

## History

The summary below covers the history, process, and Nevada County Cannabis Ordinance Amendments as they have been approved by the Board of Supervisors, including provisions related to cannabis activities at dispensaries in North San Juan and Soda Springs. As part of the permitting process, any future cannabis dispensary will require approval by an Evaluation Committee and approval of a “use” permit by the Nevada County Planning Commission following a duly noticed public hearing. After approval by the Planning Commission, there could be an appeal to the Nevada County Board of Supervisors.

### **Amendments to Nevada County Code Section 12.03.300 – Commercial Cannabis**

At the annual Board of Supervisors Workshop in January of 2023, the Board directed staff to consider amendments to the County’s Commercial Cannabis Ordinance to (1) allow for limited Retail Storefront Commercial Cannabis Dispensaries, (2) allow some cannabis license types in Industrial zones, (3) create a Cultivation Exclusion Zone option, (4) allow temporary cannabis events/markets, and (5) require all property taxes to be paid prior to permit issuance.

A draft ordinance was prepared by County staff with guidance from the Cannabis Ad-Hoc Committee, made up of two Supervisors. The draft ordinance was released for public review and comments from July 15, 2024, through August 30, 2024. Public comments were also accepted through public hearing processes of both the Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

During the public review period, staff hosted and attended four advertised public meetings to receive comments and answer questions regarding the proposed changes and the process. These included noticed public meetings in both North San Juan and Soda Springs. Presentations were also made at the noticed public meetings of the South County Municipal Advisory Council (MAC) and the Penn Valley Municipal Advisory Council. Additionally, staff met with members of the Nevada County Cannabis Alliance, Nevada County Contractors Association, Nevada County Economic Resource Council, and the Grass Valley Chamber of Commerce. A total of 33 comment letters/emails were received during the comment period in addition to public testimony given at the public workshops, MAC meetings, the Planning Commission noticed public hearing, and the Board of Supervisors noticed public hearing.

Ordinance No. 2538 was approved by the Board of Supervisors on November 12, 2024. The Ordinance amended Nevada County Code Section 12.03.300 to allow a maximum of two Retail Cannabis Dispensaries within the M1 (Light-Industrial), BP (Business Park), C1 (Neighborhood Commercial), or C2 (Community

Commercial) zones in the North San Juan Rural Center and/or the Soda Springs Rural Center as identified by the General Plan. A maximum of one dispensary is allowed per Rural Center. In addition, the Ordinance amended Nevada County Code to allow for manufacturing, indoor cultivation, distribution, and testing laboratories in the M1 Zoning District and to allow temporary cannabis events in certain commercial/industrial zones and on certain other properties within unincorporated Nevada County. The Ordinance also established the Commercial Cannabis Dispensary Application Evaluation Committee.

**Commercial Cannabis Dispensary Application Evaluation Committee**

Resolution No. 24-594, approved by the Board of Supervisors at its regular meeting on November 12, 2024, adopted a competitive application selection process for up to two commercial cannabis dispensaries in Nevada County. As part of the resolution, the Board approved establishment of a Commercial Cannabis Dispensary Application Evaluation Committee to create a merit-based approach for selecting the most qualified applicants to apply for a Discretionary Use Permit for a Retail Storefront Commercial Cannabis Dispensary. The Evaluation Committee comprises seven members who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors. Each member must be a resident of one of the five Supervisorial Districts with two members being appointed from Districts IV and V and one member each from Districts I-III. The Evaluation Committee members need diverse and unique perspectives and must have a wide range of experience including but not limited to cannabis, hospitality, design, business, local government licensing, social justice, and drug policy reform and must be familiar with Nevada County.

The Evaluation Committee meets on an as needed basis to establish a merit-based approach to selecting the most qualified applicants to apply for a Discretionary Use Permit for a Retail Storefront Commercial Cannabis Dispensary. All meetings are open to the public.

Following appointment of committee members by the Board of Supervisors, County staff began convening publicly noticed meetings of the Evaluation Committee to develop and refine the competitive application and review process.

The Evaluation Committee has been responsible for developing the final selection criteria and the corresponding point weighting procedure for scoring the applications; it forwarded its recommendations to the Board of Supervisors following its meeting on May 21, 2026. The criteria will be reviewed and approved by the Board of Supervisors prior to initiation of the application process.

**Notification History:**

To reach the Soda Springs Community, a public meeting was held on August 8, 2024, at the Soda Springs Mountain Resort main lodge. Notification of the public

meeting was done by a Press Release on July 30, 2024, distributed through Nevada County Media and Social Media platforms and placed on the Nevada County website. In addition, as part of the Press Release, *Sierra Sun*, *Moonshine Ink*, *The Union* (Grass Valley), KTKE, YubaNet, KVMR, and KNCO were notified of the meeting. The meeting was held in an effort to notify and educate the public about what was being included within the proposed amendments to the Nevada County Cannabis Ordinance. Nevada County Community Development staff in attendance at the meeting included Matt Kelley (Director of Code and Cannabis Compliance) and Kimberly Parker (Economic Development Program Manager).

In a continued effort to meet notification requirements and specifically to address Soda Springs, the Planning Commission held a Special Public Hearing on Thursday, October 10, 2024, to make a recommendation to the Board of Supervisors for the Ordinance amendments. This notice was published in both *Sierra Sun* and *The Union* newspapers on September 27, 2024. In addition to notification in the newspapers and on the County's website, notifications were sent to (1) the Donner Summit Association and the Donner Summit Public Utility District, which the Division understands are sources of information for the Donner Summit community; (2) the Placer County Planning Department; and (3) a distribution list maintained by the Planning Department for those individuals who were interested in receiving project notification. The Serene Lakes Property Owners Association is included in the distribution list, but staff subsequently discovered that the SLPOA address is out of date.