



**PLEASANTREES®**

**SOCIAL EQUITY PLAN**



## THE PLEASANTREES PLEDGE

Once upon a time, the word diversity was a new concept. Then came inclusion. And now we seem to be figuring out equity. It goes without saying that diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) – or better yet, the actual achievement of DEI – is a key indicator of a progressive, healthy society. That is the sort of place within which Pleasantrees hopes to exist, but we are not there yet ... not by a long-shot.

In that regard, equitably “leveling the playing field” would ideally create a world of equally respected and valued ethnicities, cultures, origins, viewpoints, talent, and contributions associated with any specific cause, initiative, or aspect of life. Naturally, a business operator’s intentional effort to incorporate DEI into its mission will lead to greater profitability, innovation, and a more effective workforce. Beyond that, of course, we at Pleasantrees believe this is simply the right thing to do.

Perhaps the end goal sounds like a utopia. No doubt the vision is most certainly lofty. But meaningful progress is indeed attainable. So, challenges aside, the good work must continue.

What follows is a slide deck outlining Pleasantrees’ Social Equity Plan including its stance and commitment to being a part of the change we wish to see.



## SOCIAL EQUITY PLAN

Pleasantrees is devoted to being a contributing member of the communities it serves. Recognizing the disparate impact that criminalization of cannabis has had on certain communities, the company aims to change that perception through continual and constant outreach and targeted initiatives. Pleasantrees' work in the social equity arena starts at its core with an intentionality to foster greater diversity and inclusion at all levels of the company and throughout our society. While much progress has been made, there is still so much more to be done – and that is why Pleasantrees remains steadfast in its commitment toward furthering these goals.

### OVERVIEW

Pleasantrees' position is that cannabis should never have been illegal in the first place. The prohibition of cannabis at the federal and state level was/is a decades-long injustice that has caused millions of people to experience undue hardship as a result of being aggressively prosecuted and sentenced for “crimes” that are now a booming and legal industry.



To fortify its mission in the social equity space, in November 2020, Pleasantrees brought on attorney and community leader Jerome Crawford as the Director of Legal Operations and Social Equity. In this newly created role, Jerome not only directs and supports legal needs for the organization, but he also importantly spearheads social equity initiatives to ensure the company makes a positive, genuine and lasting impact within local communities as it grows. Notably, among other roles, Jerome is a former President of the Wolverine Bar Association (the preeminent organization for Michigan's black lawyers, judges, and law students, founded in 1919) and former Co-Chair of the Men of Color Project through the American Bar Association Young Lawyer's Division.

Pleasantrees endeavors to build a pipeline of talent comprised of individuals who have been negatively impacted by the war on drugs. In that regard, a significant portion of Jerome's efforts are focused on unlocking fair and balanced employment opportunities at all levels of the fast-growing, legalized cannabis industry.

Through Jerome's leadership, in tandem with that of Pleasantrees' CEO, Randall Buchman (a former MMMA caregiver), the company also advocates for legislative reform aimed toward the release of those incarcerated for cannabis-related crimes, as well as the mass-expungement of criminal records regarding cannabis offenses.



Frankly put, whatever Pleasantrees is doing, it is not enough. We are working hard to stay abreast of developments, attend to social needs, and remain dedicated to identifying and cultivating new, cutting edge avenues to right historical wrongs. What follows is a summary of what Pleasantrees is doing, and hopes to do in the future, in furtherance of creating a meaningful impact and a more equitable future for the cannabis industry and our society itself.

## LAYING THE GROUNDWORK

### *Four Foundational Pillars*

Pleasantrees understands that the effects of prohibition have helped exacerbate a contemporary situation in which the people that were disproportionately impacted by the criminality of cannabis are now systematically disadvantaged from participating in the legal cannabis industry.

Accordingly, the company has identified four key areas of focus towards leveling the playing field:

#### **(1) Access to Value Chain**

- Purpose: Create financial opportunities throughout the value chain, from maintaining a robust staff of individuals with non-violent cannabis convictions to incubating independent talent and businesses that serve the industry.

#### **(2) Education**

- Purpose: Provide life skills training to our staff, their families, and our communities through qualified partners in order to close the life skills gap that often tracks closely with or is the direct result of incarceration and systemic racism.

#### **(3) Legislation & Advocacy**

- Purpose: Support elected officials, individual pieces of legislation, and organizations that work to mitigate the effects of prohibition and create equitable opportunity for those disproportionately affected.

#### **(4) Good Neighbor**

- Purpose: Act and fund initiatives in local communities in which we operate to help make life a little more livable in ways that matter to our neighbors – we focus on efforts that address food and housing insecurity, safety, general financial need, and the environment.

