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**GRAND JUNCTION CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, JANUARY 10, 2022
WORKSHOP, 5:30 PM
CITY HALL AUDITORIUM AND [VIRTUAL](#)
250 N. 5TH STREET**

1. Discussion Topics

- a. Cannabis Regulations

2. City Council Communication

An unstructured time for Councilmembers to discuss current matters, share ideas for possible future consideration by Council, and provide information from board & commission participation.

3. Next Workshop Topics

4. Other Business

What is the purpose of a Workshop?

The purpose of the Workshop is to facilitate City Council discussion through analyzing information, studying issues, and clarifying problems. The less formal setting of the Workshop promotes conversation regarding items and topics that may be considered at a future City Council meeting.

How can I provide my input about a topic on tonight's Workshop agenda?

Individuals wishing to provide input about Workshop topics can:

1. Send an email (addresses found here www.gjcity.org/city-government/) or call one or more members of City Council (970-244-1504);
 2. Provide information to the City Manager (citymanager@gjcity.org) for dissemination to the City Council. If your information is submitted prior to 3 p.m. on the date of the Workshop, copies will be provided to Council that evening. Information provided after 3 p.m. will be disseminated the next business day.
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3. Attend a Regular Council Meeting (generally held the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 6 p.m. at City Hall) and provide comments during “Citizen Comments.”
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Grand Junction City Council

Workshop Session

Item #1.a.

Meeting Date: January 10, 2022

Presented By: Tamra Allen, Community Development Director

Department: Community Development

Submitted By: Tamra Allen, Community Development Director

Information

SUBJECT:

Cannabis Regulations

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The voters approved referred measures 2A and 2B at the City election on April 6, 2021. The approval of those measures provides the City Council with an opportunity to establish tax rates and regulations for the retail cannabis industry in Grand Junction. The January 10, 2022 work session ("Workshop") is for the City Council to discuss and determine criteria for entry into (sufficiency criteria), and weighting within (policy priorities), the license lottery.

BACKGROUND OR DETAILED INFORMATION:

Weighted Lottery for Cannabis Business Licenses

At the September 20, 2021 City Council Workshop, the City Council addressed various aspects of retail cannabis regulations. The Council confirmed direction on zoning, buffering, and taxation. Consensus was developed to cap cannabis stores, at ten (10) city-wide. As more than ten (10) applications for licenses are likely to be made, a process for selecting licenses is required.

The Council has previously discussed methods for awarding licenses, such as merit-based, lottery, or hybrid approaches. The Council directed staff to refine a process for selecting applicants through a weighted lottery system. That system would utilize a random lottery of applications which have been preliminarily reviewed and deemed sufficient with those applications that meet higher standards benefiting from improved odds in a lottery.

To implement that process, the Council must consider and direct what will constitute general sufficiency of an application and the additional merit which will afford an

applicant improved odds for an application entered into the lottery (i.e., weighting).

The differences between sufficiency criteria and merit-based criteria are as follows: Sufficiency criteria can be viewed as a combination of legal and technical criteria that complement the State's application and licensing process. An application's failure to meet a sufficiency criterion would result in exclusion from the lottery.

Merit-based criteria can be viewed as priorities that ask applicants to go "above and beyond" for the purpose of achieving the Council's policy goals. Inability to meet one or all of those criteria would not disqualify an application but would also not increase an applicant's likelihood of selection.

Accordingly, any criterion deemed critical or non-negotiable by the City Council is best suited as a sufficiency criterion, whereas any deemed to be only desirable is best suited as a merit-based criterion.

In all criteria, and particularly in those that are merit-based (included for weighting of an application), each criterion must be measurable and clearly supported/supportable based on current City policy.

At the November 1, 2021 workshop, the Council provided input and direction regarding the sufficiency criteria. On January 10th, City Council will review the criteria and should consider either affirming or modifying those presented in anticipation of incorporating those in an ordinance.

Sufficiency Criteria (Entry into Lottery)

Local jurisdictions are authorized to adopt and enforce regulations for retail cannabis licenses that are at least as restrictive as the provisions of State law (principally Article 10 of Title 44 of the Colorado Revised Statutes.) City Council has previously considered the following sufficiency criteria. Many of these correspond to State criteria; however, for City licensing, local compliance is emphasized.

- 1) Tax Compliance – Applicant demonstrates that payment of any judgments, taxes, interest or penalties to the City of Grand Junction and Mesa County are not delinquent.
- 2) Violations and Enforcement Actions – City records and applicant statements demonstrate that no ownership interest greater than 10 percent has a record of prior notices of violations, stop work orders, cease and desist orders or repetitive contact by the City's Code Enforcement officers or agencies.
- 3) Complaint Resolution – Applicant provides information in the form of a plan describing their proposed process for conflict and nuisance avoidance and resolution that will provide a high likelihood that complaints regarding the direct impacts from the business operations (e.g. odor, traffic, noise, etc.) will be avoided and/or resolved sufficiently and expediently.

4) General Business Experience - Applicant can demonstrate that owners and/or managers have a record of experience in operating a business, whether within the cannabis industry or other regulated industries, with a cumulative demonstrated experience of at least three (3) years.

