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The pot problem

Now that marijuana can be used legally, the next part of the battle will be determining how, where, when and by whom it will be sold

By Nick Fiorillo
the425 Editor

With the passing of Initiative 502, Mountlake Terrace and cities all across Washington could expect a brand new kind of store to open up: a store that sells marijuana.

Tasked with creating the guidelines for how marijuana will be produced, processed and sold, the Washington State Liquor Control Board (WSLCB) is in the beginning phases of drafting the policies for the implementation of I-502.

The WSLCB has outlined a schedule which some are describing as optimistic. This "tentative" schedule says that Dec. 1 of this year "retailer licenses become effective."

Community and Economic Development Director for the City of Mountlake Terrace Shane Hope said, "I think it will take more time."

Hope said she thinks it will end up being "midway of 2014," before marijuana retail stores are up and running.

Under the I-502, retail locations for marijuana sale cannot be located within 1000 feet of any school, park, transit center, playground, recreational center or arcade. This guideline puts extreme limitations on where marijuana can be sold in Mountlake Terrace.

After city officials drafted a map of possible retail marijuana locations, taking into account the 1000 feet separation requirement and the city zoning code, Hope found that, "there's only a few places where it could be allowed."

Hope noted three main possible areas.

The map showed, "a very small area off of 44th [Ave. W], the light industrial office park area in the far northwestern portion of the city, and then a little bit in the south portion of the city."

"Of course, we don't know whether there may be some other regulations that get adopted that limit it even further," Hope said.

Hope stressed that the city can't begin to create their own guidelines until they know what the WSLCB will require, which is only in the drafting process.

The law allows persons who are the age of 21 or older to possess one ounce of marijuana, 16 ounces of marijuana in solid form or 72 ounces in liquid form.

Also, the law makes it clear that marijuana or marijuana-infused products cannot be consumed "in view of the general public," according to the WSLCB.

Mountlake Terrace Police Dept. (MTPD) Commander Doug Hansen said, "Under I-502 it is a class 3 civil infraction to open a package containing marijuana, useable marijuana,



or a marijuana-infused product, or consume marijuana, useable marijuana, or a marijuana-infused product, in view of the general public."

Like the way MTPD handles drinking alcohol in public, Hansen said, "An infraction will be issued and the offender may be required to hand over the marijuana for destruction."

The WSLCB estimates that marijuana would be sold for retail purposes at an average of \$12 per gram. However, high tax rates will raise prices significantly.

Marijuana sale could generate big bucks for the state.

With a 25 percent tax on each level of marijuana (from producer to processor, processor to a retailer and retailer to a customer), the state estimates marijuana sale could generate as much as \$2 billion in the first five years of sale, according to the WSLCB.

Currently, all of this will go directly to the state. The city is not expected to receive any funds from I-502 taxes.

Hope said, "We don't know if it's even possible for the city to require some percentage of sales."

With so much unknown and so much to still be decided, Hope said that the city cannot quite begin to draft its policies and codes regarding marijuana sale.

However, public opinion will be requested by the city.

"We do want to get input on it once we get to look at regulations when we know a little bit more about what the state is proposing," Hope said. "Once we're there we really want public input," she said.

"I think it will be midway of 2014 [before marijuana can be sold in Mountlake Terrace]."

Shane Hope

CITY OF MLT COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR

Rising drug abuse leads to more crime

By Paxtyn Merten
HAWKEYE staff

In Mountlake Terrace, as with the rest of the nation, more and more people are turning to drugs.

Commander Don Duncan of the Mountlake Terrace Police Department (MTPD) said this drug abuse is resulting in more crime, both property and violent.

As reported by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), illicit drug use is on the rise in nearly every city and state in America.

Before Initiative 502, the most commonly abused drug in the MLT area was marijuana. Since the initiative passed, marijuana is now considered a legal drug in Washington.

However, the use of heroin, a dangerous and very addictive narcotic, is increasing.

According to Duncan, heroin is currently the most popular illegal drug in the area.

Duncan stated that, "People are abusing the privilege of marijuana being legal, but there's no data to prove that people are abusing it more."

Certain violent and property crimes are in result of people abusing drugs, according to Duncan.

"A significant portion of crime is in some way attributed to drug use and abuse," Duncan said.

These violent crimes, such as assault, occur because of the way drugs affect a person's mind.

Duncan revealed that drug users often commit property crimes such as burglary in order to feed their addictions. This is especially true for more serious drugs. Few people are committing crimes to feed their marijuana addiction.

Commonly, young people start using marijuana and may gradually progress to harder drugs, such as heroin. This causes the age range of people using drugs to be very spread out. Take marijuana out of the equation and the highest percentage of people abusing drugs is from ages 18-35.

"It's not just your teenagers, it's on from there. And the younger you start using drugs, the longer you're likely to abuse them," Duncan revealed.

"As drugs continue to grow more prevalent in our community, the age range of people abusing them will expand as well," he said.

"The increasing prevalence of drug use is deteriorating our society," Duncan affirmed.

In addition to the crimes that drug users tack onto the total crime in the community, they prove to be dangerous drivers while under the influence.

