

From: [Jim](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: Agenda Item #9 Public Comment for March 11, 2025
Date: Monday, March 10, 2025 8:15:19 AM

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Dear Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors,

My name is Jim King. I write in support of Cannabis Farm Tours, Retail Sales and Consumption, however the proposed sales limit of one eighth ounce of cannabis flower should be modified to reflect the current California State limit for Adult Use.

As someone residing outside of Santa Cruz County, the prospect of being able to visit, tour and experience cannabis directly at farms is very appealing.

While visiting the Santa Cruz area, spending one or two nights lodging and enjoying the local amenities would be a natural part of my visit to cannabis farms in the County.

Such an adventure presents an opportunity to experience cannabis in a unique fashion - directly where it is grown. Similar to visiting a craft brewery or a farm selling its produce, visiting cannabis farms affords an opportunity unlike any other.

In support of your proposed ordinance, I request considering the cannabis farm purchase limit be modified. The prospect of being able to visit, spend time and enjoy the area, only to travel home with an eighth ounce of Santa Cruz County grown cannabis is much less appealing than a more reasonable figure would present.

Thank you for considering my input.

Respectfully,

Jim King
Modesto, CA

From: [Bryce Berryessa](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Cc: [Kyle Giorchino](#); [Jenna Gallant](#)
Subject: Item #9 for March 11, 2025, Cannabis Lounges
Date: Thursday, March 6, 2025 11:42:58 AM
Attachments: [White Paper - Cannabis Consumption Lounges in Santa Cruz County.pdf](#)

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Submission of White Paper on Cannabis Lounges – Key Findings on Youth Use, Public Safety, and Economic Impact

Dear Members of the Board of Supervisors,

After hearing concerns expressed at the recent BOS meeting—specifically around youth cannabis use, impaired driving, and the overall economic viability—we felt it was important to review credible government data and statistically relevant studies to see whether these claims hold merit. Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to share our findings regarding the proposed on-site cannabis consumption lounges.

Our research, detailed in the attached white paper, shows:

- **No legitimate evidence** that cannabis lounges increase underage marijuana use.
- **No documented rise** in impaired driving incidents or citations in jurisdictions that have legalized cannabis lounges.
- **Significant economic benefits** reported by several California cities with on-site consumption programs.

We hope this analysis provides clarity and aids the Board in making an informed decision on this issue. Thank you for your consideration, and please let us know if we can answer any further questions.

Best Regards,

Bryce Berryessa

Treehouse | The Hook Outlet

Cannabis Consumption Lounges in Santa Cruz County

Executive Summary

Santa Cruz County is evaluating a proposed ordinance amendment to permit on-site cannabis consumption lounges at existing licensed dispensaries. While supporters highlight potential economic and regulatory benefits, some local stakeholders and Public Health officials have raised concerns: **(1) youth cannabis use, (2) impaired driving, and (3) the economic viability of such lounges.** This paper integrates local Santa Cruz County regulatory information, and peer-reviewed studies (e.g., JAMA Pediatrics, CDC surveys). Findings strongly indicate:

1. No Increase in Underage Cannabis Use

- Well-regulated lounges (21+ entry, strict ID checks) do not drive teen consumption.
- Multiple CDC and California Healthy Kids Survey data sets show declining youth cannabis rates despite adult-use legalization.

2. No Significant Spike in DUIs

- Research from early-adopter locales (e.g., West Hollywood) and peer-reviewed studies find no significant surge in cannabis-related DUI incidents.
- Mitigation strategies (no alcohol on-site, staff training, ride-share options) further reduce potential risks.

3. Economic Benefits

- Case studies in California (West Hollywood, San Francisco) suggest tax revenue gains, job creation, and tourism growth after opening lounges.
- Additional local revenue can fund prevention, enforcement, and public health programs.

Conclusion: Rigorous evidence underscores that on-site cannabis lounges, when properly regulated and monitored, do not spur higher teen use or DUIs and instead offer tangible economic benefits. Santa Cruz County can implement a model that prioritizes public health and leverages safe adult-only spaces for consumption, thereby reducing unregulated public cannabis use.

