



## Overview: Cannabis Community Reinvestment in Georgia

# **A Local Government Framework for Equity, Public Health, and Economic Opportunity**

Georgia's cities and counties are entering a new era of cannabis policy reality. While Georgia maintains a regulated medical cannabis framework and national reforms continue to evolve, local governments are already confronting the practical impacts of cannabis enforcement, public health needs, workforce reentry, and community economic disparities.

Cannabis Community Reinvestment offers a responsible, forward-looking approach: it is not legalization, but rather a locally controlled strategy to ensure that communities disproportionately impacted by cannabis enforcement receive measurable, structured investments in healing, opportunity, and development.

Across Georgia, particularly in metro regions like Fulton, DeKalb, Clayton, Richmond, Chatham, Bibb, and beyond, municipalities and counties can adopt reinvestment models that strengthen communities while improving fiscal efficiency and public trust.

## **What Is Cannabis Community Reinvestment?**

Cannabis Community Reinvestment is a public policy framework through which cannabis-related revenues, grants, penalties, settlements, or philanthropic contributions are directed into communities most impacted by past cannabis enforcement.

Rather than allowing enforcement costs and harms to remain unaddressed, reinvestment creates a pathway for local governments to support:

- Workforce development and reentry
- Public health and trauma-informed care
- Youth education and prevention pipelines
- Housing stabilization and anti-displacement
- Entrepreneurship and cooperative economic development
- Expungement and restorative justice services

In short, reinvestment transforms a legacy of disproportionate enforcement into a platform for measurable community benefit.

## Why It Matters for Georgia Cities and Counties

Local governments in Georgia are often the front line of cannabis-related impacts:

- Police and court service costs
- Jail and probation burdens
- Behavioral health and substance-use needs
- Youth diversion and education gaps
- Neighborhood-level economic disinvestment

Cannabis Community Reinvestment provides counties and municipalities with a tool to:

### **Reduce long-term public safety costs**

By supporting diversion, reentry employment, and restorative justice.

### **Improve health outcomes**

By funding community mental health and preventive care.

### **Strengthen local economies**

By investing in job pipelines and small business development.

### **Build trust and legitimacy**

By acknowledging past harms and reinvesting transparently.

### **Prepare for future policy shifts**

By establishing infrastructure now, before broader reforms occur.

This is especially important as Georgia continues to refine its medical cannabis system and as federal policy evolves.

## How Cannabis Community Reinvestment Helps Municipalities

Municipalities can adopt reinvestment ordinances or programs that:

- a. Establish dedicated reinvestment funds
- b. Support neighborhood-based workforce and youth programs
- c. Partner with school systems, nonprofits, and public health agencies
- d. Align with local decriminalization or diversion efforts
- e. Demonstrate measurable equity outcomes for residents

For cities, reinvestment becomes a community development tool rooted in restorative public policy.

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## How Cannabis Community Reinvestment Helps Counties

Counties have unique leverage because they oversee:

- Public health departments
- Courts, jails, and probation services
- Workforce boards and economic development systems
- Housing and human services infrastructure
- Regional grant administration

A county-level reinvestment fund can serve as a scalable backbone for:

- Multi-jurisdiction coordination
- Regional workforce and reentry programs
- Countywide equity metrics
- Philanthropic and federal grant readiness

Counties like Fulton can pilot models that other jurisdictions across Georgia can replicate.

## Cannabis Community Reinvestment vs. the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)

It is important to distinguish Cannabis Community Reinvestment from the traditional “Community Reinvestment Act.”

### The Community Reinvestment Act (CRA)

The federal CRA (1977) is a banking law designed to prevent redlining by requiring financial institutions to serve low- and moderate-income communities.

- **Focus:** Lending and banking access
- **Target:** Financial institutions
- **Mechanism:** Credit and investment obligations
- **Scope:** Broad community finance

# Cannabis Community Reinvestment

Cannabis Community Reinvestment is a local public policy model designed to repair harms caused by disproportionate cannabis enforcement and redirect resources into impacted communities.

