Speaker 1 (00:03:57):
So, I mean, when she saw, Yeah, somewhere. I am so,

Speaker 2 (00:06:46):
Oh, my I family. That was so that, Did Laura tell you about that? It was like a moment for, I'm gonna talk about it. How the important, like, so, um, in the person. Um, so like, yeah, it was like that. Great.

Speaker 3 (00:07:09):
All right. Hello. We have everyone see live stream and here today. Welcome to Politica 2022, your ballot booster shot. My name's Ashley Rodriguez. I'm the Director of Development for Voice of San Diego. I'm so glad to be here with you today. Thanks to everyone joining us on the live stream as well. Hello. Hello. Uh, in case you're not familiar with that boy, San Diego is an in investigative nonprofit newsroom committed to holding public officials accountable and giving you the public the information you need to be advocate for a good government. We depend on members and donors like yourselves to make this work possible. But thank you so much for being here, for being Voice San Diego member and stay with us as long. Um, I'd like say a minute to recognize our sponsors who help me today possible. A big special thank you to A A R P California for our being our title sponsor today. Uh, another thank you to the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of San Diego and the Department of Political Science International Relations. This is the fifth year USD is partnered with us and hosted us in their home. Um, so thank you so much sha them. Uh, we really appreciate their long time partnership. Uh, additional, the, the Kuya Nation Planned Parenthood's Center. Thank you all so much.

Speaker 3 (00:08:24):
If you are unable to attend, I con concurrently because you bought your ticket today. You're a member, you'll have all of these available to you recorded, uh, after the fact. So, um, don't worry about getting from one session and getting to another. You'll be able to see them all after. Um, just submit questions to her. There is the number here at the top right. I'll be monitoring that during the panel and get it to the moderator. So if you have any questions, you can text it to us. Um, that goes through the whole event as well. We'll catch anything, uh, whether session or anything else. Um, you can tweet along with us. We both shared through the social media thing, have chat live as 2022. Um, and I will now announce our moderator at by, by panels, bios and moderating bios are all in your app, so check there for the full, uh, the full blood version. But Jackie Bryan is our moderator here. She is the managing editor for the San Diego Magazine, and the past has been a freelance contributor for Voice of San Diego and many other news outlets and, uh, publish often on cannabis to their, uh, resident San Diego cannabis expert. Um, so I'm to have her here with the panel today. I'll introduce them, get started. Hi. Great.

Jackie Bryant (00:09:35):
Uh, hi everybody. Thanks for being here. Um, I'm Jackie Bryant, managing editor of San Diego Magazine. But yeah, I've, uh, contributed a lot to voice over the years. I'm primarily cannabis stories. And, um, for the last several years, I was primarily a reporter on the, the cannabis beat, whatever that means. So <laugh>, we could mean a lot of things. Um, so today we're talking about the general landscape of, uh, cannabis legality in San Diego, which sounds easy, but like anything dealing with cannabis is not. And, and it means that there's a trillion different variables. So, uh, we have Marcus Bush here for a city councilman from National City. We have Laura Wilkinson Sinton, who is a cannabis business woman and, and owns a number of cannabis businesses and is continuing to, uh, build her footprint in San Diego County. And then we have Lance Rogers, who is a cannabis attorney, um, all based here in San Diego.
Jackie Bryant (00:10:24):
So, thank you guys, and, uh, welcome. Thank you. So I wanted to start off with giving a little bit of context about where we are in cannabis legalization. I'm sure everybody heard the news about Biden the other day. It, it, it doesn't have a lot of immediate effects for anybody on the ground, but it is obviously a historic announcement, and it does set the path for federal legalization or decriminalization or, um, de or rescheduling, which is a huge deal. There's a lot that can't be done simply because cannabis is federally illegal. So, um, it's largely symbolic right now, but it will, because there are not many federal prisoners, uh, in jail for marijuana possession. I think there's like 70 or 90 of them actually. So, um, which is, they didn't announce that. But anyway, um, so that's largely symbolic. Weed is not actually totally legal yet, but it is technically legal in California.

Jackie Bryant (00:11:20):
And, uh, that happened in full for adult use. Medical was in, uh, uh, 1996, Props two, Prop two 15. And then now because of prop, uh, 64, which came into law in 2018, it's, it's technically legal for all adults over 21 to buy, sell, and, uh, grow and manufacture. So that kind of brings me to my next point, which is that the industry in California isn't really going well. I think it's fair to say, would you guys agree with that? Yes, <laugh>, it's what you mean by that, and we can talk about that. But it's good that it's legal, it's good that people are not really going to jail for it anymore. And that's really ultimately, I think the most important thing. What's not going well is that it is like anything coming from the dark, the light, it's going to be complicated to get it there.

Jackie Bryant (00:12:13):
And so we're in the middle of those growing pains, and a lot of operators just simply aren't doing very well. Taxes are very high. They're higher than in other states, and there's a lot of varying regulations because of Prop 64, which implemented a system called local control. And I think personally, that that local control element is really why this panel exists, because every little jurisdiction is allowed to have their own marijuana rules. And as you can imagine, if one town or city has one rule and it's totally contradictory to something that's next to it, it creates a lot of interesting, um, variables. We'll say that. So I'm gonna kick it over to Lance just to sort of give us the overview of local control and Prop 64 and why, how it's created, the legality landscape that we have in San Diego County and, and the area cities today.

Lance Rogers (00:13:04):
Okay. Um, and first I want to say thank you so much for putting the panel together. Uh, thank you for the work of Marcus. Thank you for the work of Laura. Uh, you know, it might not be as exciting, uh, as listening to people, you know, argue over, uh, you know, the height restrictions and things. It might not be click bait for, uh, for the news articles. But what this guy's gonna do is gonna save the world, uh, cannabis, cannabis in South County.

Lance Rogers (00:13:31):
Uh, and, and, and I'll explain my position to you a little bit later as we get into it, but first, I guess a history lesson. Um, I started as a criminal defense attorney in 2008, and one of the first cases I worked on was people v Jovan Jackson at that time, the District Attorney, Bonnie Dumanis, uh, was 100% opposed to anything, uh, cannabis. Um, and in, in concert with federal and state authorities, uh, she was engaged in a war on marijuana in San Diego County. There's, you know, interesting reasons for this that I've, I've thought about over the years. Um, you know, we, we have a, a really dynamic community. Uh,
we have a lot of military, Uh, we have border patrol, um, uh, ringing our community as well as an international border and, and the ocean. And yet everybody here likes to smoke weed, right?

Lance Rogers (00:14:23):
Like, who doesn't like to go to the beach? I do to get high and, and hang out. I mean that, that's awesome. So we had this, um, this, this conflict, which was really unique in, in the entire state and possibly the entire country where, you know, you got a lot of people that wanna enjoy and smoke weed with local law enforcement who are at war with marijuana. And so that all in a sense culminated with a series of orchestrated raids in 2008, 2009 that were coined Operation Green rx. Um, and I just so happened to, you know, become a criminal defense attorney around the same time, um, got a call, visited a gentleman by the name of Jovan Jackson out in, uh, George Bailey Detention Facility, Uh, you know, was doing, you know, DUls and robberies and these types of things at the time, and sat down.

