



neccog

MEMO

To: Jeff Gordon, M.D., Chairman, Planning & Zoning Commission

cc: Tyche Planning & Policy Group, Woodstock ZEO

From: Delia P. Fey, AICP Senior Regional Planner, NECCOG *DPF*

Date: June 14, 2023

Re: Review of proposed zoning changes pertaining to cannabis establishments

The following is a review of the proposed ideas for regulating cannabis establishments that have been discussed at recent PZC meetings.

The following calculations are based on our GIS records that the town has 71,212 acres in total.

Option for 1. 1,500 foot buffer from historic and otherwise identified sensitive land uses

Category	# properties	Total Acreage for these properties
Historic Properties	368	5,131.34 acres or 7.21% of town
Sensitive Properties <ul style="list-style-type: none">• These properties include:• Schools (6)• House of Worship (7)• Library (4)• Public Playground (3)• Town Parks & recreation facilities (11)• Daycare centers/ preschools (2)• Municipal Building (2)• Board of Education facility open to the public	32	368.34 acres or 0.52% of town
Total	400 properties	5,499.68 acres or 7.73% of town
Area of the 1,500 ft buffer around the identified address points which correlates to the building, where applicable. The full 1,500 ft buffer may actually exceed if it were to be adjusted to include the entire identified properties.	22,257 acres	Together the combined historic and sensitive use properties PLUS the 1,500 ft buffer = 22,257 acres or 31.25% of the town would be considered ineligible under the required buffer proposal.

Staff comments & review on proposed zoning approach to regulating cannabis establishments:

A. Since the Woodstock PZC has not opted out of allowing cannabis establishments, they have to be allowed *somewhere*, however several complications exist under the current proposals as follows:

B. Option 1. 1,500 ft buffer

One of the current proposals is to require a 1,500 ft buffer from 368 historic properties as well as 32 identified sensitive use properties as listed above. *With the buffer, the area of ineligibility would be at minimum 22,257 acres or 31.25% of the town.*

Note: The actual number would of ineligible acres would be *higher* if the:

1. The buffer was to be set to the property boundary as opposed to the address point of structures on the identified properties, as was done for the purposes of this initial review.
2. If the acreage of all roads, formally protected open space parcels and approximate area of environmentally sensitive lands such as wetlands and/or watercourses, were also deducted for practical purposes due to the inability or difficulty in permitting development in these areas.

While the required 1,500 ft buffer approach may serve to protect these identified properties from any potential or perceived impacts from cannabis establishments, they shift this type of new development from the areas of town where development has historically been located, hence the reason for their being identified as historic. This effort to protect or buffer would then actually serve to shift this type of new development, with the associated impacts of all kinds to relatively undeveloped areas of town and/or to some of the lower volume back roads.

C. Planning Proposal:

It would be beneficial for PZC to determine the bigger picture, beyond cannabis establishments, for where new economic development, otherwise referred to in Woodstock as ‘non-residential development,’ should go.

D. Option 2. Restrict either cannabis establishments and/or non-residential development to higher volume collector roads.

Questions for consideration:

1. Do you want to keep the new non-residential development where paved roads exist now?
 2. Do you want to encourage or require new non-residential development on state roads or collector roads as they are designed to handle higher volumes of traffic?
- One of the benefits of this approach could be to contain the development and the associated impacts, including traffic, to the areas of town that already see comparative higher volume traffic than the most remote areas of town.

E. Option 3. Create a new zone in South Woodstock

Do you want to create a new zone where non-residential development, was encouraged to go?

1. If this approach were to be considered, I’d recommend a mixed-use zone so as to minimize the creation of non-conforming uses that could create unintended problems that would not enhance the property values or economic opportunities within the area.
2. South Woodstock already has a mix of residential and non-residential uses so it may not present a big change but rather create a different method for regulating new development within this part of town.
2. One benefit of this approach would be the positive effect that businesses often experience when locating near other businesses.
3. It would be considered ‘smart growth’ to contain new development to the developed parts of town, preferably previously developed properties including grey and brownfields, thereby

discouraging sprawl from encroaching into fresh, raw land that may still be agriculture, woodlands, wildlife habitat, etc., and leave those natural functioning lands to serve those beneficial purposes for the community and local economy.

I have attached several maps:

1. Identified *Historical Properties* as well as the *Sensitive Use Properties* and the 1,500 ft buffer extending from the address points as well as *combining* all of that onto another map to see how much of the town would become ineligible in the 1,500 ft buffer option.
2. The *Woodstock Land Use* map shows the existing varied uses in South Woodstock. This can be reviewed for the purposes of considering a boundary should PZC wish to pursue a new mixed-use zone.

As time allows, I will continue to review and comment on these approaches to regulating business as well as cannabis establishments, specifically.