5) Business Plan – Applicant provides information in the form of a plan describing their proposed business. The business plan shall clearly demonstrate the applicant's history of compliance and ability to operate in a highly regulated industry, and may include a scope of work for the planning and development of the proposed business; a scope of work for capital improvements for the proposed business; an estimate of first-year revenues; and an estimate of first-year operating expenses and evidence that the applicant will have the resources necessary to pay for those expenses.

the Plan shall include at a minimum, a(n)

- a. Executive summary
- b. Business description
- c. Market analysis and strategy
- d. Marketing and sales plan
- e. Competitive analysis
- f. Management and organization description
- g. Products and services description
- h. Operating plan
- i. Financial projection and needs

Policy Priority Criteria (Weighting within Lottery)

The policy criteria (i.e., application weighting criteria) are intended to align with City Council policy objectives that have been expressed at prior meetings. City Council may weight criterion differently, or define differently, to achieve the desired result of the City Council. Staff would anticipate that conformance with each of the policy priorities once established will be a continuous obligation of the licensee and failure to comply would be cause for revocation of a license, if issued. If that is not Council's expectation, it would be beneficial for Council to clarify which, if any, are or are not to be continuous obligation(s). Likewise, compliance with the policy priorities would be subject to verification during annual license renewals by inspection, auditing and/or submitted evidence by the Applicant/operator. If a business fails to achieve or maintain the required criteria(criterion) a license may be suspended or revoked.

Policy Priorities Criteria

1) Living Wage – Commitment to providing a “living wage ” to all part-time and full-time staff and employees. A wage scale should be provided in writing for all levels of employment. “Living Wage” shall mean a minimum of 150% of the minimum wage mandated by Colorado or Federal law, whichever is greater. ¹

2) Community Benefit – Applicant submits a plan that demonstrates meaningful and substantial commitment through financial donation, service or similar, to programs, services and organizations that address Social Determinants of Health as defined by

the CDC, including economic stability, education access and quality, health care access and quality, neighborhood and built environment, and social and community context. Substantial commitment can, for example, mean:

- a. A minimum of 10% of business profits, and/or,
- b. A minimum of 1,000 public service hours, and/or,
- c. Operation as a registered 501(c)3 not for profit entity, and/or,
- d. Assistance to the community, as defined and described by City Council, to support/advance City policy goals.

As the City Council is aware, an alternative approach to “community benefit” has been proposed by Invest in GJ. The proponent will likely be speaking at the January 10th City Council meeting. Its proposal generally is to create a public benefit corporation (PBC) and that the PBC be the cannabis licensee(s) in Grand Junction with its proceeds after expenses being dedicated exclusively to “community benefit”/Social Determinants of Health. ²

3) Sustainable Business Practices – Applicant demonstrates environmentally sustainable practices by obtaining at least a LEED Gold Certification of the building within one-year of licensing and/or demonstration that the business will utilize 100% renewable energy.

4) Local Ownership – The extent to which the business will be locally owned and the factors that demonstrate that no less than 50% of the business will be locally owned. Those factors may include but are not limited to ownership of property, investment in other local business(es) and being a legal resident of and domiciled in Grand Junction, as defined by Grand Junction City limits and/or the following zip codes: 81501; 81503; 81504; 81505; 81506; 81507. Applicants must demonstrate by production of the businesses organizational documents, and maintain during the term of the license if issued, that at least 50% of the officers of a corporation, members of a limited liability company, or partners of a partnership satisfy these local ownership standards for at least 3 years prior to the date of application.

5) Local Cultivation and Manufacturing – Applicant commits that by July 1, 2023 a minimum of fifty (50) percent of their cultivated and manufactured product will be grown, produced and manufactured within Mesa County, contingent upon City of Grand Junction and/or Mesa County allowing such uses. ³

Weighting

Once the Council determines which criteria should be included, a decision must be made on whether any criteria are more important than others, and to assign weight to those criteria. A further determination to be made is the degree of weighting that would result from an applicant responding positively to some or all policy priority criteria. The degree of weighting would also require clarity of measurement. If the assumption is that any application meeting sufficiency criteria would be entered into the lottery with

standard odds, then it follows that subsequent thresholds need to be established for the degree of merit that results in improved odds.

There are numerous possible approaches to weighting and no apparent industry standard. For example, if a score of 0 out of 10 points on policy priority criteria results in standard odds, a score of 4 or greater out of 10 could result in doubled odds, and a score of 8 or greater could result in tripled odds. Alternatively, an applicant could receive a 10 percent increase in their odds of selection for every policy priority criterion that they meet. These are just two possibilities within a wide array of possible approaches to weighting in the lottery. Still further, criteria need not be pass/fail, but could be scored on a scale of 0 to 3 or similar, provided that clear guidance is given on the manner of scoring. Because a specific approach to weighting can be developed to respond to the relative importance of the criteria, the Council may be best served by making a general assessment on that question. If certain criteria are more important than others, or if all are seen as equally important, then weighting can be designed to suit.

Staff recommends and requests that the City Council also discuss and direct its preferred process for reviewing applications and determining the sufficiency thereof. For many reasons which may be further discussed at the meeting on the 10th, staff advises that a consultant be retained to perform the review. Following the application review and upon selection of 10 applications by means of lottery, each Applicant would proceed with the State and City's licensing processes. Any business that seeks a local license for a cannabis business must also obtain a license from the State.

The State applies a set of minimum standards that include "Findings of Suitability" for any major ownership interests, as well as a general license application with questions that respond to State criteria for licensing. Criteria addressed by the State include:

1) Good Moral Character — Any ownership interest of 10% or greater must demonstrate good moral character as defined by State statute. Such judgement is based on a variety of factors, including that the Applicant establishes that he or she is not currently subject to and has not discharged a sentence for a conviction of a felony in the three (3) years immediately preceding his or her application date. The following is an excerpt from State law describing what good moral character is:

(i) A person who was convicted of a felony in the three years immediately preceding his or her application date or who is currently subject to a sentence for a felony conviction; except that, for a person applying to be a social equity licensee, a marijuana conviction shall not be the sole basis for license denial; or

(ii) A person qualifies as a social equity licensee if such person meets the following criteria, in addition to any criteria established by rule of the state licensing authority:

- a. Is a Colorado resident;
- b. Has not been the beneficial owner of a license subject to disciplinary or legal action from the state resulting in the revocation of a license issued pursuant to this article 10;

- c. Has demonstrated at least one of the following:
 - i. The applicant has resided for at least fifteen years between the years 1980 and 2010 in a census tract designated by the office of economic development and international trade as an opportunity zone or designated as a disproportionate impacted area as defined by rule pursuant to section 44-10-203 (1)(j);
 - ii. The applicant or the applicant's parent, legal guardian, sibling, spouse, child, or minor in their guardianship was arrested for a marijuana offense, convicted of a marijuana offense, or was subject to civil asset forfeiture related to a marijuana investigation; or
 - iii. The applicant's household income in the year prior to application did not exceed an amount determined by rule of the state licensing authority; and

d. The social equity licensee, or collectively one or more social equity licensees, holds at least fifty-one percent of the beneficial ownership of the regulated marijuana business license.

2) Fees – Applicant has paid all applicable fees for licensing.

3) Not a Food, Liquor, or Tobacco Establishment – The Applicant establishes that the premises he or she proposes to be licensed is not currently licensed as a retail food establishment or wholesale food registrant. The Applicant shall not provide, or be licensed to provide, sales of tobacco or liquor products at the premises.

4) Accuracy and Completeness of Application – Applicant certifies that all records provided to the state in the application for a license are complete and accurate, and no determination is made counter to this assertion.

5) History of Tax Payments – Applicant has filed all tax returns related to a medical or retail cannabis establishment and has paid any taxes, interest, or penalties due, as determined by final agency action, relating to a medical or retail cannabis establishments. Applicant is not delinquent in the payment of any judgments, taxes, interest or penalties to the State Department of Revenue or US Internal Revenue Service.

6) At Least 21 Years of Age – Applicant is of sufficient age to legally operate a cannabis business, the minimum age for which is 21 years.

7) Adequate Security – Applicant must install a fully operational video surveillance and camera recording system, which includes but is not limited to, recording in digital format; storing recordings in a secure area that is only accessible to a Licensee's management staff; making system recordings accessible to any state or local law enforcement agency for law enforcement purposes; and surveillance of all entrances and exits to the facility, sale areas, limited access areas, and other areas as described in State statute.

1. At today's minimum wage of \$12.56, a "Living Wage" would equate to \$18.84. For a

full-time employee this would be \$39,187 per year.

2. There is no express prohibition on a PBC applying for a cannabis license. It is unknown if the PBC intends to address/satisfy social equity licensure.

3. The Town of Pagosa Springs limits the import of cannabis for retail sale into their community. This regulation has had the singular effect of limiting the number of stores (six are currently in operation) due to the requirement for a store to also have a local grow/manufacturing supplier. The Town requires 70% of the product to grow/produce/manufactured locally.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

SUGGESTED ACTION:

Staff recommends City Council discuss and direct its priorities for both the merit-based license selection criteria and the weight to be given to those criteria for the purposes of the selection lottery.

Attachments

1. Citizen Comments Renee Grossman High Q
2. Citizen Comments Invest in GJ - Cover Letter
3. Citizen Comments Invest in GJ - Presentation
4. Citizen Comments A Social Enterprise
5. Citizen Comments Sentinel Article - August 2021



December 4, 2021

City Council
City of Grand Junction

Dear Mayor and Council Members:

I would like to offer a few comments for the work session on December 13th. I have submitted some of these comments previously, but believe they are worth repeating.

I. Set the application fees to allow for hiring staff and/or consultants to evaluate applications

Given the size of Grand Junction, it is reasonable to assume you will receive numerous applications for Retail Marijuana Stores. I would encourage you to establish fees that are high enough to cover the costs to add additional staff and/or consultants to assist in the evaluation of the applications as well as other prospective costs the City anticipates from legalization. It would not be unreasonable to charge a \$20,000 non-refundable application fee, for example.

The majority of the public and the industry have been encouraging the City not to do a lottery (see my next comment) and, instead, a merit system. Implementing a merit system will require additional people to evaluate and score the applications. This could be done by adding additional staff on a temporary basis or by engaging outside consultants.

The Town Manager of Palisade had suggested the town hire four people to independently score each application and then present the findings to the Trustees at a public hearing at which time the Trustees would finalize the scores. I thought this was a great idea but the Town instead opted for a lottery and ended up with lawsuits and a corrupt process that resulted in a two year delay and only two stores opening. I would encourage you to keep their identity of those tasked with reading and scoring the applications anonymous to avoid any improprieties or harassment by any unscrupulous applicants.

II. Please finish the process soon

The original timeline conveyed was that licensing would begin in the third quarter of 2021. I understand that the complexities of this process and other City priorities have caused delays but several prospective applicants are paying on leases for empty spaces and that money would be better spent on operations and staff. Moreover, it will likely take approximately 6 months after award of the local license to obtain a state license, complete renovations, hire staff and get stores open. The City is losing substantial tax revenues by continuing to delay the process.

III. Do NOT do a lottery, even a weighted lottery

I have been participating in your process for over a year. I was on the working group and have attended all of your meetings, work sessions and several public gatherings. Overwhelmingly, the public has stated they do not want a lottery of any form and favor a merit system. Those of us from the industry oppose lotteries because they often lead to lawsuits, which delay the awarding of licenses. It's unclear to me why the City Council continues to consider a lottery when the public seems opposed to it and the litigation risk is so high.

It may appear counter intuitive but lotteries almost always lead to litigation and merit systems rarely, if ever result in lawsuits. A well crafted merit system is far more defensible and will always yield the most favorable results for all parties. There are numerous examples of lawsuits following lotteries throughout the State and in other States.