Lance Rogers (00:15:09):
I was like, Okay, alright. What's, what's the story? He said, I'm innocent. I was like, Oh, okay. This is like the fifth time I've heard that, but okay, go on. So, no, I, I was running a, uh, a medical collective under, under prop two 15, SB four 20. And, uh, and I'm innocent, you know, I was like, Okay, tell me more. Well, you know, I got, you know, 2000, uh, seriously ill medical cannabis patients who come to me and I, I provide them with medicine. It was like, Okay, this is getting interesting, you know, go on. He's like, Yeah, and I have a, you know, a nonprofit and we pay taxes. Like, okay, okay, so why are you in a jail cell? Well, you know, I'm innocent and I was targeted. I was, I was discriminated against. And I was like, Well, okay.

Lance Rogers (00:15:46):
So it's really difficult to represent innocent people. Um, as a criminal defense attorney, it's way easier to represent, you know, the guilty, uh, cause it's just kind of like a mitigation of, of, of, uh, of risk. Uh, but we took the first case to trial, won that case, took the second case, uh, to appellate court and made the law and the state of California that you can sell, you know, cannabis. And, uh, in a sense, I think Jovan was, was, you know, vindicated. Um, you know, when you look back at that, that, uh, that arrest and, and, and all of those efforts, you know, some things strike me. Um, when I think about it, there were 22 collectives, dispensaries, you know, uh, targeted in 2008, uh, of the 22, uh, Jovan was the only one who was charged with, uh, his dispensary was the only one that was charged by, uh, uh, Bonnie Demanis.

Lance Rogers (00:16:41):
Um, if you looked at the data, the rest of the dispensaries were run by, uh, folks who were not African American. When I looked at the, uh, his particular case, you know, there were multiple people. It wasn't just Jovan running the dispensary. Uh, there were, there were lots of folks, you know, uh, in the dispensary, you know, getting cannabis out there. Uh, and there were, yes, I I would say there were probably around 10, uh, suspects of that investigation. Eight of whom were white, two of whom were African American, jovan in the security guard. And, um, you, you can probably guess the, uh, the, you know, who got charged. Uh, you know, 100% of the African Americans got charged with, uh, crimes. And 100% of the, uh, white folks working at dispensary were cooperating witnesses. Um, I'm shocked. No shocked. I tell you, it's never happens ever the first time I've ever heard of this.

Lance Rogers (00:17:33):
So, so that kind of, you know, set me on a course to handle, uh, cannabis criminal offense cases throughout California for my career. Um, 2011, I represented the first, uh, dispensary in the county of San Diego. Okay, So let's get into the history. So, um, you know, we have this war on marijuana in the county of San Diego. The board of supervisors said, Oh, we've got a great idea to deal with this. Let's pass an ordinance, uh, that is so restrictive that no one could ever get a license. Um, and they did. And, you know, everybody was just up in arms, You know, What, are you kidding me? You know, these are gonna be in the middle of nowhere, and, you know, you have to pay all these fees. I mean, it's, this is a defacto ban. And that's true. It was a defacto ban. And

Jackie Bryant (00:18:20):

It's worth saying that this happens in other counties and places in California. 100%. San Diego has a reputation because of this, this war that Bonnie Deman has, you know, started that for being particularly strided in that. But this is not the only jurisdiction in California that has, uh, legislated this way.

Lance Rogers (00:18:36):

Correct. Yeah. And I guess to get to your point too, real quick, with regard to local control, every municipality in the city has, excuse me, in the state, has one of three things with regard to local cannabis, uh, an outright ban, um, on its face, no cannabis anywhere in the city of x, a defacto ban, which is so restrictive that it's impractical or impossible to actually get a license, um, or a, a permitting scheme, you know, that actually licenses dispensaries. Um, and, and you cannot get a state cannabis license without a local permit. We call it dual licensing. Okay. Um, so in the county of San Diego, they passed an ordinance defacto ban. Essentially, I represented a group that was actually able to find a location, go through the process, work with the San Diego County Sheriff's Department in 2011, and get a dispensary license in 2011.

Lance Rogers (00:19:27):

Um, I remember specifically a meeting with a member of the sheriff's department in the big warehouse that then became, I think it's OutCo, um, out mm-hmm. In, in the county now. At the time, it was called Mother Earth Cooperative. And, uh, and we exchanged numbers, and, uh, and I said, he, he, he said, Boy, this is the first time I've st stood in a warehouse and not, uh, thrown anybody with a, with a bunch of pot growers, and I haven't arrested anyone. And I said, Yeah, sir, This is the first time I've ever given a cop my cell phone number. You know, we're, we're trying to, you know, we're trying to, you know, move things along. Um, got involved in, you know, in sort of advocacy efforts from then and, uh, uh, joined a, you know, so, so there's this transition from, you know, cannabis being a movement to an industry.

Lance Rogers (00:20:12):

And there's sometimes there's a lot of tension, um, with that as well, which we could probably get into. Yeah. Certainly still a movement because it's illegal under federal law, and there are hundreds of cities throughout California that, um, prohibit this activity. Um, but I mean, again, focusing on the, on the, on the county of San Diego, uh, worked with the city of San Diego in 2016, I want to say. Um, and worked with the first, uh, dispensary that was licensed through the city, uh, called a Green Alternative down in, in OTA Mesa. Um, it, it was a, a incredibly competitive, um, land use, uh, process where, you know, folks were, were, it was a knife fight, you know, like everybody was playing all sorts of, you know, zoning in litigation games to try and get the first one to get this golden ticket, which is worth millions. Um,
Jackie Bryant (00:21:06):
And that's also very common, right? That's common across the state. That's, uh, there, I always joke that whenever I meet a land use attorney, I'm always like, You have cannabis clients, don't you? And he is like, How did you know it? It's kind of become the defacto vehicle

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:21:18):
For, but it doesn't have

Jackie Bryant (00:21:19):
Living these battles won't get in. It doesn't have to be it

Marcus Bush (00:21:22):
Shouldn be,

Jackie Bryant (00:21:22):
But it is.

Lance Rogers (00:21:23):
Yeah. I could, I could, we would, we could talk about stories, but I don't wanna take too much of time. So, uh, City of San Diego, uh, then worked with the city of Chula Vista a couple of years ago, uh, representing, uh, Grasshopper Dispensary, which is a fantastic, you know, South County based, locally owned, uh, dispensary, uh, worked with, uh, a cultivator who received a ca uh, cultivation license in the city of Ocean side, um, which is great. And so, um, you know, slowly by, slowly cities are starting to come along. Um, I'm looking forward to, uh, when the city of Coronado, um, opens its first dispenser.

Jackie Bryant (00:21:58):
Yeah. That'll happen soon, right,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:22:00):
<laugh>?

Marcus Bush (00:22:01):
Yeah. Well, Laura's gonna announce our candidacy from mayor or of Corona

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:22:06):
Changed those

Jackie Bryant (00:22:06):
Along.

