# Marijuana Legalization Faces Mixed Reactions at the Jersey Shore



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**Atlantic City, New Jersey** — As New Jersey approaches two years since the legalization of marijuana, the reception among communities at the Jersey Shore remains varied. Despite nearing a billion dollars in annual legal weed sales, many Shore towns are hesitant to integrate cannabis businesses into their locales.

### Historical Context and Current Sentiments

Though locals like Chet Kennedy, a manager at the Boarding House in Cape May, recall informal cannabis use under the boardwalks dating back years, official acceptance has been slow. Many southern Jersey Shore towns, including Ocean City, Avalon, Cape May, Wildwood, Sea Isle City, and Stone Harbor, have banned cannabis businesses and reaffirmed restrictions on public marijuana and tobacco smoking.

### Atlantic City's Embrace of Cannabis

Conversely, Atlantic City has embraced the cannabis market. The city now hosts seven dispensaries, including one on the Boardwalk, and anticipates the opening of the state’s first legal weed consumption lounges pending approval. Atlantic City recently hosted the MJ Unpacked cannabis business convention and events featuring renowned acts like Cypress Hill.

### West Cape May and Other Towns

West Cape May has cautiously entered the cannabis market with Shore House Canna, a dispensary co-owned by Nicole Melchiorre and Tom Nuscis, dedicated to education and a welcoming atmosphere. Recent events included the unveiling of New Jersey’s first legal weed brownie. Despite the cautious approach, public cannabis consumption remains prohibited at these events.

### Future Considerations

Cape May’s city manager, Paul Dietrich, suggests that some towns may never fully embrace cannabis. However, West Cape May Mayor Carol Sabo highlights the potential financial benefits, noting stable local taxes partly due to cannabis revenues.

### Outlook

The acceptance of cannabis at the Jersey Shore reflects broader societal shifts but faces opposition rooted in historical and cultural contexts. Only time will reveal the extent to which marijuana will become a seamless part of Shore life, akin to other legal substances. For now, public consumption remains limited, with Atlantic City positioning itself as the primary cannabis-friendly destination.

**— Henry Savage, May 15, 2024**