



DATE: September 24, 2019

TO: Members of the City Council

FROM: Vice Mayor Bill Baber and Councilmember Kristine Alessio

SUBJECT: CONSIDERATION OF ESTABLISHING REVITALIZATION GRANTS FOR PROPERTIES ADJACENT TO FORMER ILLEGAL DISPENSARY SITES (PILOT PROGRAM)

### **Background**

During 2013-2018 the City of La Mesa, particularly the west side of town along University Ave and El Cajon Blvd, was inundated with illegal marijuana dispensaries.

These businesses created a nuisance for the surrounding neighborhood with increased volumes of trash, graffiti and vagrancy.

Since being shut down many of these properties have remained vacant and the negative systemic effects are still apparent.

We would like the Council to discuss one means to mitigate that neighborhood damage.

### **Proposal**

We ask staff to bring back a pilot grant program for the Council to consider using the following guidelines.

1. This will be a three-year pilot program for the entire city, although it will most likely be used primarily in West La Mesa.
2. Up to \$10,000 per year, starting in Fiscal Year 2021, will be earmarked from Proposition V revenues for this pilot grant program.
3. These grant funds may only be used to encourage investors/developers to rehabilitate properties adjacent to former illegal dispensaries.

4. These grant funds may only be used for cosmetic improvements (facades, landscaping, signage, exterior paint, etc.) and may not be used for interior or structural improvements.
5. These grant funds will be provided on a reimbursement basis determined by actual costs verified via paid invoices.
6. These grant funds cannot be used by any person that ever owned, leased, or operated any property used for an illegal dispensary inside or outside the City of La Mesa.
7. If a brand new owner, completely independent of the former owner or operator, applies for the grant to use to revitalize the site itself, the grant can be awarded only if the new owner or operator can prove no legal or financial or familial relation to the former owner or operator.
8. The purpose of these prohibitions is to encourage new owners to clean up the mess left behind by the former owners and not to benefit any former owner or operator who broke the laws of La Mesa or California.
9. This program should allow for private donations to this fund from legal dispensaries who want to voluntarily help the City clean up the mess created by illegal operators.
10. This program is consistent with the City's plan (made in the context of our creation of Prop V in 2018) that we intend to use some of this general fund revenue to "shut down illegal cannabis dispensaries." We believe cleaning up the surrounding neighborhood is a natural responsibility after we shut down an illegal dispensary.

Thank you for your consideration.