Lance Rogers (00:22:07):
So anyway, that's just a little bit about me, a little bit about San Diego, and, uh, you know, I'm looking forward to the discussion.
Jackie Bryant (00:22:11):
Yeah, that's great context. Thank you. So, so to that point, um, everything's a little bit different. It's, it's legal in the city of San Diego. There are a number of dispensaries. Do we know off the top of, there's 20,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:22:25):
Believe there's 28

Jackie Bryant (00:22:26):
At this point, right? I was gonna say 25 of 28 there.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:22:29):
36 available permits that some of them aren't being used after

Jackie Bryant (00:22:31):
Blade. Got it. Okay. So there you go. There are 28 licenses, uh, currently active and, and open store fronts.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:22:38):
And if I, if I could punctuate, you know, conservation

Jackie Bryant (00:22:42):
Licenses, there are a number issued, but most, many of them in manufacturing are not actually in use. So this happened a couple years ago. There was a manufacturing tax in the city that got amended, but it was considered to be very high for a while. And due to that, in a number of other factors, a lot of people who were growing in manufacturing here in San Diego actually left. There was a decent exodus from here up to the Bay Area around when, uh, 64 came into effect. So, um, that is being made up for the difference of that in, in other cities slowly. And, and I think manufacturers in some measure are coming back, but we kind of lost the initial wave of that in San Diego County because of that tax. And a few other restrictions

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:23:24):
On Prop 64, 1 of the promises of Prop 64 was access, patient access. And that is something

Jackie Bryant (00:23:33):
Just patients access for everybody. Yeah.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:23:36):
Access for everybody. The, the adult use and where San Diego County has lagged, most of California, and certainly all of the states that have legalized, is allowing for that access. I know in the city of San Diego, the zoning is so restrictive, and these are retail outlets. They should be in retail locations. If you go to San Francisco, you'll see a St. Dizzy right there on Market Square, but they hide them and make them inaccessible and car dependent, which is, you know, it, it's the opposite of access. They make it difficult to find, and it becomes a land use play instead of just opening a retail store like it is in so many
other places. I, uh, learned the business in Bend, Oregon in 2015, and, uh, excuse me, they up in Bend. Currently there are 40 dispensaries in a town of a hundred thousand.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:24:28):
Now, if San Diego County had that same ratio, we would have 5,500 plus dispensaries here, and it would not be a big deal. You know, in other locations. California has really restricted this in so many ways. And then you add the additional layer of cities on top of it. So you have regulation and you have taxation. Wa gummies is, is the nation's most popular THC gummy. It has left the state of California because the pardon me that's pulled out as well, is this overtaxation and this overregulation of the few that you even allow in the door. And one of the challenges we have is, and I, my personal, it's anecdotal, but I'm sure there's research we could, we could commission to figure this out. San Diego is a border county, and for 30 years, local news has pounded about evil cannabis cartels. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, you know, the racism plays into that.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:25:30):
All of that plays into it. So now we have people who are reticent to do it because you know it's drugs. Well, I will remind you that no one has ever died from, uh, THC or cannabis overdose ever. And that information is on the deas own website. So we're hoping it'll pull off of Schedule one this year. But really the lack of access is driving this same black market. It's the reason there are illegal grows using illegal poisons in our very county right now on federal lands and state lands when they can get to it. So allowing for that access and opening it up is, will cure a lot of these ills. But you know, this, this is not plutonium that we're regulating here. This is a weed that grows in the ground that has been used for millennia, for medicinal purposes, and for recreational purposes. And I am, I am still so frustrated by the red tape, by all of the regulations in the, and the taxation issues. Um, many of you are, are familiar that Chula Vista has, I believe, eight dispensaries, um, that are adult use dispensaries and a and a couple of deliveries as well. And I just won my court case. It took three and a half years to sue the state of Chula Vista because they didn't even follow their own ordinance. So when you had about

Jackie Bryant (00:26:52):
That for voice, you can find the details in there.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:26:54):
Yeah. Voice of standing. And, you know, not everybody has the wherewithal or the funds to be able to do that. If you have a social equity candidate who wants to open a shop, they're not, they're not gonna be able to challenge a big city. And the big cities know it. So, you know, this is one of the challenges as we open up. Now, the other element of this is cities are getting a taste of the money. They look at Desert Hot Springs over in the desert, you know, their city hall was in a trailer and they opened up to, um, when medical cannabis became legal, they opened up, they threw open their doors and said, Come to Desert Hot Springs. And they did enforce. And now they have a thriving arts program. They have a lead certified, um, city hall that I think is probably finished.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:27:39):
I mean, they're, they have public monies that they didn't have before for their general fund. So I think that's what's forcing the city of Santee and many of the cities throughout the county to take a look at what's possible here. But as the county gets their, you know, their regulatory construct together, um, I would implore the county of San Diego to look to the state of New York who is giving their first 200
licenses to people who have actually been arrested and incarcerated in the war on drugs for cannabis. I think that, I think New York State is leading the way because the fact of the matter is right now, it's a lot of rich people in rich corporations, even publicly traded Canadian corporations that are coming in and doing this. And if you want true social equity, you can't just say, Okay, well we'll give you this little program, and here's a little capital.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:28:28):
These people have been punished for decades. They can't get student loans, Many of 'em couldn't get jobs. And to be able to find access to the capital that's required to either buy or lease a place and have the, the wherewithal to get through all of the regulations and everything else, you know, you've gotta give them, you've gotta give them a hand up. You just can't give 'em a handout. It's, you've gotta give them a little bit of a head start so they can establish their businesses and ete and grow this multigenerational wealth that other people are having just by walking in the door with enough money. So,

Jackie Bryant (00:29:02):
Thank you, Laura. So to that point, um, various places have limited access in various ways or opened it up in one city that has opened it up and in a way that I think is, is significant, um, for anywhere in California, certainly for the country. And notable in San Diego County is National City, National City Ordinance in spring 2021. Is that correct?

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:29:26):
Yes,

Jackie Bryant (00:29:27):
May, 2021, I believe. And, um, they're actually going to have consumption lounges, which is so hotly contested all over the country, all over the state. It's very hard for, for them to get implemented because people are like, Okay, sure, you can grow and sell weed, I guess, and, and people can smoke it in their own homes, like whatever, do what you wanna do. But people get freaked out, especially voters when they hear that there's going to be like a weed bar in their neighborhood. And I get how that feels on its face, Right. But then when you think about it actually, like a bar bar with alcohol and actually, you know, who's going to smoke weed and then starting a fight? Pretty much nobody. So it is actually a very, I think personally this is, these are my personal views. I think it's a very good way to implement, uh, cannabis legality because you're actually serving it and selling it to people in a controlled setting that the Bud tenderer can, can limit people's consumption. It's, it's actually, I think, a boon for public health. Um, and it's, it's very hard to get that implemented, as I mentioned, but National City's doing it. So Marcus, why don't you tell us about that? And, and, and if you could give a little color on how this came to be and any tension that may have come up, cuz I'm sure there, I'm sure there was some.

Marcus Bush (00:30:38):
Yeah, well I love color colorful guys, so happy to do that. Um, so no, just, it's, uh, honor to be here. So appreciate voice San Diego for putting this on and everyone in the, in the audience. Um, so just, uh, some background on myself. Uh, I, I am a cannabis user and I think, uh, that's really important to stay, to say to, to break the stigma that still exists. Um, especially, um, you know, against black and brown folks. And I'm black and brown. I'm black skin Afro Latino. And so, um, so I use it. My wife uses it not correctly cuz she's pregnant, but you know, when she's not pregnant, she uses it. My mom, I have friends and
family. And so I say that we need to repeat that and, and break that stigma because that’s part of what drives, uh, these over regulations, these restrictions, the over-policing.