IV. Do NOT allow multiple applications from the same ownership group

At the last work session, John Shaver indicated that Grand Junction would allow the same ownership group to apply multiple times. I would strongly encourage you NOT to allow this. It will preclude smaller operators like myself and locals from having any chance at getting a license. The large chains from Denver and out of state have a lot of money and will tie up multiple properties and submit many applications to increase their chances of winning a license. It would not surprise me, for example, if one large multi-state operator tied up 30 properties and submitted 30 applications.

You could end up with only one or two large chains, for example, getting all 10 stores in which case you will not have free-market competition. I would encourage you to only allow one application per ownership group to keep things fairer and give the smaller operators and locals a chance.

V. Do NOT allow stacking of leases

Stacking leases is when multiple applicants lease the same property contingent on getting a license. Most municipalities and the State do not allow this because it creates a lot of complexity if two applicants are picked at the same location. I would encourage you to only accept one application per location.

VI. Make sure your merit criteria really differentiate between applicants

The sufficiency criteria enumerated by staff are too low a bar to differentiate between applicants. While these criteria are good to have – and some are prerequisites to even applying, they do not set the bar high enough to cull the field of applicants to those that have the means and experience to operate successfully in Grand Junction – and you want good operators so you get more tax revenues and don't have problems.

Also, the Tax Compliance and Violations and Enforcement criteria only refer to compliance with City taxes and City Code Enforcement officers. If no one is operating in Grand Junction then these criteria don't do anything in the initial application process.

The policy priorities criteria also are not extensive enough to differentiate between applicants. Everyone will say they will provide a living wage, lots of companies can demonstrate community engagement and sustainability is hard to do for a retail store. It's more appropriate for cultivation and manufacturing. LEED certification may only be achievable by those building new buildings, which precludes smaller operators.

I would encourage you to use a merit system more similar to the example submitted by Cindy Sovine in her public comments included in the packet or the ones used in Cedaredge, Aurora and other municipalities that had successful processes.

VII. State application timing

It is unclear if you intent to require a state licensing application to be submitted at the time of the local license application. Both licenses are required to operate but typically, applicants prefer to apply with the State only after they are awarded a local license so as not to create more work for the MED. It's burdensome to have the MED evaluate numerous applications that will never receive local approval.

Thank you for your consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "R. S. Grossman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Renée S. Grossman

January 4th, 2021

To: Grand Junction City Council

Re: Presentation at Grand Junction City Council Workshop – January 10th.

From: Invest In GJ LLC – Michael J. Pramenko M.D. & David Thurow

Invest In GJ LLC is presenting an innovative and unique model for your consideration. The timing on this proposal is essential. This plan is only relevant and can only be considered at the very beginning of licensure for recreational marijuana sales. Once the decision/vote is made to proceed with a more routine approach to marijuana sales, this opportunity will be lost forever. Recreational marijuana regulations should not be considered within a “vacuum”.

We ask the council for 24 months to prove the validity and benefits of our plan with embedded milestones for operational evaluation:

- 1) Exclusive licensure for recreational marijuana in the City of Grand Junction – starting with three to four stores. Our ability to raise necessary funding for our plan increases substantially with exclusive licensure. Exclusive licensure comes with other noted benefits.
- 2) Licensure is **completely dependent** on an operation that spends **all** profits on local social determinants of health (SDOH) needs for the citizens of our community (e.g., Housing, Education, Nutrition, Transportation, Recreation, Environment).

The benefits would include:

- 1) Millions of dollars will be kept in our community as opposed leaving to out of town ownership/partnerships on the Front Range
- 2) Funding of SDOH via our proposal will counteract the social and health care costs of increased marijuana use as marijuana sales and consumption do not occur in a “vacuum”
- 3) Marked reduction in the need for marijuana advertising – great for our youth and good for image of our city
- 4) Marked reduction in administrative costs to the city – only one entity to audit/license/oversee
- 5) Grand Junction becomes “center for innovation” regarding cannabis sales and limiting impact of the product
- 6) Grand Junction prioritizes its own citizens ahead of the Denver based cannabis industry and a handful of owners
- 7) Honors the wishes of the voters: allow recreational marijuana sales while limiting the number of stores

Thank you for your consideration,

Michael J. Pramenko M.D.
Family Physician
Chief Medical Officer - Primary Care Partners &
Monument Health

David K. Thurow
Principal
Prosono – A Social Impact Consulting Firm



January 2022

Innovative Approaches To Community Development



Invest in Grand Junction
Pitch Deck for turning over a new
leaf in the Cannabis Industry

Via
Investments in Social Determinants of Health

Introduction to Invest in GJ

What is it?

Invest in GJ is a purpose driven social business* established by individuals with a passion for solving the funding gap for social determinants of health (SDoH) in Grand Junction. We believe a new community funding stream can be created through leveraging the voter-initiated Cannabis Dispensaries to make Grand Junction the healthiest city in America.

Why are we here?

- **Measure 2A** – Cannabis is coming to GJ. On April 6, 2021, Grand Junction voters supported the opportunity for Cannabis Dispensary's to ensure tax revenue from the sale of Cannabis stay in Grand Junction
- **\$2.9 Million per year** – the voter approved tax increase on the sale of Cannabis that is already forecasted to go to parks, trails and open space
- **\$400k-3M annual sales** – current estimate of like-markets projected annual revenue and a conservative \$400k-3 million in annual profits
- **Profits will go to Solve SDoH**– Creating a Social Business to own and operate the dispensaries in GJ, with the purpose to return all profits to



**A social business combines both commercial and social goals and investments and growth could lead to equivalent increase in social impact.*

