

Marin Voice: In San Anselmo, pro-cannabis does not mean support for storefronts

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Last month, the San Anselmo Town Council began revisitation of the current local ban on retail marijuana businesses in town. Deliberations on behalf of the town's Planning Department and the Town Council are ongoing, with contemplation of an amendment to the existing zoning regulations. Within our household, the topic of retail cannabis is viewed as one of relative complexity, with elements of validity across differing perspectives.

While we are ultimately opposed to retail cannabis in San Anselmo specifically, we do concede — and agree — with some of the advocates' contentions in general. Moreover, we also admit to disagreement with certain other positions put forth by our fellow opponents.

For example, we acknowledge that, as a matter of public policy, it is better to regulate and tax cannabis than it is to allow it to subsist in a criminal black market with its attendant diseconomies. We also believe, that under the right ownership and possessing of adequate capital resources, retail cannabis stores can, in fact, have subdued signage and adequate "curb appeal."

That said, one common argument put forth by retail cannabis advocates is that local voter support for Proposition 64 provides, by logical extension, a rationale for San Anselmo to approve a zoning amendment to permit the siting of such establishments. We strongly assert, however, that the dual issues of Proposition 64/decriminalization and municipal self-determination are separate and distinct; there exists no explicit or implicit 'will-of-the-voter' linkage.

And we believe it is incumbent upon the Town Council to fulfill its important and requisite responsibility to determine precisely where, in the present moment, voter support lies specifically as regards retail cannabis in San Anselmo — separate and distinct from general voter support for Proposition 64 in 2016.

Ours is a family which does, in fact, support Proposition 64 while simultaneously opposing retail cannabis in San Anselmo. Personally, we would view such a commercial presence as inconsistent with the overall tenor and vibe of our town. Unabashedly, we admit to "NIMBY-ism" on this count. Further, we emphatically argue that there exists a very meaningful number of San Anselmo voters who feel precisely the same way.

Beyond the foregoing, however, the essential crux of our household's opposition to retail cannabis in our community — which outweighs all other factors both pro and con — is simply this: any welcoming of such establishments sends a harmful and irresponsible message to our town's children and adolescents.

Such a presence and message is not something we personally wish encountered in San Anselmo. Further, it would meaningfully challenge and complicate the primary and sacrosanct duty of responsible parenting.

We would argue that the de facto sanctioning of marijuana and its THC-derivatives via the granting of any retail cannabis licensure would betray an indifference to the physical and emotional well-being of our youngest citizens — those who are simply too young to make fully-informed, mature decisions. That THC consumption is detrimental to the cognitive, social, and emotional development of adolescents and young adults is an indisputable scientific fact.

Furthermore, we submit that such indifference would primarily be ultimately rendered in the pursuit of consumer convenience and economic self-interest. For us, when a choice comes down to principled example, on the one hand, and consumer or fiscal expediency on the other, the choice is easy.

Parenting — and its related moral responsibility to nurture mature, socially-conscious, and self-actualizing children into young adulthood—is already a challenge of sufficient difficulty. We respectfully ask that interested voters and the Town Council help us honor that responsibility by taking a principled stand against retail cannabis in San Anselmo.