Marcus Bush (00:31:25):
Um, is, is is that stigma. So it's gonna take some time. Um, but I think we all, we all need to move forward, uh, doing that. Um, and so for me, from a, a policy standpoint, so I got, I first got involved, uh, when I was a planning commissioner, and I actually served as a planning commission chair in 2015 for the city of National City. And that was at a time, and you guys probably have to help me, there was a lot that was passed that gave this trigger period where if, uh, cities didn't ban it or allow regulation that had shut down. And that wasn't, I think the deadline was 2015, right? Do you guys remember that? Um, you know what I'm talking about. Well, Jackie Bryant (00:32:00):
Or prop. Yeah, Prop 64. 64. And, and the same thing is actually currently happening in New York. It's either you buy in now or you, you buy in now and you're in forever, but if you don't, you can do it later. They actually did it in the inverse, but yeah. That it's a common provision. So

Marcus Bush (00:32:17):
Thanks. Yeah. So, um, so that was back in, um, well at least when it was discussed at the, uh, city, uh, um, the city level, um, when I was on the planning commission. So you had to, it was at trigger, so we had a period of time where we allowed it or not. And our city staff, of course, was planning to, to ban it all. So, um, I took the lead, um, on saying, Well, why aren't we looking at banning it right away? Why don't we look at regulating it? So there was a lot of discussion. It was, uh, really controversial, but I think that was in December of 2015, we did pass, um, on the planning commission. We passed a, uh, ordinance and, um, that, uh, legalized, uh, cannabis re retail, um, consumption, uh, and cultivation and I think manufacturing too, So didn't matter.

Marcus Bush (00:33:01):
It was swiftly rejected by city council at the time. Uh, uh, unanimously to, and it's unfortunate because, um, you know, it, it passed, you know, four three on, on planning commission. But imagine where we would be a national city with more revenue, with more access. Um, but our, uh, our leadership at the time didn't see that. I'm glad that now we're, um, you know, kind of taking, uh, more steps. Uh, you see that with the, um, with the lounge, as you said. So even though we were behind on the, the land use part of it, um, I think we got more ahead where the first in the county to do the, the lounge. That lounge is important. It's the first in the county. It's very controversial. Every council meeting we have those group of activists, Laura knows them very well that, um, Becky and, uh, a few other, um, people, I can't remember their names. And, um, I appreciate their being. They're, they're giving their voice, so I appreciate that. Uh, but, um, so it's definitely controversial and, uh, but, but I think it's making progress. You

Jackie Bryant (00:33:58):
Expand on why it's controversial, Like what are, what are people

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:34:00):
Concerned about? And I have to jump in here only because it's literally only six people. It is the same true six people actually at every city council. Oh, Zoom is the greatest thing for them. They don't even
have to get in their cars and drives <laugh>. They have an outsized voice. They purport to represent. One of ’em says he’s from, uh, I think it's San Goods for safe neighborhoods. There is no such organization. There is no website. They are not registered at the Secretary of State's office. It is a fake, I mean they are without portfolio, but they work the refs and they make it sound like it's controversial at the city council level. Only 8% of Americans in the pew research that just came out big cannabis should be illegal at this point in the whole United States. So it's, it's not controversial, but they're, they're, as we've seen, they drum up controversy at every city council meeting. He has to sit through it. Can I

Jackie Bryant (00:34:54):
And voices, Jesse Marks wrote about these people actually a few years ago. So if you wanna go back in the archives, there is definitely some literature on this tradition in San Diego.

Marcus Bush (00:35:03):
<laugh> Can, can, can I explain how National City's gonna change the world? Uh, real quick,

Jackie Bryant (00:35:06):
Please. I, I, of

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:35:08):
Course, it's quite

Lance Rogers (00:35:08):
Superlative. I know a little bit about this controversy because I've been dealing it with, with it my entire, entire career. And I, I know these people, they show up all the time. And the challenge with these people is, as you said, you know, they, they represent such a, uh, a minority of folks that it's kind of like, you know, do you even give them the time because the, the legalization train has left the station, You know, it's normal <laugh> uh, to be a cannabis uni user. It's normal to, you know, participate in the cannabis movement or the cannabis industry. It's, it's, it's a little odd to listen to people, uh, oppose, you know, the use and consumption of this plant. But there's a lot of long history about where those folks come from as dating back to the twenties and Reefer Madness. Um, you know, as you read, if you read, you know, The Emperor has No Clue by Jack Herre goes into the whole history there.

Lance Rogers (00:35:56):
And, uh, in my career, it’s been really fascinating because if you do, you know, interact with people over 60, 65, um, there is, they are ingrained with this subconscious fear of, of marijuana cannabis because it, there was a large propaganda campaign during that time period, you know, and you could just watch Reef Madness and look how crazy it is. But it, it was perpetuated. And even when you talk about, it sounds a little crazy, but there's, there's evidence there, um, that I could put forth in court about, you know, how it was propagated, uh, to advance the hemp and cotton industry cuz they didn't want to compete with, uh, I'm sorry, to, uh, uh, to advance the cotton industry, uh, nylon, other textiles. Cause they didn't wanna compete with hemp. And

Jackie Bryant (00:36:38):
Also they wanted to protect the timber industry because they saw cultivation of hemp or cannabis Correct. Would, could actually go against that. And so it was, uh, William Randolph Hearst, the, the
newspaper Titan was actually involved with that effort with the federal government to quietly crush marijuana.

Lance Rogers (00:36:55):
So since 2000, uh, 18, we have created a multibillion dollar hemp industry in the United States, You know, as a brand new industry. You know, we are leaders in, in, in hemp, uh, in, in hemp now, thanks to the efforts of folks that, you know, have worked on cannabis and then worked on hemp. Um, but going back to national city and consumption lounges, um, you know, currently we all, you know, live in our own little bubbles. You know, we're on the internet and we like, you know, like, like, you know, friend, friend, friend, whatever. Um, and you know, especially that was a part of Covid too, right? Like, so as we're coming outta Covid, you know, we're having more of these things. People have their own, you know, sense of, of comfort about that. No, I don't wanna be around people. Maybe I should wear mask.