1. Introduction

In 2016, California legalized adult-use cannabis (Proposition 64). Despite this, Santa Cruz County currently prohibits on-site consumption in licensed dispensaries, forcing adults to consume exclusively in private residences. This dynamic disproportionately affects renters, tourists, and medical cannabis patients with housing limitations. The County's proposed amendment addresses this gap by authorizing well-regulated consumption lounges within existing dispensaries.

Opposition Arguments

Some Local stakeholders have argued that consumption lounges could:

- Encourage youth cannabis initiation,
- Increase impaired driving (DUI) incidents,
- Provide limited economic benefit relative to potential public health costs.

This white paper systematically rebuts these concerns by synthesizing:

- CDC and California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) data,

- Peer-reviewed research (e.g., JAMA Pediatrics, American Journal of Public Health),
- Local California case studies in West Hollywood and San Francisco.

The evidence consistently shows that youth usage has not escalated post-legalization, DUI trends remain stable with proper safeguards, and economic gains can be significant when lounges are managed responsibly.

2. Rebuttals to Youth Use and Access Concerns

2.1 Core Argument

Opponents claim that formalizing cannabis lounges will “normalize” marijuana for minors and expand their access, undermining youth prevention efforts.

2.2 Research Findings

- 1. Stable or Declining Teen Use**
 - **CDC Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2011–2021):** High school students’ reported current cannabis use decreased nationally from 23% to 16% (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2022).
 - **California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS):** The 2019–21 data show no statewide increase in youth cannabis consumption; in fact, the overall trend indicates a decrease in adolescent substance use since 2013–15 (California Department of Education, 2022).
- 2. Peer-Reviewed Studies**
 - **JAMA Pediatrics (2019, 2024):** Large-scale analyses found no correlation between adult-use legalization and rising underage use. Licensed dispensaries employ rigorous ID checks, making it harder for minors to purchase cannabis (Smart et al., 2019).
- 3. California Examples**
 - **West Hollywood:** After granting consumption lounge licenses in 2018–2019, the local Sheriff’s Department reported no measurable increase in teen cannabis incidents. Age-gated lounges effectively deny minors entry (Lounge White Paper, 2025).
 - **San Francisco:** Dispensary lounges operate under strict 21+ policies. Youth usage patterns have remained stable per city-level surveys (SF DPH, 2022).

2.3 Mechanisms Preventing Underage Access

- **21+ Only:** Lounges require robust ID checks at entry (Youth Access to Licensed Dispensaries.pdf).
- **No “Social Loitering”:** Adult patrons must purchase and consume on-site; minors are restricted from even entering the lounge space.
- **Shrinkage of Illicit Markets:** Regulated dispensaries outcompete illegal dealers, who have no age controls.

Conclusion: Empirical evidence from CDC, CHKS, and real-world California city data demonstrates **no upward trend in teen cannabis usage** post-lounge implementation. Strict ID checks and the absence of minors in licensed lounges ensure minimal risk of underage access.

3. Rebuttals to Impaired Driving Concerns

3.1 Core Argument

Public Health officials worry about potential DUI increases if patrons drive after onsite cannabis consumption.

3.2 Findings from Studies and Case Examples

1. No Significant Rise in Cannabis-Related DUIs

- American Journal of Public Health: Studies of Colorado and Washington found no statistically significant change in fatal crash rates post-recreational legalization (Smart et al., 2019).
- Additional research indicates that while THC detection in drivers may increase, it does not necessarily correspond to higher crash rates (Lounge Rebuttal White Paper, 2025).

2. California Pilot Insights

- West Hollywood: Since lounges began operating in 2019, the Sheriff's Station has not reported a notable spike in DUI collisions specifically linked to cannabis lounge patrons (Lounge White Paper, 2025).
- San Francisco: Similar consumption sites also show no evidence of a surge in impaired driving incidents.

3.3 Mitigation Measures

- **Prohibition of Alcohol:** By disallowing alcohol, the poly-substance risk is minimized (JAMA, 2020).
- **Staff Intervention & Education:** Lounge staff monitor consumption, advise against driving while high, and can call ride-shares or cabs.
- **Strong Enforcement:** Partnerships with local law enforcement can include DUI checkpoints and consistent messaging ("Drive High, Get a DUI").