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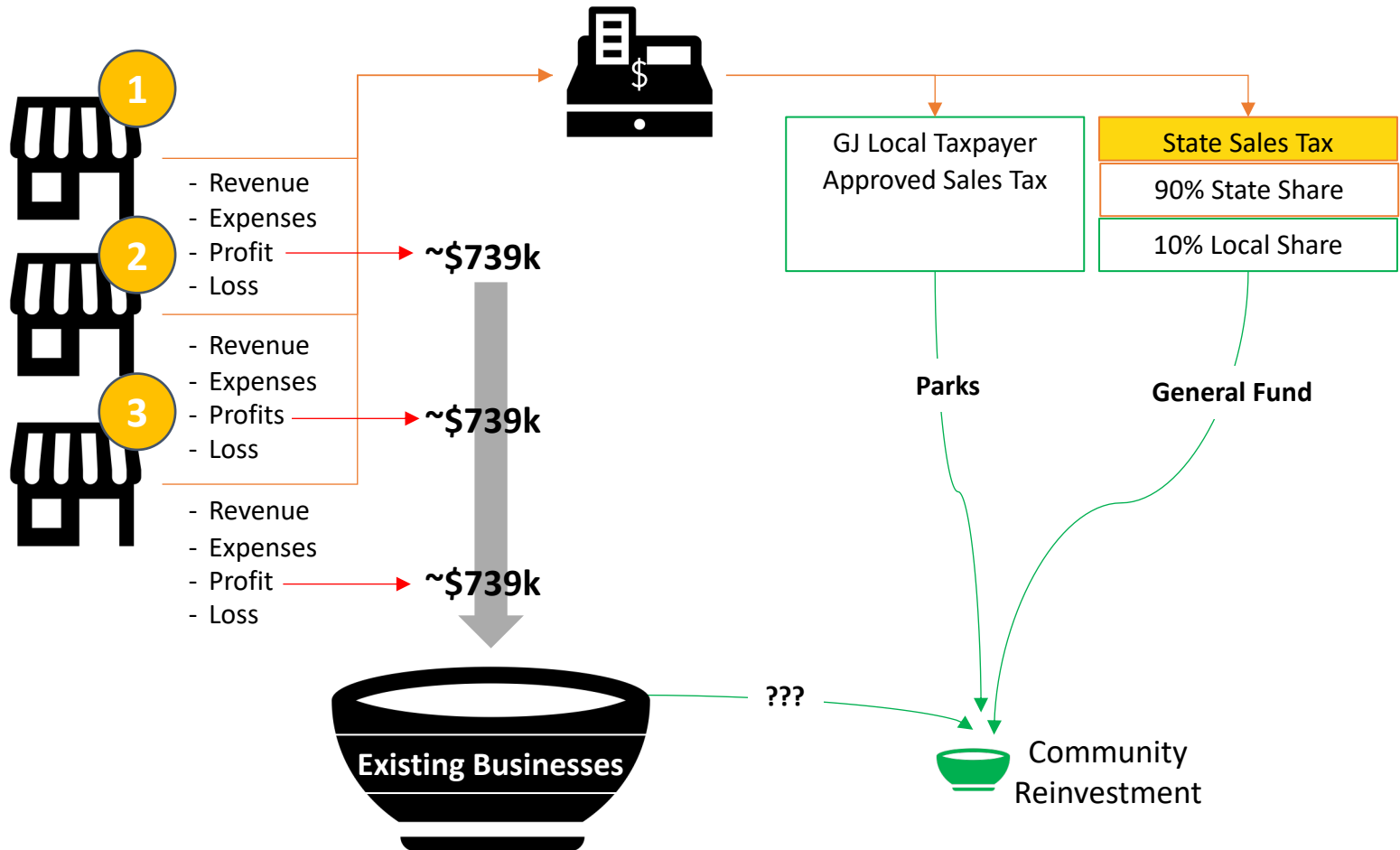
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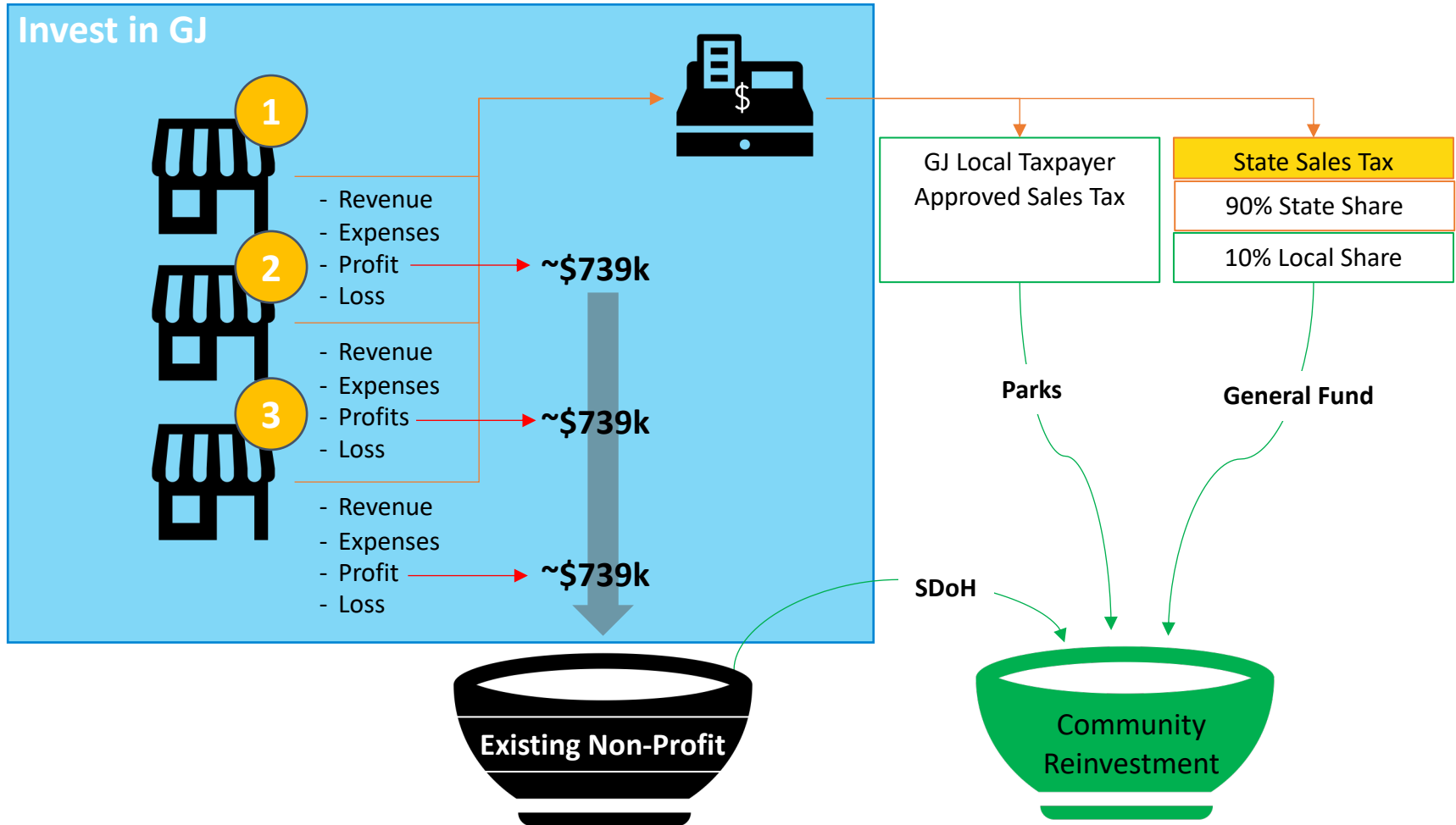


