



Royal Oak residents worry cannabis shops will lower property values, but studies show they could get higher

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On Thursday, Royal Oak's City Commission resumed the grueling task of reviewing the more than 100 voicemail messages it received regarding licensing and zoning proposals to allow recreational marijuana businesses along the Woodward Avenue corridor.

The public comment period **started during Monday's commission meeting**, but had to be adjourned due to the high volume of calls. The vast majority of the messages were in opposition to the proposal, though some expressed approval of the proposal in a new batch of comments that came in on Thursday, saying it would bring stable businesses and tax dollars to the community, and accused a local church of leading a campaign of fear-mongering among residents.

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Many of the opposition's comments had the same talking points: They falsely accused the City Commission of secretly ramming the plans through without public input, though the plans have been discussed in many public meetings throughout the past year. Many referenced an alleged planned two-story "mega marijuana store" on the site of the Golden Basket Restaurant, but Mayor Michael Fournier said no such proposal was being considered or had even been submitted.

Those opposed to the marijuana businesses worried the stores were too close to residential areas, would draw too much traffic, encourage loitering, and bring the aroma of marijuana wafting into people's backyards. Others said they think the stores should be located in light industrial zones or downtown, near the police station. Many requested the commission postpone the vote until after the coronavirus pandemic ends, so a safe public forum could be held and people could ask questions.

Some even threatened to move if the proposal goes through, saying they were worried that their property values would drop.

However, a number of studies suggest recreational marijuana businesses could actually raise property values.

A **2018 study** from the University of Mississippi found that simply legalizing recreational marijuana in Colorado increased housing values by about 6%. Those findings were echoed in a study by the **St. Louis-based Clever Real Estate**, which found cities that allow recreational marijuana dispensaries saw home values increase \$22,888 more than cities where marijuana is illegal from 2014 to 2019, even when controlling for population and initial home values.

A study by the **Cato Institute** reached a similar conclusion, finding homes close to retail dispensaries (within 0.1 miles) increased in value approximately 8.4% compared to those further away.

As some of the residents who approved the proposal said, there are plenty of bars and liquor stores on that stretch of Woodward. Anyway, any loitering (and aromas) that marijuana businesses would bring to Royal Oak would be **no match for the Dream Cruise**.

*It's a new era for marijuana in Michigan. **Sign up** for our weekly weed newsletter, delivered every Tuesday at 4:20 p.m.*