Lance Rogers (00:37:40):
Maybe I don't wear mask. And so you, you know, the more that we can create space for people to have a conversation that's not on the internet, uh, the better. Um, and a cannabis lounge is a place where folks of all walks of life are gonna go and smoke a joint with each other, take a hit on the vape, and eat a edible and have whatever conversation they want. And there's a ton of scientific data about how, you know, the endocannabinoid system, when it creates these, these connections, it makes people, you know, a little bit elevated in their thinking. So that's why I understand that is a big loaded statement that national city is gonna change the world. But, um, that's, that's my argument for why it's going to

Jackie Bryant (00:38:25):
No, I agree with this. And it's also worth pointing out exactly to that point that cannabis culture and cannabis consumption and use has alwa has been completely privatized because of, of its illegalities. So there's just, unless you were willing to, um, forego that and go to underground events that have been happening, you know, in California, especially for years with two 15, and you're part of that culture, most people aren't part of that culture and don't have access to it. And so this is the first time that people will actually be able to consume in public with people they don't know or like-minded people. It's, it's actually, I, it's, I get kind of emotional about it. It's, it's because you forget that this is in the shadows and that you do this privately and that it, it is seemingly such, you know, it's just smoking weed or consuming weed, but it is a big part of a lot of people's lives and in, in a way that drinking or, or doing other things is. And so, um, and there's obviously a strong agricultural element. Oh my God, there's so much. So, um, yeah, I, I, I agree. I think it's, it's a big deal for that.

Marcus Bush (00:39:20):
I, so I, I do think, uh, it, it can in a way change the world and we all continue to world the ripple effects, you know? Yeah. In our, in our way. And so in National City, at least, uh, for the county, so us being ahead of the game on this, it's, it is I think, scary to a lot of people, right? And even residents, because we all sometimes have this fear of the unknown. And so we're the first doing it, but not in the state. Right? And so I think West Hollywood, San Francisco has some I'd like to visit still Definitely the desert. Yeah. Um, so, so, so they exist and, and it, and it shouldn't be this radical thing if we think about it because we accept alcohol. It is a fact that alcohol is much more dangerous than cannabis. It's, it's just a fact.
Marcus Bush (00:39:59):
And if you think about it, just like from like metaphor, just experience, like who would you rather, what is a less dangerous situation? Is it someone, a bunch of people in a bar that have been drinking? Like where is the, um, the, the possibility for more violence, right? Is it with a bunch of people drinking and, and, and getting drunk and then, you know, sometimes like, you know, one little thing can set someone off and then it just, it results in violence. Or compare that to someone who is really high, who is, uh, you know, smoking weed. They're chill. They're not, like, they're not necessarily trying to start fight. We all, they know that

Jackie Bryant (00:40:33):
From bunch

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:40:33):
Of, at that point, law enforcement, they'll tell you quietly, there are no cannabis domestic calls. Mm-hmm. None. There you go, honey, Let's, let's order a pizza and hang out on the couch and watch a movies, you know, let's chill. Yeah. Mean law enforcement loves that.

Marcus Bush (00:40:49):
And obviously that's not to say like, so there's, um, obviously should be controlled and regulated, right? We don't want, uh, folks, we need to protect, uh, the public from, you know, uh, from, uh, driving under the influence of cannabis too. So that's dangerous. We need to say that. And that can be done. And that's why in a controlled setting like a, uh, cannabis lounge, it, it absolutely can be done it's revenue with the city. And just to give you guys, um, info about what we're doing, so it's still with the a application process, my understanding is there was only one applicant. So, um, and part of it is because, um, we, we are really heavy regulating it in the city. So when we did, um, uh, propose it, uh, I wanted, uh, it expanded citywide in our mixed use zones in retail, because I think it should be treated as a retail use.

Marcus Bush (00:41:32):
Why are we treating it as anything different than retail? Um, that wasn't where the council was. And, uh, so we really restricted it to the west side of national city and these really difficult, uh, parcels in my opinion. However, having, having said that, uh, I do think I do see the value in that this was kind of almost like a pilot. And now that it's, uh, smaller, I'm having concerns, which I'm more than happy to talk later about our, our social equity policy. I'm concerned about that. Do you wanna talk? And so it's good that, um, we, um, like social equity, you have to get right on the forefront, not on the back end. So, um, I think, and I think with this, with this lounge, it's the opportunity to address as social equity too.

Jackie Bryant (00:42:11):
So speaking of social equity, and one second,

Speaker 7 (00:42:15):
Say a quick question. Yeah. What is the actual timeline, do you think, of the lounge of actually opening?

Jackie Bryant (00:42:21):
What's the timeline of the lounge open? I
Marcus Bush (00:42:23):
Think late 2023. I think that's case estimate. Uh, probably with the permitting and the construction, but don't quote me on that.

Jackie Bryant (00:42:33):
And, uh, just to give a quick aside, um, you know, what we mentioned earlier about the county and, and, and, and the county's, uh, the blanket ban that, that was still in effect until recently, It's in the process of being overturned in legality implemented in the unincorporated areas of the county. So I did wanna make that point. So we know that that process is rolling too, but as I understand it, I, I don't think there's going to be any legal adult use sales or anything like that in the county, at least until some point in 2023 or beyond, right? They,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:43:03):
Yeah, they, um, they had a blanket EER that they're doing, which actually was good because you'll save all the growers and all the small people a ton of money because, and the California reg, the environmental impact report for the county for, that'll cover growers, manufacturers, it'll cover all of it. So individual applicants will not have to go to that $150,000 expense of getting an EIR report. Right. So, and that takes two years. And that started maybe a year ago, maybe nine months ago. Yeah. So, okay. There are five that do operate, um, under a grandfathered clause right now, though, But they're in Ramona, they're in in very, you know, small, they're clustered in a couple of small rural areas.

Jackie Bryant (00:43:42):
Thank you for that. And so, social equity, social equity is a huge topic across the nation. Um, as mentioned, New York State made a rather historic announcement to give its first 200 licenses towards, uh, people of color and also people who have been arrested, uh, for cannabis and have cannabis, uh, citations. So, um, speaking of social equity, how is, how is that concept, uh, affected what you've done in National City and, and how things have come to be in National City and what are your personal feelings about it? About the concept?

Marcus Bush (00:44:15):
So, personal feeling on a social equity issue, it's a priority and how I view social equity. Um, we've had, uh, historically, uh, and Laura, uh, said this, I, uh, appreciate it. Um, and Lance, but, so we've had decades of black and brown men, mostly men, um, selling cannabis and incarcerated for it. So, um, the generational, uh, trauma that, that cause a separation of families when they do get out the recidivism, not being able to find gainful employment, not being able to have upward mobility, can't, um, you know, much more difficult, if not impossible to even purchase a home. So don't have that, that wealth building. So it just, or

Jackie Bryant (00:44:54):
Get a job or to anything that normal people do. If you have a felony on your record, you can

Marcus Bush (00:44:58):
Imagine anything. And it's been predominantly black and brown men. What frankly me off is that now that it's suddenly illegal, who's profiting from it and who's has that access? It's predominantly white males that have it. And I think that's wrong. And it's honestly very, very difficult to, because Jan, and we
don’t want to exclude white men, right? So I’m not, uh, saying that, um, it’s, but the priority should be those who’ve been previously incarcerated. I would say that. So not necessarily like, yes, black and brown folks. Yes. I think, um, you know, when we have these licenses, it should be local. But the priority for me, if we want to achieve, uh, true social equity, it should be those that have been, uh, incarcerated for it, including their families. I think that, and that those happen to be black and brown and brown

Jackie Bryant (00:45:42):
Folks, right? And so those people operated in what, um, uh, people in the cannabis movement or in the industry like to call the traditional or legacy market, which is considered a compassionate term for what, um, most common folks will call the black market that that’s

Marcus Bush (00:45:56):
Considered or illicit market

Jackie Bryant (00:45:57):
Or illicit market. It’s considered a little gosh and disrespectful. So, um, I personally use the words traditional and legacy where I can. And so, so, so how is that shaking out in National City and what does that mean?

