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April 14, 2014 in City Spokane Valley weighs easing marijuana zoning law

David Wasson The Spokesman-Review

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Jesse Tinsley photo [Buy this photo](#)

The Spokane River separates the Centennial Trail, below, from the industrial area to the north, just east of Barker Road in Spokane Valley. Spokane Valley's pot ordinance says no marijuana-related businesses can be within 1,000 feet of a recreational trail.

[\(Full-size photo\)](#)



Spokane Valley is home to the largest marijuana-growing facility licensed by the state so far.

Now city leaders, despite their near-unanimous dislike of legalized pot, are poised to open more industrial areas to potential cannabis production.

The reason: economic development and the prospect of helping refill long-empty warehouses with tenants and the new jobs that could bring.

"It's legal here whether you agree with it or not," said Mayor Dean Grafos, openly acknowledging the awkwardness of discussing the state's fledgling marijuana industry in purely economic development terms. "We're looking at keeping the additional restrictions for retail but not on the production and bagging."

Later this month, the heavily conservative City Council is expected to partially ease zoning restrictions that go beyond state requirements by imposing 1,000-foot buffer zones around recreational trails in addition to schools, parks and public libraries. Production and bagging operations likely will be removed from the trail restrictions while leaving the regulations on retail outlets intact.

The interim zoning plan was intended to protect the family-friendly nature of the Centennial Trail and the soon-to-developed Appley Trail through the heart of the Valley.

But the trail buffer extended into several industrial sites north of the Spokane River along the eastern edges of the city.

Commercial real estate agents, industrial property owners and would-be pot entrepreneurs all have urged the city to reconsider, suggesting that the river is a better natural buffer than an arbitrary 1,000-foot rule.

"For someone to get to our property (from the Centennial Trail), they'd have to swim the river,

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cross the railroad tracks and climb a 6-foot fence," said Paul Bielec, who has had several marijuana producers contact him about his industrial complex west of Barker Road. The facilities there are considered off-limits for pot production because the southern property line is barely within 1,000 feet of the trail on the opposite bank of the river.

"I think we need to use some common sense," said Councilman Bill Bates, supporting efforts to restore the sites to potential use.

More than 30 companies have applied to the state for production and processing licenses in Spokane Valley, while 43 more have applied for retail licenses. The state will allow just three retail operations in the city, but there's no geographical limit on the number of licensed producers and processors.

So far, the only licensed production facility in Spokane Valley is Farmer J's LLC, which launched operations last month. It's the largest indoor growing operation that's up and running right now in Washington. Located in a secured facility near Argonne Road, it's unaffected by any of the city's additional restrictions and is expected to be among the first to have inventory ready for delivery to retail outlets when they open this summer.

In Spokane, a small production facility also is up and running, but the owner, Sean Green, has been looking at larger sites in Spokane Valley as well.

Green is among those who have urged Spokane Valley to ease its zoning restrictions.

"We now have a market that's creating new and legal jobs that pay well and include benefits," Green said. "These production facilities are more discreet in nature (than the retail outlets will be) and, fortunately, it appears Spokane Valley is embracing this."

Deputy Mayor Arne Woodard supports the proposed zoning adjustments but worries that cities will have to bear the brunt of enforcement and other yet-to-be identified costs.

"I wish we didn't have to deal with it, but the fact is it's state law," Woodard said, noting that the state so far is refusing to share any of the marijuana tax revenue with cities. "I'm all for having the commercial property owners getting their buildings filled, absolutely, but there's some costs overall the city is going to have to deal with here as this market develops."

Grafos sees differences between production and retail operations.

He said the pharmaceutical industry already has shown that drugs can be discreetly stored and packaged in warehouses that draw little attention, and he's confident it will be similar for marijuana producers and packagers.

"We've got pharmaceutical warehouses operating in the Valley that have done so for years without drawing attention to what they are or what they do," the mayor said. "They're nondescript and secure and I think that's what the marijuana production and packaging can be, too."

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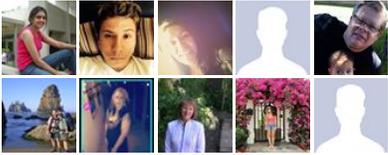
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The Spokesman-Review

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SugarShane · 3 months ago

"We're looking at keeping the additional restrictions for retail but not on the production and bagging."

So much for equal protection under the law.

