



Release

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ZAZA WAZA PADLOCKED

DCWP Enforces 2013 Smoking Law Passed by City Council;

Brewer Releases Results of New UWS Unlicensed Cannabis Survey

New York, NY — Zaza Waza Smoke Shop, the unlicensed cannabis store 200 feet from Council Member Brewer’s office on Columbus Avenue, was padlocked for chronic violation of New York City’s *Sensible Tobacco Enforcement Law* under orders from the Department of Consumer and Worker Protection (DCWP).

The padlocking comes on the heels of Brewer’s new Upper West Side Unlicensed Cannabis Survey, which revealed 53 unlicensed stores out of 89 checked — a 104% increase from the first survey in December 2022. On top of unregulated cannabis, 33 of the stores illegally sell tobacco, e-cigarettes, or banned vapes.

Using publicly available data, Brewer’s staff found that at least 12 of the 53 stores are already eligible for padlocking under the City Council’s 2013 [Sensible Tobacco Enforcement Law](#) and shared the information with DCWP. Full results and an interactive map are available on Brewer’s cannabis webpage: bit.ly/brewer-cannabis

The *Sensible Tobacco Enforcement Law* strengthened penalties for unlicensed retail sales, allowing City agencies to seal shops after a third offense. DCWP has conducted six inspections at Zaza Waza since the store opened in April 2022, issuing 47 violations related to tobacco, e-cigarettes and flavored vapes, according to public data. Zaza Waza will stay shuttered unless owners pay more than \$225,000 in penalties, stop selling cannabis and flavored vapes, and get licenses to sell tobacco and e-cigarettes.

Brewer is calling for amendments to the State cannabis law, which currently preempts the City Council from creating a local civil enforcement structure. “The change we need from Albany is flexibility to pass Local Laws for civil enforcement of unlicensed retail cannabis, just like the tobacco law we enforced today,” Brewer said.




“I could not be more grateful to Commissioner Mayuga and her team at DCWP for closing this store,” Brewer said. “They are organized and collaborative and I can’t wait to close more unlicensed stores together.”

Brewer first suggested using City tobacco laws to seal unlicensed cannabis stores in a 2022 [letter](#). She joined Sheriff Anthony Miranda on a [raid](#) of Zaza Waza January 2023. Hundreds of products were seized, but the store was restocked and reopened two days later.

Brewer and Zaza Waza were recently featured in the [The New Yorker](#). The reporter described its cannabis products as potent enough “to send a devoted stoner like myself to the emergency room, if not the grave.”



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UWS Unlicensed Cannabis Survey

Conducted January 23 to February 16, 2024

By The Office of Council Member Gale A. Brewer

There are 53 unlicensed cannabis stores on the Upper West Side, according to a new block-by-block survey of 89 stores from W. 54th to W. 108th Streets. That's a 104% increase from December of 2022, when the same survey revealed 26 cannabis retailers without licenses out of 61 stores visited.

Just three stores on the original list have close: West Coast Convenience (176 W. 72nd St.) and Amsterdam Varieties Corp (228 Amsterdam Ave.) were busted by the Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg in July of 2023; and 85 Convenient Store (523 Amsterdam Ave.) shuttered for unknown reasons.

Of the 53 Stores:

- 28 sell tobacco or e-cigarettes without the required licenses
- 13 sell illegal flavored vapes
- 25+ have at least one tobacco or e-cigarette violation issued by DCWP, according to public data
- 12+ are already eligible for sealing under New York City tobacco laws, according to public data
- 3 stores have violations issued by the New York City Sheriff, according to public data
- 10 landlords received an enforcement letter from the New York City Sheriff
- 3 opened during the four weeks it took to complete the survey

More information is available at bit.ly/brewer-cannabis or scan the QR Code below:

