Board adopt a Resolution of Intention and Cannabis Program Update Framework to direct and guide staff in its preparation of a draft ordinance, potential General Plan Amendments, and a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report to amend the Cannabis Land Use Ordinance and related regulations

On [October 26, 2021](#), the Board adopted Ordinance No. 6356 to extend Ordinance No. 6354 and amend the cannabis ordinance to prohibit large-scale multi-tenant cannabis cultivation permits, such that multiple zoning permits may only be issued on a single parcel if the aggregate cultivation area does not require a use permit. The ordinance will remain in effect for a period of 22 months and 15 days from the date of adoption, unless earlier repealed by the Board.

On [March 1, 2022](#), the Board approved three time-limited positions, effective March 1, 2022, and terminating June 30, 2024, including two full time planners and one full time clerical support staff. The proposed time-limited positions are dedicated to the cannabis program, with primary focus on processing the remaining Penalty Relief Program land use permit applications within the next 2.5 years. These positions were filled in May 2022.

On [March 15, 2022](#), The Board of Supervisors adopted a Resolution of Intention ([Resolution 22-0088](#)) and Cannabis Program Update Framework, to direct and guide staff in its preparation of a draft ordinance, potential General Plan Amendments, and a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report to amend the Cannabis Land Use Ordinance and related regulations.

On [October 4, 2022](#), The Board of Supervisors authorized the Director of Permit Sonoma to execute an agreement with Ascent Environmental, Inc., for the preparation of a Programmatic Environmental Impact Report and an Economic Analysis in support of the Comprehensive Cannabis Program Update in an amount not to exceed \$623,238.

On [June 6, 2023](#), the Board adopted Ordinance No. 6436 to permanently amend the cannabis ordinance such that multiple zoning permits may only be issued on a single parcel if the aggregate cultivation area does not require a use permit.

On [April 15, 2025](#), the Board of Supervisors received an informational update on the progress of the Cannabis Program Update.