

**From:** [Nabila Sher-Oliver](#)  
**To:** [Planning Commission Meetings](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Agenda item PC 24-34  
**Date:** Monday, January 27, 2025 10:54:56 AM

---

Dear Planning Commission,

On behalf of the Alcohol, Marijuana, and Prescription Drug Coalition (AMPD), I would like to express our deep concern regarding the potential proximity of future cannabis-related businesses to areas frequented by youth and families. While we recognize the economic and regulatory goals behind these zoning amendments, it is vital that the health and well-being of our community—particularly our young people—remain the top priority.

AMPD strongly urges the City of San Pablo to include strict provisions in the proposed ordinance that ensure all cannabis-related businesses are located at least 1,000 feet away from schools, residential neighborhoods, places of worship, and any locations where youth gather, such as parks, libraries, and recreational facilities.

Our youth already face immense challenges navigating environments saturated with messaging and access to substances that can harm their development. Introducing cannabis businesses in close proximity to their schools, homes, and gathering spaces only increases their exposure to these substances, normalizes their presence, and creates additional risks for use and misuse.

Research has consistently shown that environmental factors, including the visibility and accessibility of cannabis-related businesses, influence youth attitudes toward cannabis use. Normalizing cannabis through its physical presence near schools and other youth-centric spaces sends the wrong message. It undermines the work of prevention coalitions like AMPD, which strive to educate and protect our youth from the long-term impacts of substance use.

We respectfully ask the City Council to prioritize the protection of our young people by implementing and enforcing a robust buffer zone policy that will safeguard their environment. By doing so, the City of San Pablo will demonstrate a firm commitment to creating a safe, healthy, and youth-centered community for generations to come.

Thank you for considering this critical issue as part of your decision-making process. AMPD is available to provide additional data, resources, and support to ensure our shared goal of a healthier San Pablo is realized.

Sincerely,  
Nabila Sher-Olover  
Alcohol, Marijuana, and Prescription Drug Coalition (AMPD)

Nabila Sher-Oliver  
Alcohol and Other Drug Policy Coordinator  
Alcohol, Marijuana, and Prescription Drug (AMPD) Coalition Coordinator  
Bay Area Community Resources  
11175 San Pablo Ave  
El Cerrito, CA 94530  
510-559-3004

[Nsher@bacr.org](mailto:Nsher@bacr.org)



1220 Morello Ave | Suite 101 | Phone: (925) 335-3340 | Fax: (925) 335-3311  
cchealth.org

January 28, 2025

City of San Pablo Planning Commission  
1000 Gateway Avenue  
San Pablo, CA 94806

Dear San Pablo Planning Department,

My name is Jorge Flores. I am from Contra Costa Health and serve as the Cannabis Prevention Program Manager. I am writing regarding the Planning Commission Resolution PC24-34.

Safeguarding youth from the sale of Cannabis in The City of San Pablo is a significant step forward in deterring youth from cannabis use. Use of substances at a young age, when the brain is still developing, can lead to a lifetime of addiction. When youth protections are set in the ordinance, there will be fewer young people who have access to these harmful substances because they are not being exposed to them.

Implementing and maintaining robust youth protections as part of the city's cannabis retail policy development ensures that cannabis businesses operate responsibly and without undue influence on youth, which is critical to safeguarding the health, safety, and well-being of the community.

Best practices in protecting youth from Cannabis use are as follows:

**1. Restrict Advertising and Billboards**

To minimize exposure to cannabis-related advertising, it is recommended that the city prohibit or strictly limit cannabis-related billboards and other outdoor advertising. Research shows that such advertising can normalize and glamorize cannabis use among young people, increasing the risk of early use.

Sarvet AL, Wall MM, Fink DS, et al. Medical marijuana laws and adolescent marijuana use in the United States: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *Addiction*. 2018; **113**: 1003-1016.

Smart R, Pacula RL. Early evidence of the impact of cannabis legalization on cannabis use, cannabis use disorder, and the use of other substances: findings from state policy evaluations. *Am J Drug Alcohol Abuse*. 2019; **45**: 644-663.



**2. Maintain Appropriate Distance from Youth-Sensitive Areas**

It is vital to enforce strict buffer zones between cannabis retail dispensaries and youth-sensitive areas such as schools, parks, daycare centers, and recreational facilities. This ensures that these establishments do not become easily accessible or visible to minors.

**3. Density and Oversaturation Controls**

Another critical step is to limit the number of dispensaries within close proximity to one another. Oversaturation can lead to normalized exposure and increased visibility of cannabis businesses, particularly in areas frequented by youth.

By incorporating these protective measures, the City of San Pablo can create a balanced approach to cannabis regulation that supports adult access while shielding young residents from undue influence.

Contra Costa Health Cannabis Prevention Program is readily available to provide technical assistance and resources to city staff.

Sincerely,  
Jorge Flores  
Cannabis Prevention Program Manager  
Contra Costa Health



January 28, 2025

City of San Pablo Planning Commission  
1000 Gateway Avenue  
San Pablo, CA 94806

Subject: Public Comment Agenda Item No. PC24-34

Dear San Pablo Planning Commission:

My name is Eyana Rodgers, and I am a Senior Health Educator with Contra Costa Health's Tobacco and Cannabis Prevention Programs. I am writing regarding the Planning Commission Resolution PC24-34.

Young people are vulnerable to the risks associated with cannabis use, and it is crucial that we take proactive steps to protect them from the harmful effects of cannabis use. It is imperative to prioritize their health and safety through stronger local policies and increased education on the topic. The work being done by The City of San Pablo to amend the zoning code and land use standards is a necessary step towards implementing vital protections for our youth and young adult population. I'd like to share a few additional recommendations to contribute to this discussion.

- ***Limit high-potency THC products***  
Research has shown that cannabis use among adolescents, particularly products with high THC levels, is linked to mental health impairments, dependency, and an increased likelihood of using other controlled substances.<sup>1</sup> It is vital to imbed protections (especially for youth) as they may be unaware of harms and risks associated with high-potency cannabis products.
- ***Increase restrictions on advertising and billboards***  
Increasing restrictions to cannabis-related billboards and outdoor advertising can be useful in minimizing and de-normalizing adolescent exposure to cannabis. While youth cannabis use is not solely dependent on advertising, research indicates that frequent exposure to cannabis marketing is associated with more regular use of cannabis among youth who already use it.<sup>2</sup>
- ***Prohibit flavored cannabis products***  
Flavored cannabis is known to target younger audiences and lower the perception of risk by making products more appealing and fun. Restriction is necessary to aid implementing protections for adolescents.

Contra Costa Health's Tobacco & Cannabis Prevention Programs are readily available to aid city staff, share resources and findings, and provide customizable resources on cannabis law. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,  
**Eyana Rodgers**  
*Senior Health Education Specialist*  
Tobacco Prevention Program

<sup>1</sup> Hines LA, Freeman TP, Gage SH, Zammit S, Hickman M, Cannon M, Munafo M, MacLeod J, Heron J. Association of High-Potency Cannabis Use With Mental Health and Substance Use in Adolescence. *JAMA Psychiatry*. 2020 Oct 1;77(10):1044-105  
<sup>2</sup> Firth CL, Carlini B, Dilley J, Guttmanova K, Hajat A. Retail cannabis environment and adolescent use: The role of advertising and retailers near home and school. *Health Place*. 2022 May;75:102795.