



CITY OF CHICAGO • OFFICE OF THE MAYOR



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**CITY OF CHICAGO OFFICIALS JOIN LAWMAKERS, LOCAL BUSINESSES AND
ADVOCATES TO KICK OFF FIRST DAY OF LEGALIZED CANNABIS**

Inaugural day of legalized recreational cannabis is the result of extensive coordination by the City and its partners to ensure new industry is implemented in a safe, equitable and responsible manner for all communities

CHICAGO – City of Chicago officials today joined state and local legislators, cannabis businesses and advocates from across the city to mark the first day of legalized recreational cannabis sales in Chicago and across Illinois. Chicago's Deputy Mayor of Neighborhood and Economic Development Samir Mayekar kicked off the historic day joined by State Sen. Heather Steans (7th District), State Rep. Kelly Cassidy (14th District), Aldermen Matt Martin (47th Ward) and Andre Vazquez (40th Ward), community leaders and activists at one of Chicago's dispensaries authorized to sell adult-use recreational cannabis.

Over the last several months, Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot's administration has worked in partnership with state officials, community advocates, business leaders, policy experts and cannabis professionals to create rules and regulations that will ensure a safe, equitable and responsible implementation of this new industry. Only residents 21 years or older can currently purchase cannabis at the existing licensed dispensaries in Chicago, which can be found [here](#).

"Chicago is very excited about the opportunities legalized cannabis will create for residents here in our city and across our entire state," said Mayor Lori E. Lightfoot. "Over the past seven months, we have worked tirelessly with community stakeholders, business groups and state leaders to ensure this new industry will not only be operated safely and responsibly, but also to help drive economic growth and jobs in our neighborhoods, particularly those that have borne the brunt of the War on Drugs. Together, we will place Chicago and Illinois at the forefront of leveraging the cannabis industry to expand social equity, and create a legalization model the rest of the nation can follow."

To ensure residents are informed of health and safety tips related to cannabis, the City launched its public service awareness campaign, Cannabis Facts Chicago, to ensure all residents have access to the latest guidance by medical experts regarding the use of cannabis products. While those over 21 years of age will be able to legally consume



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cannabis, the City of Chicago is urging responsible consumption, warning that products can be much more potent than in the past and overuse can have serious health consequences, especially for youth and young adults. Residents can find health and safety tips [here](#).

“Today, Illinois is making history by launching a new industry that will create access to safe and legal cannabis products for our residents, while laying the foundation for social equity and our most underserved communities to be a part of the wealth created,” said Sen. Steans. “Moving forward, our top priorities for the cannabis industry are to ensure not only that it operates safely and in a way that generates much needed revenues for our state, but that we harness the power of our state act to propel significant economic opportunity for every community and in a way that ensures diversification of the industry.”

Like many jurisdictions across the state, the City has developed a cannabis regulatory framework to implement rules for residents as well as businesses looking to be a part of this new industry. To inform its policies and regulations, the City of Chicago conducted extensive community outreach, convening a total of five community meetings in the past few months to gain input on zoning, Chicago Police Department enforcement policies, public safety initiatives, on-site consumption, and other opportunities to inform laws that will ensure cannabis sales and use will be safe and responsible in the city.

“When we set out to legalize cannabis in Illinois, we were focused not only on generating new economic opportunity for our communities, but also addressing the inequities that have harmed our communities for far too long,” said Rep. Cassidy. “I am so proud of the tireless work from my colleagues in the General Assembly and the Governor’s Office to pass the state act as well as the leadership exemplified by Mayor Lightfoot in Chicago and in many other towns across the state, where people have been thoughtful about ensuring a safe and smooth rollout of this new industry that lays the groundwork for new and diverse entrants to be included.”

The administration’s regulatory framework amends antiquated cannabis policies of the past in order to address the historically disproportionate impact of cannabis enforcement on minority communities. The City has also enacted progressive reforms to the Chicago Police Department’s enforcement policies, reducing penalties and fines for unlawful possession, including replacing the zero-exception rule that once required the City to impound all vehicles containing cannabis regardless of the amount. To prepare for legalization, more than 13,000 Chicago police officers have undergone training and education on the rules and regulations regarding the possession and use of cannabis.

"From day one, Mayor Lightfoot has brought together stakeholders from across Chicago to stand up a legalized cannabis industry in a way that is built on the principles of equity



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and justice," said 40th Ward Alderman Andre Vasquez. "As Black and Brown communities have been disproportionately targeted by the failed War on Drugs, I will continue to partner with Mayor Lightfoot, community leaders and advocates, ensuring this emerging industry brings unprecedented economic and social benefits to communities that have faced decades of disinvestment."

To ensure more Chicago entrepreneurs are able to participate in the expanding cannabis economy, the City is also working to enact policies that will leverage the state's social equity provisions and encourage more entrepreneurs to participate in this emerging industry. Last month, the City proposed legislation to establish cannabis consumption rules for businesses in Chicago, with a goal of expanding opportunities for residents to safely use cannabis, while carving out growth opportunities for diverse local businesses.

"As we developed the rules and regulations for legal cannabis in Chicago, equity for every resident and safety across our city were of the greatest priority," said 47th Ward Alderman Matt Martin. "Throughout this inclusive process to prepare for the launch of a new industry in Chicago, the City Council worked to apply not only lessons learned from the unjust enforcement practices of the past, but also to build on the framework set in place by the state in order to maximize opportunities for Chicagoans across all communities to benefit from legalization."

To ensure the legalization of cannabis creates opportunity for equity and diversification of the industry, the State of Illinois has passed progressive legislation designed to ensure that those communities harmed most by the War on Drugs can be included in economic opportunities derived from the expansion of this industry. The State of Illinois has recently launched social equity loan grant applications, and, through the Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), is providing direct, technical assistance to help prospective cannabis entrepreneurs get licensed. For more information on how to unlock this assistance, please visit www.illinois.gov

"As the expert legal aid focused on removing barriers for people with criminal backgrounds, CGLA is proud to collaborate with city leaders who care about this issue. Nearly 800,000 records are eligible for expungement under the new Illinois Cannabis Act, the majority of those residing in the city of Chicago and greater cook county," said Esther Franco-Payne, Executive Director of Cabrini Green Legal Aid. "With effective implementation and partnerships across Chicago communities, our primary goal is to ensure that individuals who have been negatively impacted by the War on Drugs are able to benefit from the social equity components of this law - that means having their records cleared and having access to employment and ownership in this emerging industry. We applaud our Mayor, Lori Lightfoot, for her positive contributions in making this a reality for all Chicagoans."



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As part of the State Act, Illinois residents with arrests and criminal records for unlawfully possessing less than 30 grams of cannabis will have the opportunity to automatically get their records expunged. Last fall, the City partnered with Cabrini Green Legal Aid to host community meetings across Chicago to ensure residents have information on expunging low-level cannabis offenses as well as access to legal and support services.

"We applaud all our elected officials' leadership, and Dispensary33 is working very hard to implement the law just as they envisioned and intended it to be," said Paul Lee, Principal and General Manager of Dispensary33. "Dispensary 33 is proud to be a part of this historic day, and looks forward to working alongside the City of Chicago to ensure that our business provides a benefit for the community we operate in, the customers we serve, those we employ, and for the City at large."

Residents can find more information on cannabis legalization at the [Chicago Cannabis Information](#) webpage on the City of Chicago website, including rules on consumption and possession, health and safety tips, dispensary locations and how to start a cannabis-related business.

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