Marcus Bush (00:46:09):
So it’s still in process. Um, and, uh, what I’ve heard from, from community residents, So we’ve had, uh, our top three and I, and I think I’d really like Laura to speak on this more because she was one of the applicants. But I, I think what our council policy, um, when we, when we drafted this, or at least what our intent was, was for this to go to local residents, uh, was to go to those previously incarcerated. Um, hearing that hasn’t happened, but full disclosure, I haven’t, um, had the opportunity to fully review everything because it’s still on the staff level and process. So I’m keeping an open mind. But that, but if that isn’t what’s happened, if our goal was to make sure this is equitable for, uh, those who’ve been previously incarcerated, those who are truly local and black and brown folks, and if that’s not happening, then it’s good that this was a pilot and it’s a small geographic area, so we need to fix it. And I want to hear from you guys how we solve the social equity problem, or what your ideas are.

Jackie Bryant (00:47:03):
It’s, it’s, you know, there’s a challenge quickly. One sec. Yeah, sorry. Right before you get into it, because there, I know you have a lot of context to share on this. Um, so National City does allowed for incarcerated, formally incarcerated people, a lot of places don’t. The city of San Diego, Chula Vista, if you have a citation or if you have anything on your record, cannabis or anything, period, but even cannabis related, you’re disqualified. So if you are one of those legacy market people who, who does happen to have something on their record, you’re toast. You can’t do it. So it is notable that there are jurisdictions that will allow that.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:47:34):
And it’s even more notable that National City was one of only two cities in the entire state of California to vote down Proposition 64 uhhuh. It was by 11 votes, which council members point out to each other. But the fact that they have done the turnaround here is really a testament to the leadership that the council has truly, um, when it comes to social equity is a tough one. You look at Oakland, California, where they funded cannabis kitchens that they had to be non-profits and they build a cannabis kitchen,
and then they train people 24/7. So if you have, if you're a small person, if you're, and it was really for, um, people who had been previously incarcerated for cannabis and for drug use. And if, let's say a woman wanted to start an edibles business, she could rent that kitchen at a discount between 2:00 AM and 5:00 AM and go and manufacture in that kitchen without having to get a lease, build a kitchen, go through the regulatory process and all of that.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:48:32):
Now, where I think Oakland really bailed on this, and, and what I think National City could do is they needed a retail outlet. Because if you don't have a retail outlet to sell your gummies or your brownies or whatever you're making, you got no business. Yeah. You can't just sell, I can't just sell. And just, just like I said, the numbers here, it should be 5,000. We should have over 5,000 dispensaries here in the entire county of San Diego. We have 50 and all of them have their hands out. They want slotting fees. They want your people in their work and all. I mean, you can't do that if you're an entrepreneur and trying to start up. So, you know, expanding the number of actual retail places, because that's the last mile. There's lots of growers in California, there's lots of manufacturers. But in San Diego County, we do not have access and retail outlets for the general public.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:49:20):
And it's a safety issue at some point, because this stuff is tested and regulated that comes through stores. It's not, if you're buying it, and there's a lot of public confusion. If I Google right now National City Cannabis dispensaries, I'll get a list of six. And none of them are legal because they're not up and operating yet. So it's a real cat and mouse game for, for law enforcement there. But National City has really led the way, and they are, the thing is the, the way they're scoring right now doesn't factor in the social equity part that will come in the second part, which is when they, when you say

Jackie Bryant (00:49:53):
Scoring for,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:49:54):
For the applications Yeah, for the offers. So that the

Jackie Bryant (00:49:57):
Process in various cities that you submit an application and consultants will come in and they'll give you a grade, and then based on that, the city counselor who whichever, you know, is deciding will take that number. So, Right,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:50:08):
Exactly. And with National City, they didn't do it in a, what they call a true merit based thing, where they read the whole thing and decide, which is very subjective and can be arbitrary and capricious depending on who's reading it. But in National City it was kind of a pass fail. Either you included this or you didn't all the way down. And they're still going through the appellate process, which I will respect at this point. Um, and I haven't, I'm not saying anything here that I haven't already said at a public meeting in National City either, but, but one of the problems that you run into with these social equity programs is there's a real tokenization. They find somebody somewhere, they'll give 'em 51%. Yes. They'll say, We'll buy you out for $200,000 in a year when the city's not looking and no longer cares.
Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:50:49):
And that's what's happened. Dizzy, which actually score, they were the top score in National City. And they've gotten in trouble in this in two other jurisdictions. So I'm assuming that the National City, city attorney will look at operating agreements and, you know, validate that information to make sure it's accurate. Cuz it's, you know, you get, if if you, if you change the game, you get better players. I mean, it just happens in pretty much every industry if they can find a way to got corners. But making sure that that, you know, giving a local preference, I thought was a really terrific aspect of national state. It was at the sole criteria, but it was unique. It was a, yeah, it was unique. San Diego County. It was the first ones to do that because otherwise you get outside again, you get the, the white boys from New York with the social equity, with the, you know, who have equity VC from equity VC money and their daddy's had great lawyers when they got busted for pot. So, you know, it's a, we wanna, even for smoking, they don't smoke weed <laugh>. I've interviewed all of them. They don't smoke weed. But, but to, you know, we need to even the playing field and by evening the playing field, you've gotta give some people who have been held back a chance to Go ahead. I'm gonna pause with you right there. Cause we have a question.

Speaker 8 (00:51:57):
Just a quick, um, a quick comment and a quick question. My comment is, as a 68 year old that is totally involved in the senior community, like on executive board, the California Alliance of Retired Americans on my e-board for my union, um, and I'm not speaking for either organization, but just I have found seniors to be overwhelmingly in support. I mean

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:52:25):
Too, it's actually the highest growing category in cannabis sales in multiple places across the country is people 65 that, and even more importantly, women too in states where cannabis, where adult use cannabis is legal, the drug companies sales for over the counter pain me medications has dropped in the correlation causation. That makes me nervous as a journalist calling that, you know, direct, but I'm with you. Right.

Speaker 8 (00:52:54):
But this things open your mind that seniors are not the end impact.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:52:57):
Absolutely. I agree with that.

Speaker 8 (00:52:59):
And then my quick question is, and I'm 1000% support markets will tell you that, but I have always, as someone who works in a dangerous job, I was a waste sweater operator for the city for 30 years. I am scared about people being not in their best mind running dangerous equipment that I would've had to work with them and be put in potential danger and, uh, you know, and add around the driving stuff since there isn't like a quick test. And I'm just wondering how would the lounge, um, that would somehow be,

Lance Rogers (00:53:41):
You mind if I respond? Yeah, no, so go ahead. The, the question was just, you know, about the risks associated with cannabis, uh, consumption both individually and at a, a public level. And it's, it's a really valid point. You know, I think sometimes when you're in the cannabis movement, people think, Oh, you just want everybody, you know, smoking cannabis all the time, anywhere, you know, with no, uh, no rules or, or, or, or, you know, restrictions anywhere. And that's not the case. I mean, we have many, many, many laws, uh, in many, many ways to keep people safe. Um, so she was asking about, you know, well, what if, you know, what about, uh, drugged driving coming from this consumption launch? Well, we already have, you know, vehicle code that covers, uh, that and you can, uh, 100% be charged and convicted for driving under the influence of, of cannabis.

