



# COUNTY OF SANTA CRUZ

701 OCEAN STREET, SANTA CRUZ, CA 95060-4073

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CARLOS J. PALACIOS, COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

## PRESS RELEASE

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### BOARD APPROVES CANNABIS ORDINANCES

The Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday approved a set of cannabis cultivation and manufacturing ordinances creating a regulated local cannabis industry that protects neighborhoods and the environment while enhancing public services.

Tuesday's unanimous vote is the culmination of several years of local planning and public input, a period which included the creation of the Cannabis Cultivation Choices Committee, California voters' approval of the Adult Use of Marijuana Act and a lengthy environmental review process.

The ordinances establish rules for the cultivation and manufacturing of cannabis that protect public safety and include strict land use requirements, subjecting growers for the first time to licensing requirements and conformance with relevant state and local laws, including environmental, building, pesticide and other regulations.

The ordinances allow for indoor cultivation operations in commercial areas, as well as outdoor grows on large agricultural and rural lots, provided an applicant meets certain criteria. Dangerous practices such as neighborhood "whole-house" grows are prohibited, while practices such as solvent-based extraction methods are strictly regulated.

Individual applications will receive site-specific environmental review, be required to comply with CEQA and must include any appropriate mitigation measures identified through the EIR process.

To protect small growers, the Board added a "Cottage Garden" licenses category for operators in continuous cultivation since before January 2013. Cottage Garden licenses are available for parcels of at least 2.5 acres and allow a canopy of up to 500 feet on A, RA, TP and SU zoned parcels.



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The Board also approved fencing requirements to reduce visual impacts and adopted increased setbacks from neighboring structures to minimize, visual, noise, odor and other impacts.

The Board took a number of steps to protect neighborhoods and encourage responsible operations, including adoption of a Best Management and Operational Practices guide and an Enforcement Plan. It also allowed for increased review, including public hearing, prior to approval of outdoor cultivation projects. Complaints may also be made to the cannabis licensing office, and the Board will receive quarterly reports on cannabis licensing operations. The Board also voted to protect existing timberlands from being converted to cannabis farms.

To assist with licensing and enforcement activities, the Board had previously adopted cannabis taxes of five percent for cultivators and manufacturers through 2019, rising to seven percent by 2022. Forms related to cannabis business taxes are available online at the Santa Cruz County Treasurer-Tax Collector's website, available at [www.santacruzcounty.us](http://www.santacruzcounty.us).

As part of the enforcement plan adopted Tuesday, the County's existing Cannabis Enforcement Team will be expanded, focusing on unlicensed activities in the unincorporated areas and existing businesses that have exceeded their licensing authority. Enforcement will include an anonymous code complaint mechanism and the public disclosure of data regarding the type and number of complaints received, as well as the location of open cannabis code enforcement cases.

All cannabis licenses will be subject to annual renewal and site inspections. Periodic unannounced inspections may also be performed.

Additional information can be found online at <http://www.co.santa-cruz.ca.us/CannabisLicensingOffice.aspx>, or in-person at the Santa Cruz County Cannabis Licensing Office, 701 Ocean St., 5th Floor, Santa Cruz.