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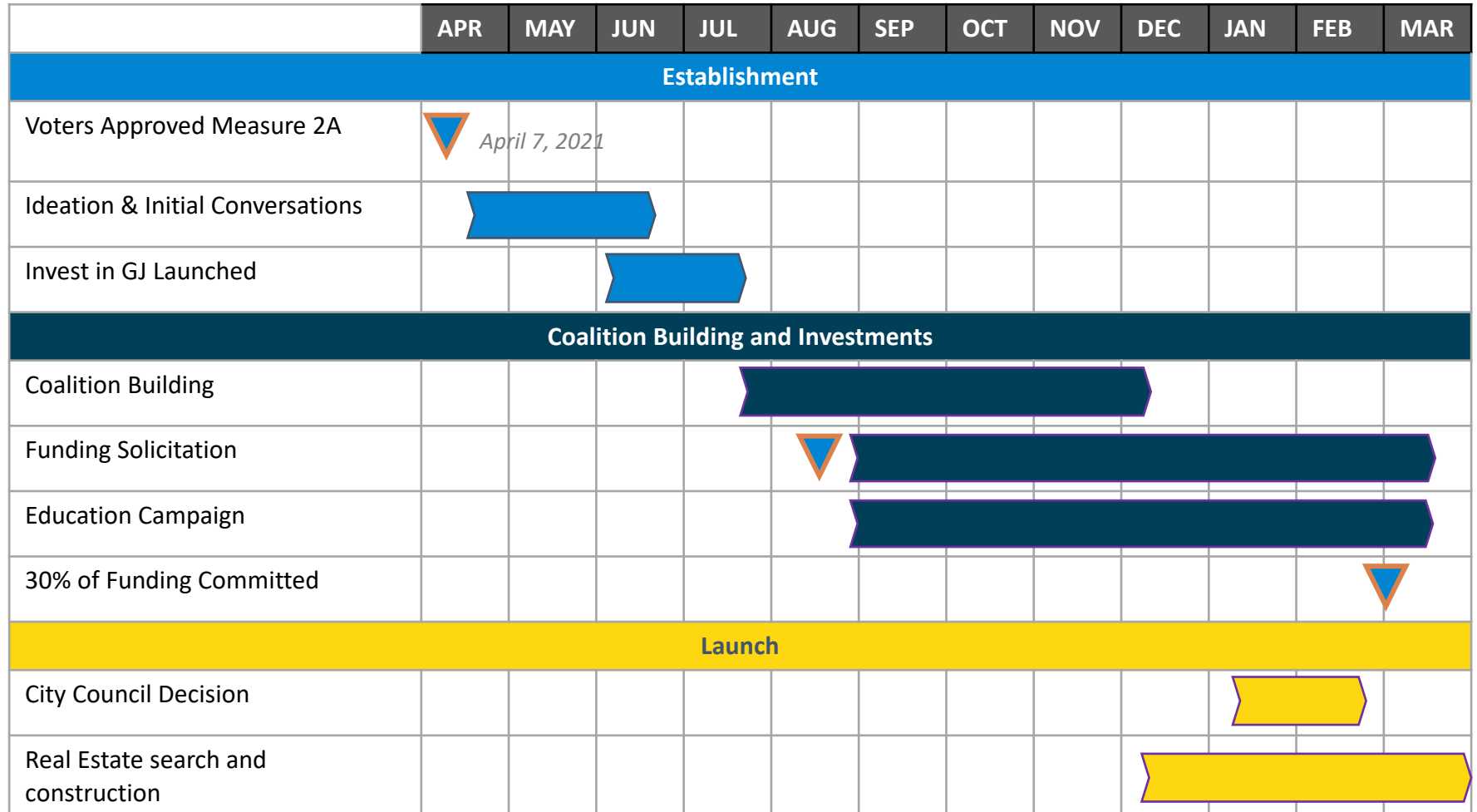
Current Proposed Model



Proposed Invest in GJ Model



Timeline of Events



Company Vision

Invest in GJ is a social business that works to improve the social determinants of health through our model of owning and operating cannabis retail locations in Grand Junction, CO. Our stores will offer customers/patients a beautiful shopping environment that inspires healing, creativity, comfort and education on products and activities to improve one's overall health and wellbeing.

