

Garfield parks, recreation areas off limits to smokers - NorthJersey.com

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GARFIELD – Smokers will no longer be able to light up in the city’s parks and recreation areas after the City Council passed a ban this week.

“I know future generations of children will thank you,” said Kerese Robinson, a member of the Bergen County Integrated Municipal Advisory Council, a coalition of tobacco control experts and community organizations that had advocated for the ordinance.

The ordinance passed on Tuesday bans smoking in all public parks and recreational facilities owned or leased by the city, any areas adjacent to those facilities such as parking lots or driveways, and any city vehicle. Smoking had already been prohibited in municipal buildings.

In addition to the use of more traditional tobacco products, such as cigars or cigarettes, the use of electronic smoking devices is also banned, according to the ordinance.

Anyone caught violating the new regulations will be fined a minimum of \$250 for the first offense, \$500 for the second offense and \$1,000 for each subsequent offense. Any city employee who breaks the rules could also face disciplinary action, according to the ordinance.

Municipalities throughout North Jersey have instituted smoking bans in their public recreation areas. Garfield is the fifteenth municipality in Bergen County to do so.

In Passaic County, smoking in public recreational areas is prohibited in at least a dozen municipalities, as well as in all county parks except the Preakness Valley Golf Course, according to information provided by the Global Advisors on Smokefree Policy group.

The Secaucus council also voted Tuesday to expand that town's smoking ban to all public parks and recreational facilities.

Garfield Mayor Joseph Delaney said Wednesday that he supported the ban.

“Maybe it won't stop everyone from smoking but it could stop people from smoking in front of other people, like children,” said Delaney, a former smoker who said he quit almost 25 years ago.

Bans on smoking in parks and recreation areas set a “healthy example” for children, reducing the likelihood that they will take up smoking, according to the Bergen County Integrated Municipal Advisory Council. Such a ban can also protect people from secondhand smoke, enhance outdoor municipal areas, defend municipal property from “preventable” fires and tobacco waste, and cut down on maintenance costs by minimizing the amount of tobacco litter in public recreation areas, according to the advisory council.

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