The NIDA divulged that 34 percent of people involved in vehicle collisions tested positive for drugs, and another 10 percent tested positive for both drugs and alcohol.

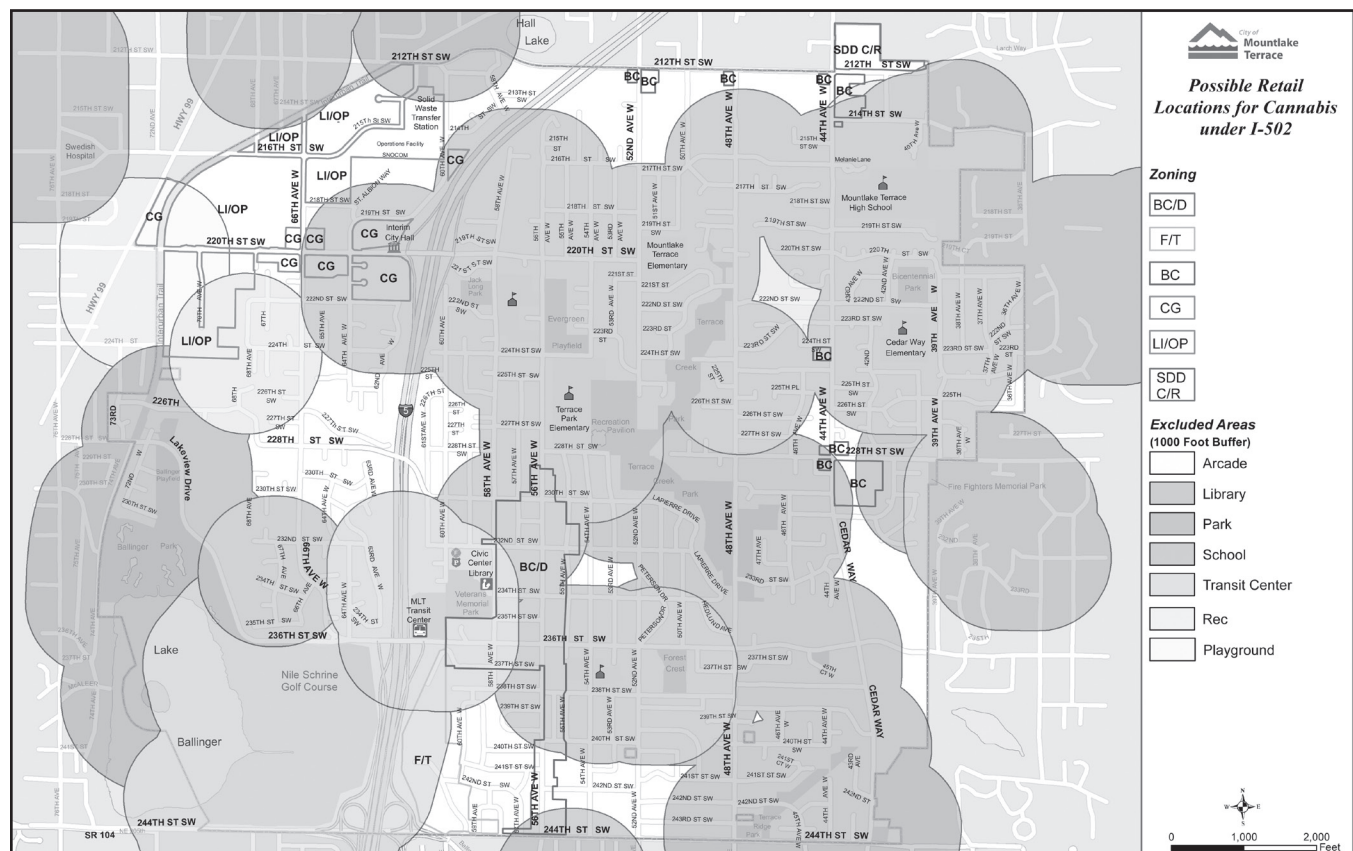
Duncan said that addicts are also a burden on the community and law system. The police continuously must prosecute and hold them, and then the community must support them once they're in drug treatment. Duncan reported that this results in high costs for the police.

Even though drugs have a serious impact on the community, Duncan stated that drugs have the most severe impact on the individuals involved.

"Users harm themselves the most by the toll the drugs take on them physically, mentally and emotionally," Duncan affirmed.

In turn, the drug use also hurts a user's family, who has to see him or her go through addiction with little to no power over what the user decides to do. Then the harm turns back to the community, in a vicious cycle of abuse, crime, arrest and pain all around.

To anyone dealing with drug problems, Duncan suggested to, "Stop, get help, get treatment, talk to your family if you are able. Do whatever necessary to get off that drug. You will not become anything that you want to become while on drugs."



There are an estimated 2 million heroin users in the United States, according to the CIA.

This map, created by the MLT Community and Economic Development Dept., shows 1000 feet zones around every school, park, transit center, playground, recreational center, or arcade. However, there could be potentially be more restrictions that limit this area further.