

THE LOCAL IMPACT OF CANNABIS BUSINESS

Cannabis businesses do not appear to harm, and may actually help, their communities

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Cannabis business does not negatively impact the surrounding community

According to a recent study from the University of Colorado - Denver, medical cannabis dispensaries in Denver have no more impact on the surrounding neighborhood than a coffee shop or drugstore. Residents reportedly don't see dispensaries as undesirable storefronts in their neighborhood.¹ Another study focused on undesirable land uses similarly concluded that “while public officials, and especially law enforcement, clearly warn residents about the negative effects of these centers on the communities in which they are situated, there is little evidence that residents are listening, as these centers do not appear to have any impact on the urban landscape — and therefore on the health of the communities in which they are located.”² Reports of negative community impact appear to be concentrated in states that allow cannabis businesses but lack comprehensive state-level regulation of the industry.

Cannabis businesses generate community benefits

Reports from Colorado and other established medical and adult-use cannabis states indicate that cannabis businesses positively impact the surrounding community by generating economic benefits like jobs, revenue, and real estate demand. Denver in particular has seen massive real estate market growth, which the Denver Post and others credit to the state's legal cannabis industry.³ From 2009 to 2014, over a third of all industrial real estate leased in Denver came under the control of the cannabis industry, which “really kick-started the recovery of the industrial market in Denver.”⁴ The industrial vacancy rate has fallen steadily since 2011 and reached a historical low in 2015.⁵

Many cannabis businesses give back to the community by assisting vulnerable populations, providing community services, and through philanthropic giving. Medical and adult-use cannabis dispensaries in Colorado and other states often collect donations for the homeless, canned foods, hygienic products, and other items that may help disadvantaged populations.⁶ The second oldest dispensary in Colorado created a charitable organization called the Green Team that cleans up after local events, plants and harvests crops in the summer for use by local soup kitchens, and holds monthly bicycle and wheelchair repair clinics.⁷ Some dispensaries donate funds directly to local institutions, like a Whitewood compassion club that donated over \$90,000 in 2015 to support community fire stations, recreational activities, and other important service organizations.⁸ Some states and localities have chosen to compel the industry to exert a positive influence by requiring submission of a community benefits plan as part of the licensing process.

Claims about the negative impacts of cannabis business on local residents appear unfounded; many may actually benefit the communities in which they are located through economic development, philanthropic giving, and provision of community services.

¹ http://blogs.westword.com/latestword/2014/02/medical_marijuana_dispensaries_denver_neighborhoods_impact.php

² Lyndsay N. Boggess, Deanna M. Pérez, Kathryn Cope, Carl Root & Paul B. Stretesky, Urban Geography (2014): Do medical marijuana centers behave like locally undesirable land uses? Implications for the geography of health and environmental justice, *Urban Geography*.

³ http://www.denverpost.com/marijuana/ci_28993836/marijuana-industry-drives-denver-metro-areas-real-estate-recovery

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Cushman & Wakefield, “Industrial Snapshot Q4 2015”

http://nprddtz.cassidyTurley.com/DesktopModules/CassidyTurley/Download/Download.ashx?contentId=4796&fileName=4Q15+Denver_INDUSTRIAL+MarketBeat+Snapshot+_+4page.pdf

⁶ <http://denver.cbslocal.com/2014/12/10/pot-shop-gives-discount-in-exchange-for-homeless-donation/>

⁷ http://www.denverpost.com/ci_23067187/medical-marijuana-dispensaries-turn-charity-improve-image

⁸ <http://ckom.com/article/292968/whitewood-medical-marijuana-dispensary-giving-back-community>