



CITY OF NEW YORK
MANHATTAN COMMUNITY BOARD FOUR

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District Manager

August 7th, 2023

Christopher Alexander
Executive Director
New York State Office of Cannabis Management
Harriman State Office Building Campus
1220 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12207

Tremaine Wright
Chairwoman
Cannabis Control Board
Harriman State Office Building Campus
1220 Washington Ave.
Albany, NY 12207

Re: Proposed Cannabis Dispensary at 158 W 23rd Street - Soodaks, Inc, d/b/a Verdi
#2022-000266

Director Alexander and Chairwoman Wright

Manhattan Community Board 4 (MCB4), at its regularly scheduled full board meeting on Wednesday, September 6th, and after holding a duly notified hearing, voted, by a vote of 40 in favor, 0 opposed, 1 present not eligible, and 2 abstaining, in support of Soodaks, Inc, d/b/a Verdi, and its proposed dispensary at 158 W 23rd Street. We understand that Soodaks, Inc.: (a) received its Conditional Adult-Use Retail Dispensary (“CAURD”) license from the Office of Cannabis Management on April 3, 2023; (b) has put significant resources into re-designing and developing its storefront; and (c) is waiting on final site-approval before it can begin operations. We also understand that Verdi intends to operate M-Thurs: 10AM-10PM, F: 10AM-11PM, Sat: 12PM - 11PM, and Sun: 12PM - 8PM.

On August 24, 2023, MCB4 hosted an informational forum regarding Verdi, which was attended by members of the public and live-streamed and recorded on Youtube. Mitchell and Ellis Soodak of Soodaks, Inc., along with their security contractors, presented at the forum and responded to various community inquiries and concerns. The forum is

available on MCB4's Youtube Channel.¹ Likewise, Soodaks, Inc. responded to an MCB4 questionnaire regarding the proposed operations of Verdi, which was made available to the public prior to the forum, and is enclosed with this letter.

Considering that Soodaks, Inc. (hereinafter the "Licensee") would be operating the first legal dispensary in the MCB4 district, which comprises of Hell's Kitchen and Chelsea, MCB4 appreciates the thoroughness of its presentation and questionnaire responses, which knowledgeably addressed both the community's justified concerns regarding the current landscape of the cannabis industry in New York City, as well as the Licensee's intentions to operate pursuant to current laws and regulations.

MCB4 supports the Licensee's proposal for a legal dispensary to operate at 158 W 23rd Street because the Licensee has committed to operate not only legally, but responsibly; they have agreed to operate in cooperation with their neighbors and community. MCB4 also believes that the proposed location will improve the quality of neighborhood—along with several empty storefronts on the block, there are currently a dozen illegal dispensaries operating within a 1000 feet of 158 W 23rd Street that sell untested dangerous products, avoid paying taxes, and are eye-sores. MCB4 believes that a well-run, professional, and visually appealing dispensary could counteract these illicit enterprises.

MCB4 appreciates that the Licensee is family-owned and operated, and acknowledges Mitchell Soodak's admirable record as proprietor of Union Square Wines & Spirits.²

The Licensee has also made several specific commitments on various topics of concern, including the following:

1. Security

- a. During business hours, the Licensee will have an unarmed off-duty or retired officer provided by John Cutter Investigations, a security team founded by a former NYPD Deputy Chief. The guard will have a direct line to the NYPD. The Licensee has also committed, upon community request, to have a security officer standing *outside* its premises during all times of operation. The guard will be required to check all IDs, regardless of age, prior to authorizing entry.
- b. The Licensee will have a high-tech maglocked front door that can only be unlocked/locked by employees with a key fob. The Licensee will also have cameras monitoring all areas of the store, including the outside entrance, the ID check foyer, POS station, and product storage.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bqZLHYRXwYc&t=334s>

² For 23 years Mitchell R. Soodak, a justice-involved applicant, owned & operated 33 Union Square West, Inc., a beer, liquor & wine store.

The cameras will store all video for 60 days, and there will be a battery back-up in the event of a power failure. The cameras also function as an alarm system, which will send a video and an alert to a 24/7 monitoring service in case of unauthorized access during off-business hours. If the monitoring service confirms a break-in in-progress, video will be instantly sent to the NYPD along with a high-priority alert. The camera monitoring system is provided by Solink.

2. Hiring

- a. The Licensee is working with a consultant to hire high quality experienced cannabis professionals. Many of their “budtenders” will come from Hospitality Pathways, which provides cannabis and hospitality training to individuals from disenfranchised and marginalized communities. The Licensee will post job postings on the main entrance as well as on major online job bulletins.

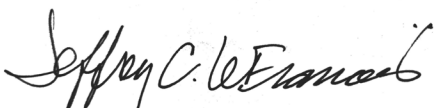
3. Delivery

- a. The Licensee will accept orders online, but not over the phone. If the order is a delivery, the purchaser’s ID will be scanned upon delivery to ensure age verification. If the purchaser cannot provide ID or is not present at the delivery location, then the order will be returned to the store and the purchaser will be credited back.
- b. The Licensee has committed to ensuring the safety of its delivery drivers, while simultaneously training its drivers to follow rules-of-the road and monitoring drivers’ speeds using app-based technology.

4. On-Site Consumption

- a. The Licensee has stated that it currently does not have plans for on-site consumption. Regardless, the Licensee committed to coming back before MCB4 before allowing any cannabis consumption on-site to occur.
- b. The Licensee has committed to ensuring there is no smoking of cannabis outside of its storefront.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey LeFranois
Chair
Manhattan Community Board 4



Jesse Greenwald
Chair
Cannabis Working Group