- **Focus:** Equity, restoration, public health, opportunity
- **Target:** Local governments and impacted neighborhoods
- **Mechanism:** Dedicated reinvestment funds + advisory oversight
- **Scope:** Cannabis-related enforcement legacy and reinvestment strategy

While both frameworks share a commitment to community investment, Cannabis Community Reinvestment is specifically designed as a restorative governance tool tied to cannabis enforcement impacts and evolving policy landscapes.

## A Georgia Opportunity: Building Local Infrastructure Now

Georgia municipalities and counties do not need to wait for full legalization to lead. Local governments can act now by establishing:

- Cannabis Community Reinvestment Funds
- Advisory councils with community representation
- Transparent reporting and equity metrics
- Partnerships with universities, hospitals, and workforce entities
- Grant-ready structures for federal and philanthropic support

This positions Georgia as a responsible leader in the South, promoting proactive, equity-centered governance.

## Conclusion

Cannabis Community Reinvestment is a locally controlled, fiscally responsible, and morally grounded framework that helps cities and counties across Georgia strengthen communities, improve public health, reduce justice system burdens, and expand economic opportunity.

It represents a shift from enforcement-driven costs to community-centered returns, ensuring that those most impacted by past policies are the first to benefit from future investments.



## Opportunity Zone Integration & Community Benefit Requirements

# **Cannabis Community Reinvestment Framework for Georgia Municipalities and Counties**

## **Overview for Commissioners, Municipal Leaders, Foundations, Economic Developers, and State Stakeholders**

Georgia municipalities and counties have an opportunity to align Cannabis Community Reinvestment with existing economic development tools, particularly federally designated Opportunity Zones, to unlock scalable, place-based investments in communities disproportionately impacted by past cannabis enforcement.

Opportunity Zones can serve as an implementation engine for reinvestment by attracting long-term private capital, supporting redevelopment corridors, and expanding community wealth-building infrastructure, provided that investments remain accountable to equity outcomes and community benefit standards.

This integration creates a pathway for reinvestment to move beyond short-term programming into sustainable community development and ownership.

## **I. Purpose of Opportunity Zone Integration**

Opportunity Zone integration is intended to:

- Direct reinvestment resources into neighborhoods experiencing historic disinvestment
- Leverage private and philanthropic capital alongside public reinvestment funds
- Expand economic mobility through community-based redevelopment
- Prevent displacement and ensure inclusive growth
- Establish Georgia as a national leader in equitable reinvestment governance

This approach allows local governments to connect restorative justice principles with economic development capacity.

## **II. Priority Geographic Targeting**

Cannabis Community Reinvestment investments may prioritize:

- Federally designated Opportunity Zones
- Neighborhoods with high historic cannabis enforcement impact
- Areas with persistent poverty, unemployment, and underinvestment
- Target redevelopment corridors identified by municipalities and counties

Priority targeting ensures that reinvestment flows to communities most harmed by prior enforcement and most positioned for equitable redevelopment.

## **III. Eligible Opportunity Zone-Aligned Reinvestment Projects**

Reinvestment funds may support projects located in Opportunity Zones that advance community benefit, including:

### **Workforce and Career Infrastructure**

- Job training hubs
- Apprenticeship campuses
- Reentry employment pipelines
- Industry credentialing programs

### **Community Health and Wellness Anchors**

- Behavioral health clinics
- Trauma-informed care centers
- Preventive health and wellness initiatives

### **Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development**

- Business incubators and accelerators
- Cooperative development and shared ownership models
- Microenterprise commercial corridors
- Minority-owned supplier pipelines

## **Housing Stability and Anti-Displacement Investments**

- Affordable housing preservation
- Community land trusts
- Anti-displacement stabilization programs
- Supportive housing services

## **Community Facilities and Cultural Anchors**

- Youth development centers
- Community learning campuses
- Arts, cultural, and legacy preservation projects

## **IV. Community Benefit Requirements | Accountability Standards**

To ensure Opportunity Zone reinvestment delivers equitable outcomes, jurisdictions may adopt Community Benefit Requirements for any project receiving reinvestment-linked support.

