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## Commission meeting

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Agency: Akron City Planning Commission

Date: June 13, 2025

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## Summary

- This was a jam-packed, lengthy, well-attended meeting that covered topics ranging from the 2025 [Consolidated Action Plan](#) (CAP) to petitions from five vape and marijuana-related businesses. More than 45 people were in the gallery, causing the line of attendees to snake out the Municipal Building in the minutes before the meeting. Those same people stood up and were sworn in before the meeting so they could share their positions with the commission.
- The commission members generally voted for more time or disapproved the petitions associated with the vape and marijuana-related businesses. The commission is awaiting proposed rules to be adopted that will regulate these businesses.
- The CAP was approved after many attendees spoke in favor of the city's investments in affordable housing. The CAP is required by the federal government for the City to spend federal money through several grant programs to support housing, quality of life and economic needs in the city.

## Follow-Up Questions

- How does the 2025 CAP compare to the 2024 and 2023 action plans the city adopted?
- How has the city's investment in affordable housing affected residents over the years?
- What information is available regarding the pending rules for vape, smoke and marijuana-related businesses?
- How informed are Wallhaven residents about the proposed development of a marijuana dispensary in their neighborhood?
- The commission considered many requests to establish vape shops and marijuana dispensaries. Is there anything to be gleaned about the proposed locations? Why is there such an increase in petitions for these businesses? Who are these businesses targeting as potential consumers?
- Does the City coordinate with the [Ohio Department of Development](#) when developing the CAP? If so, how?
- Are past spending areas still funded? What projects received increased and decreased spending, and why?

## Notes

### **Commission background**

- [The City Planning Commission](#) reviews and/or approves all matters regarding conditional use requests and rezonings before the requests go to City Council for a final decision. The commission also reviews and/or approves allotments, street vacations, dedications, sale of city land, urban renewal items, and annually reviews the Capital Investment Program.
- Members of the commission: [Michael Freeman](#), [Renee Greene](#), [Ronald Owen](#), [Bronlynn Thurman](#), [Gary Wyatt](#), [Stephanie York](#)
- The commission meets weekly on Fridays as scheduled, at 9 a.m. in City Council Chambers on the 3rd floor of 166 S. High St.

### **Information about this meeting**

- [June 13 agenda](#):
- The meeting started at 9 a.m.

- There were approximately 14 staff and commission members.
- There were more than 45 other people in the gallery.
  - Attendees had snaked out of the municipal building as they waited to go through security before the meeting.
- The commission adopted the minutes from the prior meeting and swore in those who would be testifying.

**Public hearings** - The commission held public hearings on the following:

- A. Approval of sales of property and/or development plans in Urban Renewal and Community Development projects and assorted matters necessary to promote the Urban Renewal and Community Development Plans.
  - (1) PC-2025-31-CD – 2025 Consolidated Action Plan and 2025-2029 Consolidated Plan for City’s Community Development Block Grant, HOME Investment Partnership and Emergency Solutions Grant programs
  - [Past consolidated action plans](#)
  - The commission opened the floor to hear comments for and against the proposed CAP.
  - Many, including [Jackie Hemsworth](#) and [Joe Scalise of United Way Summit & Medina](#), spoke in favor of the funds used to support housing for the community, particularly unhoused people.
  - No one spoke against CAP.
  - Wyatt commended the planning department for engaging and communicating with multiple stakeholders in developing CAP.
  - CAP was approved.
- Petition of OPC Cultivation, LLC, for a Conditional Use to establish a dual-use marijuana dispensary at [730 W. Market St.](#) in Highland Square.
  - Jesse Gannon, general counsel for OPC Cultivation, supported the petition. He said they were fully licensed, top-notch, properly licensed facilities. They have six retail locations. Two others from OPC Cultivation accompanied him.
  - The commission asked for those against the petition, and a line of attendees stood up.
  - One speaker spoke against this petition and the others for vape, marijuana and CBD-related dispensaries, basing her position on constitutional, religious and general concerns for the community (smell, violence). She believes others outside the city own these companies. She’s worried about what conditions consumers are medicating with these products and why

we aren't addressing the underlying causes.

- Another speaker who works in the Highland Square neighborhood where the dispensary will be located said he was surprised that a dispensary is contemplated to go next to Oriana House. He said there is money behind this, but he felt it was not good for the community.
  - A homeowner who said she could see the dispensary from her home said she had concerns about adequate parking and the impact on increased traffic for emergency vehicles. She asked for a forum with neighborhood residents before the petition is approved.
  - Another homeowner is worried the dispensary will lower property values for other homes on Dodge Avenue, near where the facility will be located.
  - Another speaker said this area was not zoned for this type of business and urged the commission to follow the code.
  - Another speaker from Oriana House shared that the 750 West Market location is where Oriana meets with participants in the nonresidential drug court program. She was worried about relapse from exposure to this dispensary.
  - A lifelong resident of Highland Square spoke in recognition of the turnout of speakers against the dispensary petition and asked for further comment to be collected before the commission approves the petition, rather than trying to discourage comments unless their comments were different from those from prior speakers.
  - A local homeowner running a home-based daycare said her children walk to the Highland Square Library and would walk by the dispensary. She believes the proposed business will affect her business.
  - Two additional speakers spoke against the petition.
  - The commission was told that Herb Newman owns the property now. He was not at the meeting.
  - Ward 1 Council Member Sam DeShazor (which includes Highland Square) has not shared his opinion on this petition.
  - The commission members received two letters favoring the petition.
  - Wyatt recommended disapproval. The commission voted, and the petition was disapproved.
  - (Note: the [discussion](#) was reflected in the local news.)
- Petition of Calvin Ruggs for a Conditional Use to establish a vape shop at [1252 E. Tallmadge Ave.](#) in Chapel Hill
    - No one attending spoke for or against the petition.
    - The commission voted and disapproved the petition.