Lance Rogers (00:54:31):
Uh, what about, you know, the liability? We have what's known as graham shop laws, which would also apply to a consumption lounge where if, uh, you know, someone is, is harmed by, uh, patron that over consumed, they can and will get sued. Um, and, you know, it will hopefully they have insurance and if they don't have insurance, then um, that company is going to lose their business because they were irresponsibly, uh, providing cannabis, you know, too much cannabis to somebody. And it's actually really challenging because there is a certain amount liability for these businesses. You know what, you know, what is over consumption? At what point do you say, you know what, Sorry dude, you're too stoned. How does

Jackie Bryant (00:55:10):
That get decided? Yeah,

Marcus Bush (00:55:11):
I don't even know. We, I mean, this is all new territory. Yeah. I mean, it's

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:55:16):
There, there are, um, entrepreneurs working furiously around the clock to find the test. It's not gonna work. It's fun. Yeah. But the way it works, it's like if somebody is erratic, let's say, you know, the night before they, they had legal opioids that they took and there's a residual effect in the morning. How do you test for that? I mean, if somebody is impaired driving, but they are working and I know that state of California through cannabis taxes has been furiously funding any university who can come up with an accurate test.

Jackie Bryant (00:55:46):
MIT will that working on a bunch

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:55:48):
Of them. Yeah. A bunch of people. I, I think we'll, we'll find our way to work around this, but I think, you know, the next generations too are much smarter about designated drivers than mine was.

Lance Rogers (00:55:56):
Yeah. Uber and Lyft have know the, the, there’s, you know, the, the, the, uh, the accidents have really gone down with, uh, drive share. Another thing you brought up to, with regard to employment, uh, liability or, or you know, you don't have the right to drive a forklift while you're stoned, <laugh>,

Jackie Bryant (00:56:12):
And the recent law, your job outlawing, uh, or, or saying that you can't, you know, drug tests, Fort Fire, someone based on a positive test for thc. There is a carve out in that new state law that, um, exempts federal employees and also, um, employees who work with heavy machinery and kinda

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:56:29):
Stuff, inspectors,

Speaker 9 (00:56:30):
Even broadband. There's, there's quite a few carve outs

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:56:33):
In there. Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Speaker 10 (00:56:37):
Um, I'm a commercial edge. Last year I was working on a potential dispense release in downtown. It's not allowed in downtown. Mm. Working with a brokerage who had lobbyist and said, had in to, you know, work the city on would went Yes.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:57:03):
That entire time. It's insane. It's insane because it takes years

Speaker 10 (00:57:09):
So high. How can anybody that's not big bucks get into,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:57:15):
I'll, I'll give an example. Imperial Beach was a city I worked. Would you recap? Would you mind recapping what she said just for everybody? Yeah. Um, what you were talking about as a commercial real estate lease, um, to, to have a lease in downtown San Diego to hire a lobbyist and then try and get it changed, you actually had to have payment. The lease had to be active and paying on a lease for years. This process, the license went through without having license. Right. And most of the cities do that. They want a location. A national city did not require that Chula Vista, why they wanted a location, but they didn't require that you had a lease on it. And a lot of people changed their location afterwards, which was interesting because it's all changed too. It was, you find a lot of, um, profiteering that goes on with landlords who happen, just happened to have a parcel in a place. And this is one of the challenges when cities severely restricted Imperial Beach restricted it so much, you know, they made it a thousand feet instead of 600 feet from a sensitive use area and an dense beach community, that's nearly impossible. So there were only two parcels, uh, none of them built, and both parcel owners wanted $150,000 to use their address in the application, whether you got it or not. And it was a lottery. It's like, you know, if I want a lottery ticket, I'm paying two bucks. I'm not paying 150 grand. Well,

Lance Rogers (00:58:38):
But you mind if I respond to that real quickly. Please. You know, because

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (00:58:41):
He lives in IB. You know,

Lance Rogers (00:58:42):
We, well I do live in IB and, but that's not, this is a business. Um, and, and a business needs to, you know, be sustainable and potentially turn a profit. So we could sit here and, you know, sort of, you know, complain about big corporations and and profit and that sort of thing. But, and I, I guess like where I come from is, I started out as a criminal defense attorney. You know, so when I hear someone, Ah, man, I didn't get, you know, my million dollar business. Well, I remember when people getting thrown in jail. Seriously. Yeah. So, you know, that for me, you know, is, is positive that people are not getting thrown in jail for cannabis. So when we look at the industry piece of it, um, you know what, well what can we do about that? Well encourage, you know, the businesses to, to take social equity important and, and to add that to their, their business structure.

Jackie Bryant (00:59:32):
Just businesses, but governments. Cuz it's gonna have to come.

Lance Rogers (00:59:35):
I'm not sure, I'm not sure I necessarily agree with that. I mean, we, this is, that's not the type of government that we live in. The government puts rules and then businesses come in and we as consumers choose to go to one business or another. You know, a lot of times people want to, you know, complain and then they go to Walmart and they go to McDonald's and uh, and they say, Ah, geez, yeah, Walmart and McDonald's, they always bully them and they pay 150. And this, it's like, well who supports these businesses? You know, what, what, what, what type of, you know, local national city businesses and business owners are you personally gonna be supporting with your, with your, your dollars? Cause that, that's just my personal,

Jackie Bryant (01:00:12):
But if the big corporations have so much money that they take away all the other options that you're incentivized to use that business, then isn’t that where government should come in and maybe say, we gotta make sure that the people who aren't capitalized have a shot at this

Lance Rogers (01:00:27):
Too. I don't, I think that's a different form of government that we don't live in. Um, Yeah. You know, that, that's just a different thing where the government tells people where to buy anything. And I think more about like, you know, bread and cheese and water than weed. I mean, sure you have a real problem. Grow your own weed.

Jackie Bryant (01:00:45):
Yep. That is, that is true. And we are allowed to grow it in California up to six plants per person, which is actually huge because in other states, one of the first things that will happen when we goes legal is there is some company involved in the lobbying process who will take away home grow. So that is actually a fundamental, that's a big, big thing that we have that here. It's not a small deal in Florida. It's one of what the biggest cannabis company is trying to keep home, grow out of the state law in Florida. Yeahs legal

Marcus Bush (01:01:11):
Real Laura, sorry. Cut. I just wanted to respond to, um, to that on the, because you brought up the, the downtown and, and one of the challenges I see cuz it's land use issue and it's the distance requirements. And, um, so, um, and so my background also is in, in city planning. So I got my, I majored in that at San Diego State. And, um, so we have those land use restrictions to protect from environmental impacts or in this case, uh, the sensitive uses with this, which is kids, I don't think so. Say something is part controversial. I don't think that's the best approach to protect, uh, safety or, or youth or, um, or any, anyone else. And Laura kind of brought it up. So, um, when we have, uh, parking requirements all that, we ideally, we, we want people as, and I say this as a planner, we want folks walking and biking and uh, taking transit.