Conclusion: Under a no-alcohol policy and staff oversight, data from peer-reviewed studies and localities with existing lounges **show no substantial DUI spike**. Santa Cruz County can further mitigate risk via public awareness campaigns and robust law enforcement coordination.

4. Economic Benefits of On-Site Consumption Lounges

4.1 Core Argument

Critics question whether lounges yield real economic value or merely exacerbate social problems.

4.2 Empirical Evidence of Economic Upsides

1. Increased Tax Revenue

- **West Hollywood:** Expects up to \$5.5 million annually in new local cannabis tax revenue from lounges (Lounge White Paper, 2025).
- **San Francisco:** Lounges attract tourists, boosting sales and sales-tax receipts for both cannabis and nearby businesses (SF Office of Cannabis, 2021).

2. Job Creation

- Each lounge employs additional staff (security, specialized budtenders, hospitality).
- The cannabis sector is among the fastest-growing U.S. industries, with over 400,000 full-time positions reported in 2022 (Leafly Jobs Report, 2022).

3. Tourism and Ancillary Spending

- **Cannabis Tourism:** An estimated 18% of U.S. leisure travelers express interest in cannabis-related experiences (factsheet-24_atod_trends.pdf).

- Santa Cruz’s scenic beaches and culture could draw visitors seeking a safe, legal space to consume, thereby increasing hotel, restaurant, and retail spending.

4.3 Balanced Analysis

- **Capturing Illicit Market Share:** Legal, on-site consumption helps convert some black-market consumers to regulated spaces, reducing untracked use and improving tax collections.
- **Pilot Program & Data:** A 2–3 year pilot could measure local impacts on tax revenue, job growth, and tourism to confirm the cost-benefit ratio.

Conclusion: Studies and real-world California data affirm economic gains—from immediate sales-tax revenue to expanded hospitality opportunities. **Lounges can bolster local employment and tourism** while recapturing potential illicit-market consumption.

5. Conclusions

5.1 Key Findings

1. **Youth Access**
 - Data from CDC, JAMA Pediatrics, and California’s own CHKS indicate no increase in underage use under well-regulated, age-gated cannabis lounges.
2. **DUI and Public Safety**
 - Empirical research and city-level case studies (West Hollywood, San Francisco) show no clear spike in cannabis-related DUIs. Prohibiting alcohol and training lounge staff to intervene further lower risks.
3. **Economic Rationale**
 - Jurisdictions in California consistently report meaningful tax revenue, job creation, and tourism gains from on-site consumption, lending credibility to the potential benefits for Santa Cruz County.

5.2 Recommendations for Santa Cruz County

- **Strict 21+ Enforcement:** ID checks upon entry; no exceptions.
- **Staff Training & Safe Transport:** Promote ride-share partnerships, public “Don’t Drive High” messages.
- **Ventilation & Zoning:** Maintain separate, properly ventilated indoor areas to protect non-users.
- **Pilot Evaluation:** Monitor youth survey data, DUIs, and economic metrics over 2–3 years to assess efficacy, make adjustments to regulations, if necessary as data dictates.

Santa Cruz County can safely move forward with on-site cannabis consumption lounges under a framework of robust regulation, fulfilling adult consumer needs, supporting local businesses, and upholding public health priorities.

References

All links verified as of March 2025

A full repository with all studies and References can be found here: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1vldmvxhxtrelXbM4lqV6i_mS3OvLUilk?usp=sharing

1. **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2022).** Youth Risk Behavior Survey. <https://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/data/yrbs/index.htm>

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- 4. JAMA Pediatrics. (2019 & 2024).**
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<https://www.leafly.com/news/cannabis-jobs-report>
- 7. factsheet-24_atod_trends.pdf. (2023).**
Trends in Adolescent Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Use.
- 8. SF Office of Cannabis. (2021).**
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<https://officeofcannabis.sfgov.org>

Prepared for:

Santa Cruz County Board of Supervisors & Community Stakeholders
Date: March 2025

Prepared by:

Santa Cruz County Dispensary Coalition

From: [Jade Nectar Info](#)
To: [Board Of Supervisors](#)
Subject: March 11 Supervisor Meeting - Item #9 - Cannabis Farm Tours Retail & Consumption
Date: Sunday, March 9, 2025 5:50:16 PM

******CAUTION:** This is an EXTERNAL email. Exercise caution. DO NOT open attachments or click links from unknown senders or unexpected email.****

Hi - I tried to comment on the meeting agenda portal, but I am not sure if my comment was submitted or not, so emailing now:

VOTE: FOR – with friendly amendment recommendations

9. Consider approving in concept an "Ordinance Enacting Chapter 7.138 of the Santa Cruz County Code Regarding Cannabis Farm Retail License Pilot Program,"

Dear Board of Supervisors,

The Farm Retail & On-site Consumption Pilot Program is a commonsense approach for attracting responsible cannabis tourism to Santa Cruz County.

However, I would like to propose the following friendly amendments to the current ordinance proposal. These friendly amendments would ensure that the farm retail sights are not used to lure local customers away from our local dispensaries, while also allowing the farm tours to provide the robust retail experience that tourists expect.

These amendments would serve to protect our local dispensaries while also giving farms the freedom to provide a quality experience for their guests:

1: Remove the retail 1/8oz flower limit per farm visitor, and set sales limits to the state limit of 1oz of flower per visitor.

- Multiple people who are interested in traveling to Santa Cruz to visit our farm have expressed disappointment that they would not be able to purchase a ‘sampler’s platter’ of the rare varieties of cannabis that our farm specializes in.
- Many people expressed that the 1/8oz limit would be similar to going on a wine vineyard tour, but only being allowed to purchase and bring home a hotel sized minnie bar bottle of one type of wine. It would be awkward, disappointing, and unfulfilling to not be able to bring home multiple unique varieties of our farm’s different cannabis flowers.

- The 1oz state limit would allow visitors to purchase an 1/8oz of up to 8 individual varieties. Many potential visitors have expressed that they are interested in purchasing a ‘sampler’s platter’ rather than purchasing 1oz of one variety. This is not an ‘outlet mall’ bulk savings experience. Visitors see our farm as a unique opportunity to sample multiple rare varieties of cannabis that cannot be found anywhere else!
- If the goal is to attract out-of-town tourists and provide a robust tourist experience that meets visitors’ expectations, imposing a limit of 1/8oz runs the risk of deflating the experience and disappointing visitors.

2: Require reservations to be made at least 24 hours in advance of the farm visit for all visitors who engage in purchasing cannabis flower products.

- Requiring tourists to make reservations at least 24 hours in advance of visiting a farm will create a burden that will deter locals from visiting a farm solely to purchase cannabis products.
- Requiring a 24 hour reservation prior to visiting a farm will also provide a layer of security for the farm. This allows the farm to know in advance who will be visiting their farm, and when.

3: Impose seasonal operation dates for farm/retail activities to: May 1 – November 15

- To further reassure local dispensaries that farms will not compete for local customers, a seasonal operation window should be considered.
- As a large portion of dispensary sales occur around the winter holiday season, restricting farm retail operations to May 1 – November 15 would add further assurances for local dispensaries.

Providing responsible & professional cannabis farm tours with on-site consumption & retail will be a huge opportunity for defining Santa Cruz County as an innovative leader in positive and responsible cannabis tourism experiences. This positive ‘branding’ will benefit our local cannabis businesses while also providing opportunities for other ancillary services who cater to tourists. Even if one is not a cannabis enthusiast, one has to recognize that Santa Cruz is known worldwide as a quirky progressive cannabis culture town. And Santa Cruz County now has an opportunity to responsibly evolve with the cannabis legalization movement, and embrace our identity as an exciting town to visit for those seeking a safe & professional tourist experience that is a little out of the ordinary

I sincerely hope you will consider these friendly amendments that I feel would more effectively help all stakeholders prosper and feel secure.

Kind regards,

Jeff Nordahl

Owner – Jade Nectar

Farm owner in Boulder Creek

(our farm is located on a former summer camp property that is set up for accommodating farm tours)