Every effort Pleasantrees makes toward rectifying these imbalances espouses one or more of these pillars.

### *Social Equity Committee*

To coordinate and formalize its work, Pleasantrees established an internal Social Equity Committee in January 2021. The Committee consists of representation from a variety of the organization's key functions (i.e., Cultivation, Processing, Retail, and Corporate).



As we know, there are a multitude of institutional shortcomings that exist in the cannabis industry with respect to DEI. This is a reality to which Pleasantrees is not immune. Accordingly, the company is taking action intended to overcome those failings. In order to even begin moving the needle meaningfully, the first step is to take inventory of the current status then brainstorm an action plan. In sum, the purpose of the Social Equity Committee is to determine how we as a company can make a greater impact outside of our organization and, ideally, set an example for other similarly situated operators in this space.

Presently, the group meets on a monthly basis to steer the various initiatives, develop ideas, and share feedback as the company navigates this everchanging landscape. The Committee is the living, breathing driver of our Four Foundational Pillars. What follows is a detailed summary into each pillar and how they guide what we do in furtherance of our social equity mission.

### **PILLAR ONE: ACCESS TO VALUE CHAIN**

This pillar can be summed up in one word: *Participation*. The “value chain” linked to the marijuana industry is vast and varied. Nonetheless, participation and significant involvement from minorities and those disparately impacted by criminalization is severely lacking. By no means would Pleasantrees represent that it knows precisely how to solve this problem – but we are going to keep doing what we can to balance the scales.

One of the first action items we are tackling is to assess our status quo and then disrupt the system. Looking inward, we note that the majority of our hiring has historically been facilitated through online mediums such as Indeed and LinkedIn (approximately 85-90% of our workforce has been recruited through these channels). Unfortunately, in complete candor, these digital platforms are inherently biased due to, among other reasons, distinctions in access to technology tied to socioeconomic status.

Next, we are taking great care to investigate our current demographic makeup of roles throughout the organization. Presently, over 40% of our team is comprised of what the Michigan Marijuana Regulatory Authority describes as “individuals disproportionately impacted by marijuana prohibition”; however, although appearing admirable on the surface, when unpacked we learn that this fact is primarily due to various employees’ residency in noted cities the MRA designates are disparately impacted by the war on drugs. Stated more plainly, roughly 16% of the workforce identify as ethnic minorities. Ultimately, we determined that one key reason our employee population is not as diverse as it could be is because our applicant pool is not diverse enough. This is not okay. And we are implementing changes to do something about it.

For anyone to evaluate how to make change, they must assess their own position and vantage point. Pleasantrees, as a vertically integrated operator with cultivation, processing and retail facilities, has a unique perspective and opportunity to create access. Because the company does, in essence, everything under one roof, we can increase overall access and participation by getting more diverse talent in the



pipeline. More specifically, our “value chain” creation is accomplished in large part by hiring.

In order to move the needle forward meaningfully and help balance the scales, Pleasantrees must work with a variety of partners to amplify its reach. First, the Social Equity Committee is taking on the initial task of locating local organizations and job placement institutions that can assist with broadening our job posting efforts. Second, from the executive level down, we will continue to use our networks and connections to intentionally identify individuals who come from underrepresented backgrounds and bring the opportunities to them. Lastly, Pleasantrees intends to kick off formal alignment with 70 Million Jobs to feature “felony friendly” employment postings, specifically to find those individuals who have been impacted by cannabis-related crimes.

Candidly, this is Pleasantrees’ number one area of needed improvement and without a doubt, we are a continual work in progress in this regard. Although the road is long, we are committed to staying the course and making the necessary adjustments to steer ourselves in the right direction.

## **PILLAR TWO: EDUCATION**

From our vantage, this pillar is two-fold. On one hand, we believe that part of our responsibility is to educate the community on cannabis culture and consumers, and work to destigmatize and dismantle the myriad of negative cannabis stereotypes that have been perpetuated for decades. We push this angle through our newly launched podcast (“Pleasant Talks”) which is filmed in Royal Oak, MI and hosted by Jerome Crawford. The more that the general public learns about positive cannabis culture and this incredible plant, the more barriers will be broken down to unify rather than divide.

On the other hand, we must invest in our employees’ collective knowledge base. As a young startup, we are routinely generating and refining standard practices to formalize the way we do what we do. Essentially, it is our goal to share the sum total of our corporate knowledge throughout the entire organization. Taking it a step further, our aim is to create genuine opportunities for advancement within, while providing job skills and life skills to our team that will benefit them the rest of their professional and personal lives. To that end, Pleasantrees endeavors in 2021 to launch routine webinar training modules for employees covering topics such as financial wellness and retirement planning.

