



operation of their retail environment and strategy, which involves training them in customer, patient, and employee behavior, for example,” Stone explains. Playing such a comprehensive part in the development process is a challenge, she adds, but a very rewarding experience too. “It means that we collaborate closely, which has led to deep, long-lasting partnerships with our clients and allows us to connect with the communities their businesses serve.”

As the niche High Road carved blossoms into a fruitful industry, the need for creative design solutions is now greater than ever—and due to ever-evolving legislation in the US, it continues to grow. “We have new markets coming into play every year, with dispensaries that need to adhere to specific regulations while bringing their brand to life,” Stone affirms. For her team, “this keeps things fresh and sets standards for reinvention.” Spurred on by a thriving market, High Road’s clients are becoming more business savvy and forward-thinking, too, she shares. A growing demand for multilocation strategies is keeping High Road’s team on their toes, but thanks to bigger budgets and legislative amendments, they have also gained flexibility as designers. “Not too long ago, many of my projects had onerous security and zoning regulations, and advertising presented difficulties,” Stone recalls. “The expansion of the industry has led to some relaxation, so design in 2019 is able to go further in most locations than it could in the past. There are exciting opportunities ahead in 2020.”

Despite her optimism, Stone has developed a differentiated view of the hype around hemp: “I think we have to be honest with the fact that this isn’t something for everybody,” she comments. “We are dealing with a mind-altering substance, and the goal can’t be to turn everyone into cannabis users. I want cannabis to be accessible so people don’t fear civil asset forfeiture or felony charges if they choose to consume it safely. At the same time, I feel that we need to be careful to avoid becoming the next tobacco industry and acting as though there are no risks.” Embracing her position as a creative thought leader, Stone engages in close dialogue with her clients to advocate a sense of agency and responsibility. “I don’t want to see capitalism and greed hijack this industry and rob it of the honesty and authenticity that is required.” *

Gnome Creek dispensary, Beaver Creek, Oregon (above, opposite, and previous page)