### **Required Community Benefit Commitments May Include:**

#### ***Local Hiring and Workforce Participation***

- Minimum local hiring targets
- Priority for impacted residents and returning citizens
- Apprenticeships and paid training pipelines

#### ***Minority-Owned and Community-Based Contracting***

- Supplier diversity benchmarks
- Participation by minority-owned and local firms
- Community-based nonprofit partnerships

#### ***Affordable Commercial Access***

- Affordable retail leases for local entrepreneurs
- Incubator space for impacted business owners
- Cooperative commercial ownership options

### *Anti-Displacement Protections*

- Housing stabilization measures
- Community land trust participation
- Tenant protections and affordability covenants

### *Community Governance and Transparency*

- Public reporting of outcomes
- Advisory Council review
- Equity performance metrics tied to funding continuation

## **V. Preventing Extractive Development**

Opportunity Zones have the potential to generate investment, but without safeguards can risk displacement or wealth extraction.

Cannabis Community Reinvestment integration ensures:

- Investments are equity-driven, not speculative
- Community benefit is measurable and enforceable
- Impacted neighborhoods retain voice and stake
- Growth strengthens communities rather than replacing them

Reinvestment frameworks can establish clear guardrails that distinguish restorative development from extractive redevelopment.

## **VI. Stakeholder Roles in an Integrated Model**

This framework invites coordinated participation across sectors:

### **County and Municipal Governments**

- Establish reinvestment funds and restricted accounts
- Identify priority Opportunity Zone corridors
- Approve community benefit standards and reporting

## **Economic Development Authorities**

- Structure catalytic redevelopment projects
- Align OZ investment with inclusive growth strategies
- Support minority business participation

## **Foundations and Philanthropy**

- Provide seed funding, matching grants, and evaluation support
- Invest in workforce, health, and housing stability initiatives
- Strengthen long-term sustainability beyond annual budgets

## **Nonprofits and Community-Based Organizations**

- Deliver services and programming
- Anchor trust and community engagement
- Support restorative justice and expungement efforts

## **Academic and Medical Institutions**

- Conduct research, evaluation, and equity impact studies
- Support workforce pipelines and public health outcomes
- Serve as neutral institutional anchors

## **State Legislators and Agencies**

- Enable grant pathways and supportive statutory frameworks
- Align reinvestment with statewide workforce and health goals
- Promote replication across Georgia jurisdictions

## **Private Investors and CDFIs**

- Deploy patient capital aligned with community benefit
- Support long-term development in designated reinvestment zones
- Partner through accountable, equity-centered investment vehicles

# **VII. Additional Beneficial Tools for Georgia Jurisdictions**

Beyond Opportunity Zones, reinvestment frameworks may also align with:

- Community Development Block Grants (CDBG)
- American Rescue Plan (ARPA) legacy investments
- Opioid settlement public health infrastructure

- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding
- Tax Allocation Districts (TADs)
- Land bank and affordable housing strategies
- Community Benefits Agreements (CBAs)
- Cooperative and employee ownership models

Together, these tools allow reinvestment to scale across multiple funding streams.

## **VIII. Conclusion: A Scalable Georgia Model**

In closing, I believe Cannabis Community Reinvestment represents one of the most responsible and forward-looking opportunities for municipalities and counties across Georgia. By pairing reinvestment with Opportunity Zones and enforceable community benefit standards, we can transform historic harm into measurable community healing, economic mobility, and long-term neighborhood stability.

This is not simply a policy proposal; it is a framework for shared prosperity, accountability, and leadership. Georgia has the chance to set a new Southern standard for equitable development, and I look forward to working with commissioners, local governments, institutions, foundations, and community partners to bring this model into action.

Respectfully,



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