Well, we don't like marijuana, and don't care what the law says, but we heard about all the money Colorado is making so how can we get some of that and still deny people their freedom?

This is what politics has become.

13 ^ | v · Share >



yurtscool → SugarShane · 3 months ago

Spot on. It will prove difficult to unwind the police state and especially how supposed freedom lovers embrace the police state as a means to enforce their version of morality.

3 ^ | v · Share >



Theman → SugarShane · 3 months ago

I was under the impression, these people already filed a for a license, and needed to have a location already, how can they move now?

^ | v · Share >



yurtscool · 3 months ago

If you like your weed dealer, you can keep your weed dealer.

I just love conservatives. They spend decades dictating how other consenting adults can live their lives, hate the will of the people, but as soon as they can see a way to wring money out of anything their supposed morality goes out the door like an exhaled bong hit.

8 ^ | v · Share >



samvimes · 3 months ago

And here I thought the "conservative" position was to get government off our backs and out of our lives. Apparently this city council has confused the term "conservative" with "busybody". When is the next election?

7 ^ | v · Share >



terryr → samvimes · 3 months ago

Show me one conservative who wants less intrusion into private lives. They're all about maximum restrictions on individuals (except guns) and minimal restrictions on corporations.

2 ^ | v · Share >

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Theman → terryr • 3 months ago

There are no conservatives any more. The last three so called conservative Presidents, Reagan, and the Bush's, all left huge deficits after their terms, that goes against everything true conservatives believe in.

3 ^ | v • Share >



jboHDrider → samvimes • 3 months ago

They are "social" conservatives, which means they want to intrude on any part of your life that does not agree with their interpretation of the bible.

^ | v • Share >



This comment was deleted.



BillyTheKid → MojaveMoon • 3 months ago

You must be dreaming, EPA (pressured by guess who) shut down the last lead smelter in America last December (12/13). This, at a time when the demand for lead in America last year and this year are increasing. It's not just about taking away ammo for target shooting, how about the cost of a new replacement battery for our cars? Ok, never mind, take the car away, we must walk, ignore the politically created + fueled "global warming is all caused by human activity" phenomena, just shut up, play along and do as you are told.

2 ^ | v • Share >



Theman → BillyTheKid • 3 months ago

Lead has been killing people for over a hundred years genius, read a book sometime.

^ | v • Share >



BillyTheKid → Theman • 3 months ago

Lead only poisons people who are dumb enough to allow both themselves and their kids to consume it (put teeth on window frames, for example). Use your head, common sense, and stop buying lead batteries for your car..

^ | v • Share >



spokesfolk → BillyTheKid • 3 months ago

Bullets are made from recycled lead and there are plenty of lead recycling places left.

^ | v • Share >



jboHDrider → spokesfolk • 3 months ago

That's what they say, but you can't find 22 ammo anywhere.

^ | v • Share >



admiral2040 → BillyTheKid • 3 months ago

way off the subject

^ | v • Share >



Elaine → BillyTheKid • 3 months ago

Over-react much?

^ | v • Share >



BillyTheKid → Elaine • 3 months ago

Not in the least; you?

^ | v • Share >



SSDD → MojaveMoon • 3 months ago

No chance. Way too high of a carbon footprint.

^ | v • Share >



This comment was deleted.



JBlim → MojaveMoon · 3 months ago

Back in the day, we went all-solar to grow

1 ^ | v · Share >



BillyTheKid → JBlim · 3 months ago

Back in the day, one could hardly tell the difference between the "product" and dried lawn clippings.

4 ^ | v · Share >



ThatOldMan → BillyTheKid · 3 months ago

Back in the day a lot of kids got snookered in buying a bag of gone to seed alfalfa.

3 ^ | v · Share >



rosehips → BillyTheKid · 3 months ago

he said "the day", not the stoned age. lol

3 ^ | v · Share >



Scoutster · 3 months ago

If it was Boeing or Jack's Fly-by-nite Call Center they would be falling all over themselves to offer corporate welfare.

5 ^ | v · Share >



rosehips · 3 months ago

Why would they restrict the locations around trails? Are they afraid the hikers might be corrupted or something?

4 ^ | v · Share >



Raul Duke · 3 months ago

This matter will test the extent to which the City of Spokane Valley is the hassle free place to do business that they promote themselves as being.

3 ^ | v · Share >



rosehips · 3 months ago

It makes cents...semilla.

3 ^ | v · Share >

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