

Welcome to the Dank Side

Legalization of Retail Marijuana in Palmer Lake

By Valkyrie Lynch and Bella Pemberton



Sign directing drivers to Palmer Lake Wellness Center. Photo taken by Bella Pemberton.

Since 2012, marijuana use for recreational purposes has been legal in Colorado. Even so, many communities have opted to keep marijuana use for recreational purposes illegal. On December 8, 2022, the Palmer Lake Board of Trustees authorized the amendment of code section 5-20 as it related to marijuana. Recreational cannabis sales are now legal in Palmer Lake if the seller has a license. This means that any person aged 21 or over can now purchase cannabis products for personal use much closer to home than before.

Although recreational marijuana is legal in many states across the country, there are still risks associated with its use. The United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) classifies marijuana as a class 1 substance, indicating that it has a high potential for abuse. What does the future of Tri-Lakes residents look like with cannabis on the horizon? According to Palmer Ridge's School Resource Officer, Deputy Cory Adkisson, "It doesn't change the legality of marijuana; it just changes where people can buy it from." Hence, he believes, "it probably won't change a lot." He said, "If they were getting

it before, they'll probably still get it; they just won't have to travel as far." He believes that those who already use it will continue to do so, but that new users are unlikely to emerge. Likewise, he hopes that it will not harm the younger generation. Adkisson believes that adults should be allowed to do whatever they want as long as it is within the bounds of the law. However, he does not support teenagers using marijuana because of its harmful impact on their health. Studies performed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have

found that adolescent marijuana use can lead to a number of significant problems involving an increase in mental health disorders. This could include an increased risk of social anxiety disorder, depression, and even schizophrenia in some cases. Teen marijuana users are also much more likely than average teenagers to attempt suicide or develop other severe psychiatric disorders later on in life. The younger someone begins using marijuana, the greater their likelihood of suffering from mental health consequences will be.

Many groups have advocated for recreational marijuana use in Palmer Lake for years, starting as far back as 2013. Lots of fear has stemmed from marijuana's drug classification as well as the many health consequences that can come with using it without any education. But even with this push back, the vote for recreational use won 55%-45%. After the choice for it to be legal last year, quick work was made by the board of trustees. Rather than open new businesses, Palmer Lake converted its two existing medicinal dispensaries into recreational outlets. While the majority of the town voted in favor of these changes, many still voiced their dissatisfaction.

However, Alpine Essentials, one of two existing dispensaries, has served as a source of information. "A lot of the resistance in the



Alpine Essentials on Commercial Lane.

past stems from misinformation," says Melissa Woodward, a company employee, "knowledge is power." Many people are concerned that as marijuana becomes legal for adults, teen use will increase; however, statistics show the opposite. "In the state as a whole, teen usage has decreased," Woodward says, concerning its legalization in Colorado back in 2012. A study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association discovered no major links between adult-use legalization and marijuana use among high school students. "Having it legalized helps people understand how it is an adult-use product," she explains.

As well as its ability to lower the number of teen users, Palmer Lake's economy will be greatly aided. "It's going to be amazing for Palmer Lake's economy. Not only is this going to create

millions of dollars in tax revenue, it's going to create lots of jobs in the area." Economic growth has been producing similar results across the United States. Recreational cannabis generated a whopping \$3.7 billion in tax revenue in 2021 alone. As of February 2023, the Palmer Lake unemployment rate stands at 6.8%. This is higher than the national average of 6.0%. The addition of employment opportunities between the two dispensaries offers hope to many families who may be struggling with joblessness.

While many are concerned, most are excited to see this change, which will bring new opportunities and benefits to our community. With more jobs and income available, it seems this might soon be a welcome addition to Palmer Lake and surrounding areas.



Retail marijuana off Colorado 105 in Palmer Lake. Photo by Bella Pemberton