

Study shows zoning regulations impact where marijuana dispensaries can locate

Government regulations could lead to more dispensaries in low income, high minority areas.

Municipal zoning regulations may push marijuana dispensaries into low income, minority areas, according to a study just released by the [University of Colorado Denver](#).

Published in the [Journal of the American Planning Association](#), the leading professional and academic planning resource, the study shows that government regulations will likely cause an inequitable distribution of marijuana business throughout the city. Though the impact of dispensaries to the neighborhoods in which they are located has yet to be understood, the research is clear that the majority of allowable land for marijuana business is in the city's poorest and most ethnically and racially diverse areas.

Witnessing the marijuana industry boom in Colorado, Jeremy Németh, Associate Professor and Chair of the [Department of Planning and Design](#) at the [College of Architecture and Planning](#), and former graduate student Eric Ross conducted research to determine if government zoning regulations lead to inequality in the areas of the city where marijuana dispensaries are allowed to locate.

"Though technically medical marijuana dispensaries provide a healthcare service, they have historically been required to adopt the same zoning restrictions as businesses that sell alcohol, pornography, and firearms," said Németh. "Generally, stores that sell these types of 'vices' are prohibited from locating in residential or mixed-use neighborhoods and are pushed into much less affluent neighborhoods."

Németh says that even though the impacts of dispensaries on crime, property values, or quality of life are still unclear, residents are quickly crying "NIMBY" (Not In My Back Yard) when confronted with the prospect of these facilities being located in their neighborhoods.

Németh and Ross's results show that the most vulnerable neighborhoods are those where income, education, and employment levels are lower than the city-wide average. In these socioeconomic disadvantaged areas of the city, 46 percent of the land was available for marijuana dispensaries, compared to 29 percent in wealthier areas.

"As medical marijuana has become legal in 23 states and DC, municipalities must determine where these businesses will be allowed to operate," said Németh. "I encourage my students, and city planners, to think about the impacts zoning regulations have on the entire community, not just adopt regulations that have been in place for other vices."

To read the full article, click [here](#).

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Marisa Starr, Journals Marketing Manager, Routledge Journals, Taylor & Francis Group
530 Walnut Street, Philadelphia, PA 19106 · 215-606-4206 · marisa.starr@taylorandfrancis.com