Intriguingly, the Social Equity Committee will be experimenting with the concept of an “employee exchange program.” Upon receiving interest from employees, we would, for example, look to allow a Cultivation Associate to switch roles with a Retail Sales Guide so that each can learn more about Pleasantrees’ structural operations and simultaneously grow their own knowledge base. As restrictions from the pandemic continue to ease, we will explore how to make this idea a reality. Investing in employees heavily on the front end, and expecting excellent results in return, is Pleasantrees’ strategy when it comes to staffing at all of its facilities/establishments.



This includes empowering new employees with the knowledge and confidence that comes with thoughtful job training and cannabis education. Coupled with the highly competitive wages and benefits, proceeding in this fashion ensures that our employees step into their new role feeling excited and motivated. Sample training education initiatives implemented to date include: (i) partnering with KnifeHit, LLC, a group of cannabis retail consultants who founded the “Have a Heart” chain of dispensaries renowned for their advancement of retail techniques and focus on the care of medical cannabis patients; (ii) cascading internal policy and security-based training courses in advance of a new store opening; (iii) assuring that all employees (cultivation, processing, and retail) understand the applicable laws, compliance requirements, and regulations to which the facility/establishment is subjected.

Operating compliantly within the Michigan cannabis industry is complicated. It is imperative that the company’s policies and procedures are effectively communicated in a way that provides new employees with the “big picture,” so that they are able to truly understand “why” we do things the way we do. These “why we do it this way” conversations are held in round circle discussions lead by the senior operational leadership. Major subjects addressed include: (i) inventory procurement and management; (ii) customer intake procedures; (iii) effective use of POS systems; (iv) recordkeeping, security, and storage; and (v) extensive health and safety guideline coverage.

Lastly, Pleasantrees is constantly learning and evolving. In such a fast-paced, nascent industry, our doing so is a necessity. To ensure that practice improvements, policy advancements, and “eureka” moments are appropriately captured and communicated to the entire employee base, the company lives in a state of consistent Standard Operating Procedure (“SOP”) development and refinement.

The not-so-surprising irony of the war on drugs is that those who have been systematically targeted by enforcement are the same communities who lack the necessary resources to participate in this industry – particularly with respect to knowledge and education. Pleasantrees will use its platform on an ongoing basis to share its vast expertise within the company and amongst its host communities at-large.

### **PILLAR THREE: LEGISLATION & ADVOCACY**

Pleasantrees’ approach to this third pillar is multifaceted. Pleasantrees scours the landscape to identify proposed laws, bills, and legislation that will advance criminal justice reform in order to balance the scales. Naturally, this work takes a variety of forms and is effectuated through a myriad of initiatives. Below are the preeminent partners and programs with whom Pleasantrees collaborates in order to advance the ball forward.



Last Prisoner Project (“LLP”) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to cannabis criminal justice reform. LPP was founded out of the belief that if anyone can profit and build wealth in the legal cannabis industry, those individuals must also work to release and rebuild the lives of those who have suffered from cannabis criminalization. The organization is made up of attorneys, criminal justice champions, advocates, and justice-impacted individuals dedicated to reforming our unjust and ineffective approach to cannabis law and policy.

Pleasantrees continues to serve as a Partner for Freedom with LPP and is noted as a “Supporter” on the nonprofit’s website for its commitment and contributions to aid in the fight to free prisoners and promote restorative justice in the industry (<https://www.lastprisonerproject.org/partners-for-freedom>). And recently, the company formally became a member of LPP’s Michigan Cannabis Freedom Coalition to help drive the Cannabis Clemency Campaign. From a high level, the Coalition’s mission is to provide a fresh start to those who have been harmed by the criminalization of cannabis through clemency, resentencing, expungement, reducing and eliminating barriers for justice-impacted individuals, and public education and awareness.

In particular, the Cannabis Clemency Campaign addresses these challenges by working with governors and other relevant state agencies to design clemency protocols, develop infrastructure to screen and process applications, and recruit, train and support volunteer lawyers to represent clemency petitioners. The program will recruit, train, and provide resources support to a cadre of lawyers who will provide pro bono assistance to prisoners petitioning state executives for clemency. In that regard, the program is designed to respond to the criteria for consideration articulated by each governor or state clemency authority, and will rely primarily upon local attorneys, law firms, and law clinics.