- Petition of Nathan Revesz, dba J&J Plumbing, Heating, Cooling & Electric, for a Conditional Use to install a high-rise sign at [61 S. Seiberling St.](#) in Goodyear Heights.
  - A company spokesperson said it would help the company's visibility and recruitment. He said there are 71 employees and he intends to hire more.
  - The commission voted and approved the petition. The petition will now go to council for approval.
  
- Petition of Mohammed Odetallah, dba the [Herb Hub](#), for a Conditional Use to establish a vape shop at [2517 Mogadore Road](#) in Ellet.
  - The planning staff did not recommend approval of the petition.
  - A speaker who developed the software used at the store spoke for the petition. Vape store owners are complying with all regulations. Consumers have the freedom to choose to consume this product, and they can get the product (vape) with a short drive. He urged that people get together and figure out how shops like this can operate rather than disapproving of petitions to operate.
  - Odetallah, one of the business owners who spoke for the petition, said he is currently in business. He has 7,000 customers in the loyalty program and he is from the Ellet area where this business is located. He says he has customers from other areas outside Ellet.
  - Another owner said customers come at all times and consider the business a gathering place.
  - The business sells coffee, slushies, vapes and artwork but doesn't sell marijuana.
  - Commission members asked about pending rules for vape, smoke and marijuana-related businesses. There is a moratorium on petitions like this, but this application came before the moratorium was put in place. This petition will be affected by proposed legislation.
    - A commission member said the proposed rules will be similar to those [Cuyahoga County](#) has adopted.
  - The commission voted for more time to consider the petition.
  
- Petition of Tango Ventures, LLC, for a Conditional Use to construct a dual-use marijuana dispensary at [1956 W. Market St.](#) in Wallhaven.
  - This will be the westernmost location. The city has six approved dispensaries already.

- A Klutch Cannabis representative spoke for the petition. He said he and his family and the owner of the company are local, he has been involved in local politics and he has been involved at the state level with regulating the dispensaries.
  - Other representatives of Klutch Cannabis joined him but did not speak.
  - He said 71% voted for Issue 2 in the city and this will be a multi-million dollar investment in the area (including planned renovations of the building and landscaping). It will be a flagship location.
  - He indicated there would be tax benefits where dispensaries are located.
  - They planned \$2 million in building and landscaping capital investments, to hire 10 full-time employees on-site and to have a \$440,000 payroll.
  - The proposed store location would have 22 parking spots on-site, double the number required for businesses of this size
  - They anticipated approximately 100 transactions per day, with each transaction taking 5-10 minutes. Online sales would have scheduled pickups.
  - The company has other store locations in Lorain and Canton and a cultivation facility in Akron.
  - No product would be visible from store windows.
  - There would be video cameras around the building, and footage would be available to local law enforcement.
  - The store would have controlled biometric access and would not allow loitering or on-site consumption.
  - The speaker called it a high-end pharmacy.
- [Mat Miller from LRC Realty](#), who owns the property, spoke in favor of it and the benefits of centralizing drug distribution.
- Ken Stewart, owner of Ken Stewart's Grille, and his attorney spoke against the petition.
  - Stewart said there is already a traffic jam every day, and there is not enough parking. He employs 250 people with 60 working on-site at the Grille. He said 100 employees are dependent on this business location.
  - He worried that the proposed business placed in this location would worsen the parking and traffic situation. He suggested putting the store where the new Aldi went in.

- The employees and security for the dispensary will take half of the available parking spots, Stewart said.
  - Two other local building owners spoke against the petition.
    - The owner of the building, which is located near a flower shop, spoke against the petition. She said she wasn't against this business, but worried that the proposed store would change the nature of the neighborhood.
    - The owner of the building where Larry's Main Entrance was located said LRC had not been transparent about the development (he and his wife had been told it would be a dog wash/grooming business), and then they were pressured to sell their building to the new business owners.
  - Ward 8 Council Member Bruce Bolden has not taken a position on the proposed development.
  - The commission voted for more time to consider and to allow the Traffic Department to reconsider the impact on the neighborhood.
- Petition of LaGuardia Copley, LLC, for a Conditional Use to construct a commercial building at 1518 Copley Road, in West Akron, and the sale of a portion of city-owned property (Parcel Nos. 6717443, 6706105, 6706050)
    - An owner of the LaGuardia Copley spoke in favor of the petition. He said the change will enable them to employ more people locally and consolidate. Vans would come in to get graphics installed.
    - The committee voted to approve the petition.

#### **Unfinished business from the last meeting**

- Petition of Exotic Leaf, LLC, for a Conditional Use to establish a vape shop at [1328 Copley Road](#), in West Akron.
  - The owner spoke in favor of the petition and said she had met with the council member for her ward, who emailed a letter of support. She indicated she is supporting local events in the ward.
  - The commission voted to disapprove the petition, but advised the owner that her petition will be forwarded to the council.
- Commission voted to approve renewals.
- The meeting ended at 12:02 p.m.