Our knowledgeable budtenders will navigate and guide customers through our vast product variety featuring locally sourced products along with core products line of the highest quality cannabis flow, concentrates, edibles, etc.

Most importantly, Invest in GJ is structured to return 100% of the profits of the organization to a non-profit foundation with a bi-partisan board of directors made up of a local health care, community, business and local government leaders. These leaders will be accountable for helping to set the strategy, award grants, establish partnerships and matching programs to systematically solve for the Social Determinants of Health in Grand Junction

Mission



Promote strategies and policy that improve the quality of life and health of the citizens of Grand Junction.

Vision



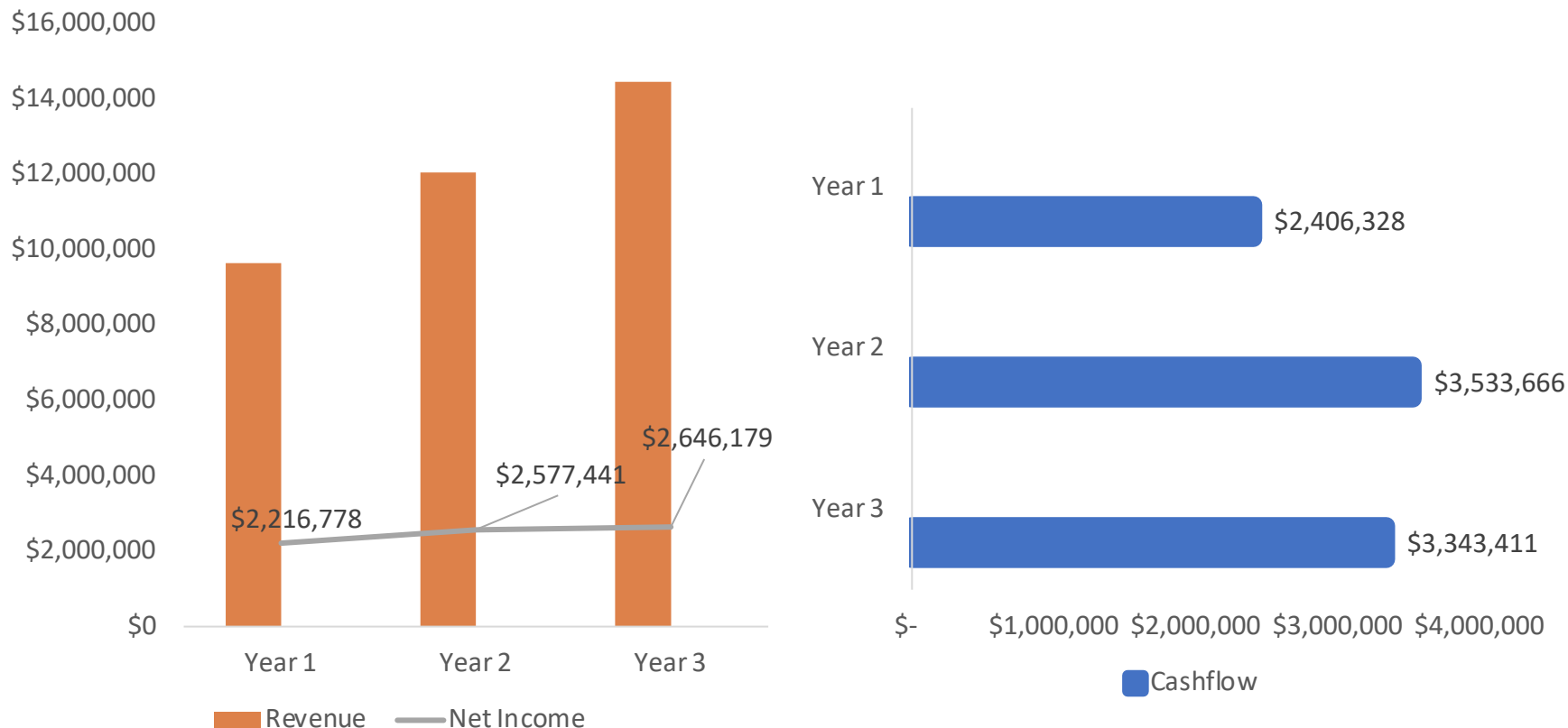
With a combination of social enterprise and public policy, we can improve our collective health and greatly enhance our ability to control health care costs in our community.

Goal



To reduce health care costs for all by creating better access to Social Determinants of Health resources through funding innovative projects in Grand Junction and funding these projects through the profits of our Cannabis Dispensary Business

Financial Summary



From a total start-up investment of \$3.437M, Invest in GJ is expected to generate \$3.842M EBITA with pre-tax income of nearly \$5.814M in Year 3 of full operations and in which Invest in GJ will be fulfilling on its commitment to investors. Investment startup costs are primarily due to purchase and upgrade of fixed assets which consist of ~85% of start up capital

Business Objectives



Getting 5-8 Grand Junction Cannabis Retailer licenses



Raising 30% of required capital to complete the build out of initial 3 store(s)*



Becoming Profitable at the end of Year 1



Establishment of the Invest in GJ Foundation and initial Priorities



A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

Often times, we hear the expression “Now More Than Ever.” And in today’s current climate of political concerns, cultural battles, and the turbulence that emanates from worldwide concerns, it stands to reason, that we might employ this phrase, once more, in considering how best to meet these challenges. As professionals, we want to believe that we can always do better in our professional pursuits. And “now more than ever” we need to pursue a plan that enables our business to serve social purposes and needs in a meaningful way. This is social enterprise. A business with a dedicated mission to addressing a societal issue by placing the objectives of profit, purpose, and people on an equally important level.

