

New Cannabis Shop Opens in Historic Albany KeyBank Branch

Albany's Lark Street has welcomed a new addition to its vibrant neighborhood with the opening of a marijuana shop, Hold Up Roll Up. Owners are hopeful that the store will appeal to the area's cannabis-friendly residents.

A Unique Storefront

Situated in a former KeyBank branch at 196 Washington Ave., the shop's exterior features a sign and tinted windows in compliance with state regulations. The old square clock outside remains, adding a nostalgic touch. Inside, customers can find a variety of cannabis products, including rolled joints, gummies, and other cannabinoid items sourced from suppliers across New York.

Capital Region's Expanding Cannabis Market

Hold Up Roll Up joins at least 12 licensed cannabis retailers in the immediate Capital Region. The store aims to set itself apart with a unique shopping experience.

Modern and Interactive Shopping Experience

In front of a bank safe, staff members don store merchandise like T-shirts and caps with a dotted "H." The spacious room features kiosks equipped with touch screens, allowing customers to smell samples of marijuana flowers and place them on a pad to learn more about the products.

"We've got a couple of comments where people said we are the 'Apple Store of weed,'" said Jason Coleman, the store's chief operating officer and co-owner. He explained that the store's name is derived from a common phrase used to pause a conversation to get high before engaging in a deep discussion.

Owners' Background and Vision

The store is co-owned by Charles "Obar" Robinson, who has a notable history in the cannabis world. Robinson, along with his brothers, sold marijuana illegally in the 1990s and served eight years in federal prison for marijuana trafficking. He is now a licensee of the state's conditional retail dispensaries program, which prioritizes business owners with past marijuana offenses.

Grand Opening Celebration

During an event on Thursday celebrating the store's May 8 opening, Robinson expressed his emotions, calling the ceremony a "glorious moment and a dream come true." The event was attended by about 25 supporters, including local and state officials like Albany council members Jahmel Robinson (Robinson's

nephew) and Gabriella Romero, as well as Tahlil McGough from the Office of Cannabis Management.

“I just want younger people to look up and say that you can dream because dreams do come true,” Robinson said.

Community Reception and Impact

Patrick Noonan of the Lark Street BID praised the new addition to the neighborhood, which hosts over 80 businesses. “It’s an incredibly unique entity that’s going to bring a whole different set of folks down here that might not have otherwise come down to check out Lark Street,” Noonan said.

For Robinson, Lark Street’s residents are likely to be supportive of the new venture. “I look at Lark Street in the city of Albany as being an area where you have a high number of nonjudgmental people,” he said.

Hold Up Roll Up’s opening marks a significant moment for Albany’s Lark Street, blending the past and present in a unique cannabis retail experience. The shop’s presence is set to attract a diverse group of visitors, contributing to the neighborhood’s dynamic atmosphere.

Email: info@cannabisriskmanager.com | Phone: +415-226-4060

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