Marcus Bush (01:01:58):
And if the concern is, uh, the presence or proximity to youth, like, um, like schools or whatnot, I mean, it's not the, the business itself, like people will walk there, it's the advertising on the outside. So, and I think that can be regulated with signage, with codes. Like, so we don't want, uh, well at least what I don't want, I'll speak for myself. Like I don't want, um, you know, cannabis advertised to youth, um, but if youth walk past the store, youth walk past liquor stores, you know, so that, that happens. So, and, and I, I think you, you don't, we don't need to shield our youth. Like we need to show them, no, this happens, this is real, this exists. Your parents use it, you know, and, and teach 'em to be responsible. And I think part of, um, you know, the taxes that we generate from that, um, you know, I, I've talked to to Laura about this, like those taxes can be used to prevent that, prevent that youth access. Yeah.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:02:49):
Where does

Jackie Bryant (01:02:50):
Tax revenue in national city from cannabis, where is that going?

Marcus Bush (01:02:53):
Where did you wanna, And so I

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:02:55):
General fund the, the argument amongst the council for a long time, although it has dissipated, was whether to set it aside specifically for social equity programs. Oh. But they decided to put it in the general fund and then allot it from there, which is what the county is doing too. Yes.

Marcus Bush (01:03:10):
And there was a discussion about, um, that like there being a special fund set aside, but ultimately we do control the general fund. So as, as a council's a body, Right?

Jackie Bryant (01:03:19):
Right. So you can choose to earmark that for different

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:03:21):
Things if you need. And I, I did wanna point out too, one of the thing about lounges, which uh, Marcus has pointed out numerous times over the last year is if you have somebody who's in section eight
housing or in an apartment building where no smoking is allowed, they'll get kicked out. Yeah. It's illegal. They'll get kicked out. This gives them a chance instead of smoking in the local park, which people would be afraid of. You know, a prohibitionist might be, it gives, you know, it's a gather instead of drinking that, you know, drink with your brown around it in the park, you have bars. And the same thing for cannabis. If people wanna enjoy cannabis in a social safe setting, that's what lounge is allowed for. So I'm proud of National City for jumping up for this. Yeah. Markets.

Jackie Bryant (01:04:06):
Does anybody have any questions? We have just a couple of minutes left. Anything at all? Yes.

Speaker 11 (01:04:12):
So as far as, uh, multi, uh, as far as like the, are you doing anything with like the multigenerational trauma stuff that's happening within all of us that's causing like, lots of conflict? Are you doing anything to heal the people?

Marcus Bush (01:04:29):
I think so. I think one of those things, uh, one of those approaches is prioritizing the jobs for those who've been previously incarcerated. So that's something I've talked to cities staff about. I, I think the challenges, What goal do you set, right? What goal? Uh, uh, the percentage. And it gets to the point where, you know, we don't wanna overregulate the business too much, so it's, um, you know, it's, it's really difficult or impossible to operate. So, but I ideally, so I don't know, and I'd be curious to hear from the panelist, what they think that percentage goal is, but I don't know if it's 20%, if it's 50, but ideally it's those who've been previously incarcerated for cannabis, they should be the ones who get the priority to work there. And that helps that they're the ones that typically have had a struggle like trying to find gainful employment. And so finding them that and, uh, that niche and then using the revenue that we have for those, for those trauma, uh, for, for those programs and whatnot with the city,

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:05:25):
I'm more the carrot than the stick on that. I think you should incentivize businesses to do it by either waiving fees for people who are applying or, you know, there are certain incentives you can do for businesses to really bring them into that. What do you think?

Marcus Bush (01:05:39):
You know, so I, I think about the economics of it, and I guess I come at it from an objective standpoint because, you know, we, we, we can sit here and we have these ideals that, you know, you know, that we, we wanna help folks, uh, deal with, you know, generational trauma. But I think if that gets into government regulation, um, and you overregulate a business, then it ends up becoming cost prohibitive for the people that you're trying to help. You know, if you set up these things and we have this consumption lounge and you know, it was, you know, all these red tape and everything that went into it, and it's, you know, uh, a hundred dollars just to walk in, you know, we could all say like, Oh man, that's so great. You know, we, we have a consumption lounge, but who's going there? And

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:06:24):
How many layers are there? There's say, state, city, local, right? Like, that adds like such a
Prohibit, right? So I mean, sometimes, whether you like or not, when I talk about Walmart or McDonald's, like there's a reason people go to those, right? Because these big corporations found a way to get the price down. And so you, you know, there's, there's that aspect of it as well, which is affordability for people of lower economic status, which I think gets lost a lot. I think. So my pushback on that is only government created this problem though. So I think it's, it takes government to, to, uh, fix it. The government was the one that, you know, and I'm sure you agree with this line, like been criminal over criminalized and, and now you have a situation where it's the wealthy and powerful and privilege that are now benefiting. And so I don't think, um, that it will fix it by itself. Like we, I agree we don't want to overregulate, but we, we do need some kind of government intervention. And I think the challenge, to your point Lance, is like finding what that, what that balance is.

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:07:21):
It's not a free market. It's a warped and suppressed market right now because it, they're limiting the number of businesses that are allowed to do this. And when you do that, when you, when you allow a cable franchise, for example, back in the day, but now you have internet, so that bypasses the cable. Mm-hmm. <affirmative>, um, I'm trying to think of a good example, but you know, if you, if you, if you suppress the supply, you will have this leakage into the illicit markets that will continue until you open it up. If you go to other places, other, other states or other places even in California where they open it up and it's unlimited, they don't say, Okay, we're only gonna give you five licenses. There are only eight licenses in the city. It's like, hey, anybody who can qualify can do that. That's what happened in Oklahoma. They have no social equity problem at all. Minorities and women have had huge opportunities for cannabis in Oklahoma. Not exactly a bastion of liberal thought. Oklahoma

Speaker 1 (01:08:17):
Has

Laura Wilkinson Sinton (01:08:17):
Other problems of this. They have 2200 and you know, we have 50 in our county and the whole state of Oklahoma has 2200 and they're similar in size. So anybody with $2,500 can literally pay the fee and open up their store.

Jackie Bryant (01:08:30):
That is a very good thing about Oklahoma's market. Oklahoma's kind of a crazy prototypical market and if, if you're not happy to it encourage you to do it. But we are out of time. Um, and I feel like we kicked off so many discussions that honestly could be their own panels. This, it's the cannabis is the topic that just always has something to talk about. So thank you all so much for coming. I hope it was informative and useful for you. And thank you guys for being here.

Speaker 1 (01:08:53):
Thank really appreciate. Thank you Zach. And our panel is for being

Speaker 3 (01:08:56):
Here. Um, again, this will be available online for you to watch, so share it with your front wall, share with your friends who are voice members. Um, next is lunch, so you can head up to the tempa in the front. We've got all the sponsors with community booths out there so you can get to know them and uh,
and then, uh, have some lunch and then we'll be in the main, uh, hall for, uh, one 15 is to start the next question. So have

Jackie Bryant (01:09:16):
Fun. Thank you,

Speaker 1 (01:09:17):
Counselor. Which side of it like.