

The future looks bright for O'dam

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Oakland votes to tax and regulate cannabis sales

Oaksterdam is the popular name of the once-blighted area of Oakland between downtown and Lake Merritt that was revitalized by Cannabis businesses in the late 90s. With nightclubs and sidewalk cafes opening, developers herald it as an arts and entertainment district, and hope to profit from a swing in public opinion.

With Measure Z's passage, cannabis prohibition's days seem to be numbered, and investors are seeing a different kind of green.

Local retailers, tired of dirty sidewalks, panhandlers and empty store fronts, have welcomed the cannabis businesses.

"I've seen a dramatic increase in sales and an improvement in the neighborhood since a cannabis cafe opened next door," says Gertha Hays from Diva's Closet, a women's apparel shop on 17th Street. Developers who spoke anonymously because they receive federal subsidies on unrelated projects, privately confide that they see a bright future for tourism.

"With Cannabis Prohibition being repealed in California before other states, Oakland will benefit in the same way Las Vegas did by legalizing gambling before every state had a lottery," a local developer predicted.

"Dilapidated hotels that are currently used for subsidized housing will again become part of a vibrant area at night and on weekends."

Astute politicians, recognizing the shift in voter attitudes and facing budget shortfalls, are beginning to see that taxing and regulating cannabis can help revitalize blighted areas and reduce budget deficits.

US Congresswoman Barbara Lee, CA State Senator Pro-Tem Don Perata, Alameda County Supervisors Nate Miley and Keith Carson, and Oakland City Council members Nancy Nadel and Desley Brooks all endorsed Measure Z, the cannabis revenue ordinance.

Long-term plans for the area are to make it more pedestrian friendly by widening sidewalks and closing 15th street between Harrison and Broadway in the afternoon and evenings.

Whether it's called the A&E district or Oaksterdam, the future looks bright for the area.

Make O'dam more pedestrian friendly

- Observe 25 mph speed limit
- Yield to peds when turning, check adjacent crosswalk before turning
- Watch out for peds crossing against lights and for jaywalkers
- Check sidewalks when entering and exiting garages and parking lots
- Check your mirror before opening your car door when parked on street
- Pedestrians, watch for turning cars and keep out of drivers' blind spots.