

Local Cannabis

Since New York legalized recreational cannabis in 2021, several Westchester County municipalities – including Mount Vernon, New Rochelle, Peekskill, White Plains, Yonkers, Pound Ridge, Rye, and Sleepy Hollow – have opted in to allow dispensaries, with about two dozen sites now **reportedly** operating across the county.

Nuna Harvest, the first fully licensed cannabis dispensary in Mount Vernon, distributed a press release yesterday about its opening in the Fleetwood neighborhood.

A spokesperson for the business said the opening “represents a major milestone for the city – pioneering both community wellness and economic growth in Westchester County’s evolving cannabis landscape.”

I wrote a column last year about Purple Owl’s **arrival** in White Plains, and New York’s cannabis legalization in general. It’ll be interesting to explore how new dispensaries impact their communities – as far as I can tell, they seem to integrate seamlessly, not unlike your local liquor store or independent pharmacy.

It’ll also be worth watching if more of Westchester’s villages and suburban towns ultimately decide to opt in, after they monitor how operations are going mostly in city settings.

Another positive aspect of the opening of legal dispensaries is the fact that they help mitigate the local impact of illegal smoke shops, providing safe access to regulated cannabis.

In fact, this past summer, six cannabis stores in New Rochelle were ordered **shut** for



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selling illegal products without a license, according to the New York State Office of Cannabis Management.

Westchester Magazine published a terrific **article** about the issue last month. The piece explains how the New York Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) released a report on the first 18 months of legal recreational sales.

“Since the office began issuing recreational licenses in 2022 – initially to existing medical dispensaries and then to independent retail locations – sales of cannabis have generated \$1 billion in revenue,” the article mentions.

As for the general manager at Nuna Harvest, Sherri McGee, she stated in yesterday’s announcement that the dispensary’s mission “extends beyond retail,” with designs on building connections and educating the community.

“We believe cannabis can be a positive force when approached with responsibility and care,” McGee said.