The tenets of a social enterprise are straight forward. There must be a desire to lead with both heart and mind. There should be the belief that one can turn a profit and also do good. And there might be the understanding that instead of handouts, there ought to be an implementation of innovation, respect and passion in facing societal issues. Nothing is quite as clear as the political and ideological divide in America right now. Working in Washington D.C., I’ve seen first-hand the crippling nature of partisan politics and its negative impact on all Americans. Social enterprises should be able to thrive in places where there is balance of power with relatively equal democrat and republican environments. A social enterprise should be a bi-partisan goal where both political agendas can be supported. Republicans espouse a decrease in government spending, offering tax incentives for businesses, and efforts to increase the viability of small business in order to improve the economy and rise all ships. Democrats believe that solving the needs of the most disadvantaged is best managed by increasing government spending which is funded through taxpayer dollars. Social enterprises can help drive both agendas.

No matter how well intentioned, there are certain challenges that face a social enterprise. For instance, businesses don’t get the tax advantages of non-profits, and social enterprises are often seen as politically motivated with a more liberal bias. Further, defining the revenue/business/investment model can be difficult to identify. Also, there is the fear of greenwashing – making an unsubstantiated claim to intentionally deceive consumers into supporting a cause about which they care, i.e. supporting a company because it appears to be environmentally conscientious. Perhaps the greatest challenge is that the wide-spread education and marketing to the public, as to why they should support, buy from or work with a social enterprise, is entirely inconsistent.

The future trajectory of a social enterprise will be based on the collective social conscience of the work force. Currently, there is a \$30T wealth transfer from the ‘Baby Boomers’ to the ‘Next Generation’, a generation that wants to see a world where we could all be doing better. A generation that has witnessed the progress, influence, and pivots achieved through their purchases and voices. These individuals care about preservation, smart land management, and sustainable brands. This is the talent which examines purposeful places to work and is most happy and fulfilled in a place that has purpose. Even, worldly investment is moving in this direction. Larry Fink, Chairman/CEO of BlackRock, stated that they will only invest in businesses which also have a stated (social enterprise) purpose. The time is now to find ways to invest, support, and incentivize the growth of the 4th sector (business, government, non-profit, social sector) and find ways to creatively address the challenges of the present and future without solely relying on philanthropy to drive this. Now more than ever.

If you are old enough, you may remember the Tobacco Institute. This defunct organization once served a critical role for the tobacco industry. It was able to protect the tobacco industry from greater scrutiny for years via deception and lies regarding the effects of smoking and chewing tobacco. In fact, via the Tobacco Institute's efforts, the tobacco industry denied for years that nicotine was even addictive let alone a major risk factor for heart and lung disease. After tobacco industry CEOs stood in front of Congress and lied about the addictive nature of nicotine, the public finally had enough. The Tobacco Institute was forced to shut down.

Fast forward several decades and another industry is working hard to deceive the public in order to advance its own agenda and profit. And, you don't have to very far to witness their antics at work. It's the cannabis industry.

The State of Colorado continues its grand experiment with legal marijuana sales. Soon, as directed by Grand Junction voters, this experiment will be coming to our community after the Grand Junction City Council decides on marijuana shop regulations.

Certainly, the citizens of Grand Junction and the Grand Junction City Council should be wary and skeptical of any information they receive from this industry regarding the safety of marijuana use. For instance, the industry suggests that teenage marijuana use is not rising following legalization. In fact, some national and state data suggest that use is rising among teenagers. It is no coincidence that Colorado and other states that have legalized recreational marijuana have the highest rates of teenage marijuana use. And, there is no dispute that the teenagers that do use it are using it in greater frequency and at higher THC strength.

Not surprisingly, Colorado emergency rooms are seeing a sharp rise in marijuana intoxication. At UCHHealth on the Front Range, their emergency room saw a three-fold increase in visits in the years following legalization. Patients have been presenting with vomiting, fast heart rates, and psychotic episodes.

Furthermore, research clearly indicates a significant and adverse effect of marijuana use on the developing brain. It is far from benign and has led to increased suicide risk, increased school dropout, lower educational achievement, and psychosis. There are issues of on-the-job work performance, increased marijuana related DUI incidents, and increased exposure to marijuana among very young children.

Now the marijuana industry is at our doorstep and they want the same access to the marketplace here that they have garnered elsewhere. In Colorado, marijuana shops now outnumber Starbucks and McDonald's stores combined. The industry's presence was notable leading up to Grand Junction referendum and now during the months leading up to the council's work on marijuana shop regulations. With deceptive and friendly "data" in hand, they have already shaped attitudes and beliefs about marijuana legalization. To some degree, they have been successful. Nevertheless, via our elected city council representatives, we still get to decide how this product and this industry does business in our community.

While Grand Junction voters have approved recreational marijuana sales, we do not have to follow the marijuana industry's playbook that will inevitably increase demand for marijuana here in our community. With a smart approach honoring the wishes of the voters, the Grand Junction City Council can guide us down a path that will allow Grand Junction access to the tax revenue associated with marijuana sales while working to minimize the detrimental effects that this product will bring to our community. In fact, via a bold approach, Grand Junction has the opportunity to direct all the profits to local efforts to improve our community. With a bold approach, we allow only a small number of stores and reduce the need for marijuana advertising. See www.InvestInGJ.org for details.

We should not let history repeat itself with yet another industry designed for profit at the expense of health.

We have a choice. Will we put Grand Junction first or the Colorado cannabis industry?

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