#### *Expungement Clinics & Know Your Rights Fairs*

Above and beyond collaborating with organizations like LPP and with the support of community leaders and elected officials, Pleasantrees will implement its own expungement clinics and know your rights fairs. Jerome Crawford himself has coordinated and/or volunteered at several such events over the years in working with a variety of public service organizations like the Wolverine Bar Association, Lakeshore Legal Aid, the American Civil Liberties Union, the National Bar Association and the State Bar of Michigan.

In fact, Jerome assisted one of his closest friends in obtaining an expungement; so the monumental value of this work is understood and appreciated. Going forward, Pleasantrees will be evaluating whether to facilitate these clinics/fairs independently or with partners to broaden its reach (i.e., the American Bar Association or local nonprofits and community rights groups).



Having just established its own in-house Legal Team, Pleasantrees intends to get in the trenches personally. We are working to identify incarcerated citizens that may be eligible for early release. Quite often one of the key challenges for such individuals is a lack of representation. That being the case, Pleasantrees will look to provide just that representation through its own lawyers.

Of course, we would then hope to offer gainful employment to those we assist in gaining early release, thereby capturing the true essence of our Social Equity Plan by converging this work with our Access to Value Chain pillar.

#### **PILLAR FOUR: GOOD NEIGHBOR**

Our final pillar is often the most visible because it reflects Pleasantrees “giving” or “doing something” to immediately benefit those in need. While not exclusively focused upon advancing the goals of social equity, our team believes it is imperative that we support the communities that support us. Below is an overview of our most recent and notable “good neighbor” initiatives undertaken in the two cities within which Pleasantrees launched retail establishments in 2020. Through these efforts, our goal is not to just operate *within* a community, but rather truly be member of that respective community.

##### *Michigan State University Book Scholarship*

Pleasantrees’ first retail establishment is in East Lansing, which encapsulates the prestigious Michigan State University campus. Given that fact, the company recently launched a very exciting new book scholarship. In recognition of the unequal impact cannabis criminalization has had on certain communities, this scholarship will provide ten (10) \$500 book scholarships to qualified applicants.

Among other criteria, the applicants must be members of ethnic minority groups historically underrepresented in higher education and demonstrate how they will use their major/discipline to positive improve their communities from a social equity standpoint. The company is accepting applications until April 30, 2021 and all details can be found on the website here: <https://www.enjoypleasantrees.com/msu-scholarship/>. Importantly, this initiative is supported by East Lansing Councilperson Dana Watson, who is quoted in a recent press release announcing the scholarship.

##### *Hamtramck Holiday Giving*

After opening its second retail location in Hamtramck, the company immediately sought out opportunities to do good within its new home. Pleasantrees is working hard to be good neighbors and reflect positively upon the cannabis community. On that note, the company gave its fifteen closest Hamtramck neighbors holiday gift bags from the Detroit Basket Company (<https://www.detroitbasketcompany.com/>).

In addition to Michigan-made treats of all types, each had a \$50 prepaid credit card. Additionally, Pleasantrees donated to Friendship House, a Hamtramck community resource and soup kitchen needing all the help it can get in these troubled times (<https://www.detroitfriendshiphouse.org/>).

Relatedly, the leadership team has roots in the Hamtramck community and is committed to its revitalization. Pleasantrees' Chief Security Officer's grandparents were married in the building which now houses Pleasantrees' retail establishment and, prior to Pleasantrees' arrival, that building had been abandoned for nearly two decades (notably, this was the site of the old Polish Army Veterans' Association). Through the company's CSO, Eric Mack, the original 100-year-old Joseph Campau street sign was also donated to the Hamtramck Historical Museum to ensure it is available for all to enjoy. Capturing the sentiment that Pleasantrees was "selling more than cannabis" during the holiday season, there is a recent blog post found on the company website here: <https://www.enjoypleasantrees.com/selling-more-than-cannabis/>.



## THE JOURNEY AHEAD

As it cannot be overstated, the team at Pleasantrees fully appreciates and understands that the work in this “social equity” arena never stops. We transparently recognize that, whatever we actually do, there is always another level to reach. And, we also know that we cannot do it alone.

We will strive everyday to carry our respective load and use our unique resources to be a genuine betterment to our employees, their families, and the community as a whole. Being a leading operator in this newly legalized industry is a privilege – one we do not take lightly.

Thus, we are constantly assessing, evaluating, revamping and refining everything we do so that we do not rest on our laurels or ever complacently believe we have “arrived”; this Social Equity Plan will be continuously updated on a routine basis to reflect best practices as we grow.

The Pleasantrees four foundational pillars work in tandem, as facilitated through the Social Equity Committee, all towards one common goal: Do Well, Do Good.

Together, we can collectively do our part to rebalance the scales and create a more equitable tomorrow.

**JOIN US!**

